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Letter to the Editor

Kempton Campbell

12/13/2021

Dear Readers,

It is my privilege to write to you as the Editor-in-Chief of the University of Connecticut's Undergraduate Political Review. This semester we are proud to publish our thirteenth edition of the journal. With each publication we strive to challenge UConn undergraduate students to explore complex and topical political issues that affect the world in which we live.

All articles included in this edition were written by undergraduate students and have undergone a rigorous peer-reviewed drafting process overseen by our student-run editorial board. Some of our past publications have confined our staff writers to a specific theme. Unlike past editions, this edition is unbound by specific themes and instead features articles that consider topics that captured the attention of our writers. We are proud to feature articles on topics ranging from mental health care policy to civic education.

This publication would not have been possible without the support of several people. I would like to thank all our editors and writers for their hard work and dedication this semester. During this semester's unprecedented and challenging transition from remote to in-person learning, we could not have published such a high-quality edition without a dedicated group of undergraduate students. Additionally, I would like to thank last year's Editor-in-Chief, Shankara Narayanan, for leaving the Undergraduate Political Review in a strong place and ensuring a smooth transition into new leadership. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Oksan Bayulgen and the University of Connecticut's Political Science Department for their continued support of this publication.

Finally, our readers should know that we accept new writers each semester, and we always encourage students to apply. Any University of Connecticut student may apply by emailing a resume and writing sample to uconnpoliticalreview@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Kempton Campbell | Editor-in-Chief

Ending America's Longest War: The War on Drugs

Jola Bufi

The “war on drugs” is a phrase used to refer to a government-led initiative that aims to stop illegal drug use, distribution, and trade by dramatically increasing prison sentences for drug dealers and users. The movement originated in the late 1970s as Congress and state legislatures passed strict penalties for drugs, which led to an increase in prison populations. As this ongoing war on drugs policy has put millions of people behind bars, there has been a rise in the amount of people speaking out against it. Over the years, people have had controversial reactions to the campaign stemming from claims that the War on Drugs has its objectives primarily on politics, gender, racism, and addiction. The “war on drugs” has become one of the most important resources of violence, militarization, conflict, and suffering all over the world. This essay seeks to highlight the immense need to end one of America’s longest wars as the policy frames the drug problem as an individual one of the users or “the enemy”. Through exposing the implications of the war on drugs on race, gender, and addiction, I seek to advocate for a new system that places the drug problem as a public health and education issue.

Background

In the 1960s, as drugs became symbolic of political dissent and social upheaval, the government put an end to scientific research to evaluate their medical safety. In 1971, President Nixon declared a “war on drugs” and proceeded to increase the size of federal drug control agencies and the presence of break-in warrants and mandatory sentencing for drug crimes. Two years later, Nixon went on to create the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which is a special police force who aims to target illegal drug use and smuggling in the United States. At the start, the DEA was given 1,470 special agents and a budget of less than \$75 million. Today, the agency has nearly 5,000 agents and a budget of \$2.03 billion.¹ When Nixon’s presidency receded, Ronald Reagan, in the 1980s, reinforced and expanded many of Nixon’s drug policies. Reagan’s wife, Nancy, launched the “Just Say No” campaign, which focused on the dangers of drug use. Lastly, in 1986 Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which established mandatory minimum prison sentences for certain drug offenses. In 2014, nearly half of the 186,000 people serving time in federal prisons in the United States had been incarcerated on drug-related charges.² Overall, the war on drugs led to a rapid increase in incarceration for nonviolent offenses. To this day our prison system continues to further the detrimental implications of such drug policy. While the War on Drugs carries less intensity and publicity now than in its early years, 50 years later this war is still being fought.

¹ A&E Television Networks. 2017. “War on Drugs - Timeline in America, Definition & Facts - HISTORY.” History.com. <https://www.history.com/topics/crime/the-war-on-drugs>.

² Ibid.

War on Race

The War on Drugs has been viewed by many as a war on race as Nixon's harsh punishment for drugs like Heroin and Crack created stereotypes and harsh jail sentences for the Black community. According to Vox, the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, "created a disparity where 5 grams of crack equated to a five-year sentence and 500 grams of powder Cocaine would warrant the same sentence".³ Many believe that this is because powder Cocaine was associated with white populations whereas Crack Cocaine was more common among Black populations. Additionally, in a 1994 interview, domestic policy chief, John Ehrlichman, provided information suggesting that the War on Drugs campaign did indeed have ulterior motives. He explained that the Nixon campaign had two enemies: "The antiwar left and black people. We could not make it illegal to be black, but by getting the public to associate the black with heroin and then criminalizing them heavily, we could disrupt those communities".⁴ Therefore, showing the direct correlation between the war on drugs and the war on race, as drug policies and laws continue to disproportionately affect people of African descent. While many reports have shown that black people do not use drugs any more than their white counterparts, the law still subjects them to more frequent, longer, and harsher prison sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. However, the strict drug laws not only targeted Black offenders, but they aided in creating an immense number of harmful stereotypes that still surround Black populations. As a result, to this day 80% of people in federal prison for drug offenses are Black.⁵ Thus, decriminalizing drug possession related to the policy would remove a major cause of mass incarceration of black people and help more people receive drug treatment. By eliminating policies like the war on drugs, we could redirect law enforcement resources to programs that help build healthier communities and allow for more opportunities to flourish within Black communities.

War on Women

Apart from its impact on race, the war on drugs has also increasingly shown that men and women experience this war quite differently as most types of illegal substances violate societal expectations of women. Much of the work on women's drug related experiences has focused on their use of drugs while pregnant as society places automatically correlates women with motherhood. One research notes that drug use was constructed as compromising the "maternal instinct" of women in ways that bolstered support for punitive drug policies.⁶ This view not only implies that drugs were more harmful to women than they were for men, but it led to many women, especially poor women of color, to be put under the control and violence of the criminal

³ Murray, Krystina. 2021. "The War on Drug's Ongoing Impact On Black People." Addiction Center. <https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2021/08/war-on-drugs-impact-on-black-people/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Women and the Drug War." n.d. Drug Policy Alliance. Accessed November 25, 2021. <https://drugpolicy.org/issues/women-drug-war>.

justice system due to random drug testing of parolees. Today, roughly 60% of women in state and federal prisons are mothers of minor children, many of them sole caregivers.⁷ Removing a parent from a household can have long term effects on the future of the child and oftentimes causes the children to end up in foster care or to drop out of school to provide for themselves. As a result, a lot of children might end up becoming involved in the criminal legal system themselves as they see no other option to sustain their lives. Under the war on drugs logic, any drug use correlates to child abuse, regardless of whether there is actual direct harm to the child. Such policy demonizes women and parents instead of trying to provide help. Susan Burton, the founder, and executive director of A New Way of Life--an organization that provides support to women recently released from prison--, medicated herself with drugs when her son was killed by the Police Department.⁸ Instead of receiving the support and services she needed, she ended up falling victim to the war on drugs and the criminal legal system for another fifteen years. Once she gained her freedom, she developed A New Way of Life Project, which to this day continues to aid in the struggle of breaking the cycle of incarceration and the war on women through providing resources to survivors of addiction. Hence, Susan's story and beneficial project contrast with the way the War on Drugs presents women's drug use and incarceration as a sign of weakness and parental failure. Projects like these prove how resources and education rather than punishment should be at the forefront of dealing with drugs.

Treatment Instead of Incarceration

For decades, the United States has tried to control drug use by spending hundreds of billions of dollars to incarcerate drug users. This has led to the largest prison population in the world and an ever-increasing number of users and rising overdoses or drug-related deaths. In 2018 alone, 1,173 people died from overdoses in Washington state.⁹ Most physicians have expressed their frustration of seeing the spiral of addiction and admitting patients with no treatment options other than incarceration for their addiction. However, even if a correctional institution does provide treatment, it is unlikely for the treatment to continue post incarceration, making the treatment ineffective as consistency is essential to recovery. Other challenges to treatment include lack of resources, treatment staff, and most importantly the fact that there is no constitutionally guaranteed treatment for addiction as there is for other medical conditions. Hence, oftentimes individuals in incarceration resort to self-help groups due to the lack of formal treatment.

Despite the approach of conviction and punishment when dealing with drugs that the United States has taken, there are other blueprints in other countries. Portugal, for example,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Low, Daniel, Kathryn Treit, and J. Dave. 2020. "As doctors, we call for treatment, not incarceration, for those with drug addiction." The Seattle Times. <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/as-doctors-we-call-for-treatment-not-incarceration-for-those-with-drug-addiction>

decriminalized the personal possession of drugs in 2001. In the past 20 years, the prison population there has dropped nearly in half and the number of drug overdose deaths has decreased by 80%.¹⁰ Evidently, approaching drug use through a community and public health lens led Portugal to save thousands of lives. Meanwhile, there has been an increased focus for rehabilitation and treatment programs in the United States as well. For example, Seattle has developed leadership with the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program--a program committed to offer alternatives to incarceration through community effort--, which has led to a 58% reduction in arrests.¹¹ Another example of treatment approaches stems from Oregon, which recently passed an act called "Measure 110" to decriminalize drug use and replace incarceration with funded rehabilitation centers. Programs and acts like these should continue to be implemented and expanded to provide education and resources for substance use disorders. Ultimately, the ongoing drug problem in America is simply a reflection of our need to develop new ways to heal addiction. By recognizing that incarceration for drug offenses is ineffective and contributes to the trauma associated with substance use disorder, we can allow for the flourishing of a new system that prioritizes healing as a communal effort.

Conclusion

As time has proven, punishment alone is an ineffective and futile response to drug abuse. For decades, our federal government has waged a War on Drugs that has disproportionately impacted low-income communities and communities of color. The increase in the number of drug offenders who fall victims to the mass incarceration enabled by this war highlights the urgency for a new approach, one focused on treatment. While the idea of decriminalizing and legalizing drugs seems too daunting, such a policy is not without precedent considering the progress of other countries like Portugal. A change in drug policy would most likely result in positive effects regarding gender and racial issues in the United States, which would allow for better and safer communities all around. In a future where drug policies are shaped by science and compassion rather than political hysteria, substance use treatment would be immediately available at all times providing individualized care as is done for other medical conditions. Our greatest weapon in dealing with addiction and drugs has never been the criminal justice system, but rather educational and public health institutions that prioritize the care of the ones struggling. Fifty years later, the question is no longer if we can afford to end this war. The real question now is: How can we not afford to? Now is the time to end America's longest war: the War on Drugs.

¹⁰ Murray, Krystina. 2021. "Drug Abuse Peaks After 50 Year War on Drugs." Addiction Center. <https://www.addictioncenter.com/news/2021/07/drug-use-peaks-after-50-year-war-on-drugs/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

Accommodation versus Inclusion: Reversing the Marginalization of the Black Voice in the K-12 American Public School System through Black Children's Literature

Michaela Flaherty

African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a dialect of English typically spoken in conversational settings by African Americans, has historically been regarded as improper in academic settings, which favor Standard English (typically spoken by white Americans). In 1979, linguistic advocates for AAVE took victory in the historic court case *Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children et al. v. Ann Arbor School District*, which sought to advocate for young speakers of AAVE in K-12 public schools. However, the Ann Arbor decision by no means healed the deep rift driven between African Americans and academia by the racism built into the American education system. The ruling ultimately fell short of inclusion, instead merely opting for an accommodationist approach: teaching students how to switch from AAVE to Standard English. Instead, young Black students should be allowed to engage with their education in AAVE. June Jordan, a renowned poet, professor, and essayist, was a leader of this progressive push, authoring several journal articles in support of AAVE's legitimacy, as well as children's books written in AAVE, such as *Dry Victories*. This work retells the history of violence against Black bodies through an engaging dialogue that: 1) uplifts Black voices and Black history, 2) subverts white-washed curriculum in K-12 public schools, and 3) bolsters the importance of family and community in combating white supremacy through both a historical and modern lens. Though the Ann Arbor decision was certainly a groundbreaking legal recognition of the validity of AAVE, a more radical solution regarding the inclusion of the Black voice in academia, such as the inclusion of AAVE children's literature, like *Dry Victories*, in classrooms as proposed by Jordan, appears to be a far more successful approach to reversing the marginalization of Black voices in academia, encouraging young Black learners to pursue educational opportunities.

The History of the Perceived Intellectual Legitimacy of AAVE

Though advocates for the inclusion of AAVE in K-12 public schools, like Jordan, have long since insisted upon the dialect's intellectual integrity, AAVE was not always regarded as a dialect by linguists, nonetheless as a dialect fit for academic settings. In the 1960s, Language Deficit Theory reigned supreme. This theory asserted that, "because children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds lacked verbal stimulation in their homes, they were not afforded the linguistic resources necessary to language success."¹² Even psychologists during this period agreed, claiming "the language of black children has none of the means necessary for logical

¹² Bowie, Robert L., and Carole L. Bond. "Influencing Future Teachers' Attitudes toward Black English: Are We Making a Difference?" *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 45, no. 2, Mar. 1994, pp. 112, doi:10.1177/0022487194045002005.

thought”.¹³ However, linguists soon changed their tune after studies performed in the 1970s, demonstrated “speakers of Black English use a legitimate, rule-governed, and fully developed dialect” and are “highly competent language users when speaking in their vernacular”.¹⁴

The Deceivingly “Progressive” Ann Arbor Decision

This linguistic evidence in support of the linguistic legitimacy of AAVE was especially integral to the decision made by United States District Judge Charles Joiner in the hallmark 1979 Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School Children et al. v. Ann Arbor School District case, otherwise known as the Ann Arbor decision. Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School was majority white, with only thirteen percent of its students identifying as Black.¹⁵ The parents of many of these Black students noticed their children were receiving significantly lower grades than other non-Black students, and “were given all the labels that go with educational failure: learning disabled, behavior problems, emotionally disturbed, and the like”.¹⁶ Frustrated, they took to Michigan Legal Services and eventually accused the school, school district, and Michigan Board of Education of failing “to take into account the cultural, social, and economic factors that would prevent them from making normal progress in the school” in federal court.¹⁷ According to testimonies, staff members, including speech therapists, were not equipped with the knowledge to accommodate for AAVE-speaking students, often employing racist measurements of verbal capabilities which strongly favored the success of Standard English-speaking students.¹⁸

To the great dismay of the defense, linguists who served as witnesses rallied against Language Deficit Theory. Lawyers on the case also incorporated political and economic issues into the plaintiff’s argument, asserting language is an essential part of the Black experience, which is largely dependent upon racist legal barriers and their ensuing economic implications.¹⁹ Thus, the disservice being done to Black students at Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School had far-reaching effects beyond impeding upon the quality of their education, including perpetuating systemic racism. Joiner ultimately sided with the plaintiff, demanding the Ann Arbor School Board “submit to him within thirty days a plan defining the exact steps to be taken to help the teachers (1) to identify children speaking Black English, and (2) to use that knowledge in teaching such students how to read standard English”.²⁰ He also addressed the underlying racism of the school district’s curriculum, stating “the language barrier that did exist was in the form of unconscious negative attitudes formed by teachers towards children who

¹³ Labov, William. “Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science: The Case of the Black English Trial in Ann Arbor.” *Language in Society*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1982, pp. 166. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4167310. Accessed 22 Mar. 2021.

¹⁴ Bowie, Robert L., and Carole L. Bond. “Influencing Future Teachers’ Attitudes toward Black English.” pp. 112.

¹⁵ Labov, William. “Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science.” pp. 167.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 168.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 168.

¹⁹ Labov, William. “Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science.” pp. 170-93.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 193.

spoke Black English, and the reactions of children to those attitudes,” which signified a legal recognition of the racism inherent to the American education system—a major step for Black communities.²¹

While the Ann Arbor decision was absolutely a step in the right direction—it legally recognized the need to support speakers of AAVE in classrooms—the court’s ruling was not quite as “progressive” as it might appear at first glance because the decision ultimately upheld the accommodation of AAVE-speaking students in classrooms, not their inclusion. In his testimony, one of the plaintiff’s primary witnesses, William Labov, professor of linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, advocated for the recognition of AAVE as a legitimate dialect in classrooms. However, he concludes:

My own view...is that operations on attitudes alone will not be enough to make a substantial difference to the reading of black children. What is needed is a set of additions to the day-to-day reading curriculum, in order to show the teachers how to deal with students in the classroom who have a different linguistic system than that assumed in the curriculum. No such materials exist as yet, but some linguists have been working at putting their knowledge to use in this way.²²

The phrase “to deal with” epitomizes the moderate nature of the Ann Arbor decision. Labov and other professional witnesses were concerned with teaching students how to “switch from Black English to standard English” as opposed to allowing them to engage in academia in AAVE—accommodation, not true inclusion.²³ While the Ann Arbor decision surely validated AAVE and brought to light the roadblocks in the education system facing Black students, it ultimately reinforced the dialect as a shameful “other.”

June Jordan and AAVE in Classrooms

One major solution to the failure of the case to fully address the educational discrimination at hand is the inclusion of literature written in AAVE in curriculum. June Jordan, an accomplished academic and activist, was a steadfast advocate of this approach. Jordan, a Jamaican American woman, often wrote in AAVE as early as the 1960s, when Language Deficit Theory was still accepted by many of her colleagues in higher education.²⁴ Jordan was especially critical of the supposed superiority of what she calls “white English,” which often perpetuates “the world of doublespeak-bullshit”.²⁵ “They all—all of them whitefolks ruling the country,” she declares, “...they all talk that talk, that ‘standard (white) English.’ It is the language of the powerful...If we succumb to [Standard English jargon]...then our mental health is seriously in

²¹ Ibid, pp. 193.

²² Ibid, pp. 194.

²³ Labov, William. “Objectivity and Commitment in Linguistic Science.” pp. 194.

²⁴ “June Jordan.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/june-jordan.

²⁵ Jordan, June. “White English / Black English: The Politics of Translation.” *We're On: A June Jordan Reader*, edited by Christoph Keller et al., Alice James Books, 2017, pp. 2.

peril”.²⁶ White English jargon is a means by which to obfuscate understanding and “to control and eliminate the powerless”²⁷.

In her 1988 essay “Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan,” she reflects on the psychological effects of the rejection of AAVE in academia. Many of her African American students, she notes, had “Black English...beaten out of them [by their parents]. I mean beaten,” and when she assigned members of her Black English course readings in AAVE, “roommates and family members ridiculed their studies, or remained incredulous, ‘You studying that shit? At school?’”²⁸. She emphasizes the estrangement of AAVE from academia is unfortunately engrained in members of the Black community. Jordan encouraged her students to write in AAVE as well, which culminated in a series of engaging midterm papers composed “with remarkable beauty, purpose, and enjoyment...Black English no longer limited [them] in any way”.²⁹ Thus, instead of “dealing with” students who speak AAVE by forcing Standard English down their throats (which is effectively admitting AAVE is not an intellectual form of communication), Jordan favors the inclusion of AAVE in classrooms. This not only allows for “the presence of life, voice, and clarity—that intensify to a distinctive Black value system,” but it also helps to reverse the psychological effects of an American education system that undermines the Black voice and space in academia.³⁰

Though much of Jordan’s career was spent teaching in college classrooms, she was passionate about uplifting Black youth and adamantly called for K-12 education reform regarding the inclusion of AAVE in curriculum as well. From a young age, African American children are forced to reckon with an education system that sidelines Black agency. Jordan examines this in her 1972 essay “White English / Black English: The Politics of Translation”:

“First grade equals first contact with the politics of white language, and its incalculably destructive consequences for Black lives...the white child is rewarded for mastery of his standard, white English...But the Black child is punished for mastery of his non-standard, Black English; for the ruling elite of America have decided that non-standard is sub-standard, and even dangerous...where is the elementary school course in Afro-American language, and where are the opportunities for the accredited exercise, and creative exploration, of Black language?”³¹

Jordan asserts this bias against the usage of AAVE in school stems from a racist power structure associated with language, much like the “doublespeak-bullshit” of politics. To right a long history of discriminatory wrongs in the American education system, teachers should engage in the “formal instruction and encouragement [of AAVE] within the regular curriculum. It will

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 4.

²⁸ Jordan, June. “Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1988, pp. 366-7. doi:10.17763/haer.58.3.d171833kp7v732j1.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 369-70.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 367.

³¹ Jordan, June. “White English / Black English: The Politics of Translation.” *We're On: A June Jordan Reader*, edited by Christoph Keller et al., Alice James Books, 2017, pp. 4-5.

mean the respectful approaching of Black children, in the language of black children”.³² This stands in radical opposition to the Ann Arbor ruling, which merely attempts to whitewash the language of young speakers of AAVE under the guise of “assimilation,” which is discriminatory to begin with.

June Jordan’s Dry Victories

Jordan did more than just call K-12 educators of Black children to action: she also uplifted Black youth by penning children’s literature in AAVE, such as *His Own Where*, the first young adult novel written entirely in AAVE, creating the very curriculum she encouraged school districts, like that of Ann Arbor, to adopt. *Dry Victories*, a strong example of her work with Black children’s literature, serves as an inclusive and revealing call to action for young Black readers.

Published in 1972, *Dry Victories* examines Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Era, retelling history through an engaging dialogue between two young characters (much like a two-man show), Kenny and Jerome, who speak in AAVE. Kenny and Jerome reckon with the repeated failure of the American government to uphold its claim of all men being created equal under the law, even after the Civil War, as well as of the American education system to cover the racist underbelly of the country’s history in classrooms. The vivid, thought-provoking, and unashamedly Black language is paired with drawings, photographs, and newspaper clips which bring the text to life.

For example, Jerome and Kenny discuss the tragic death of Charles Caldwell, Jerome’s distant relative. White Southern Democrats in 1875 Mississippi, Jerome tells Kenny, “see Black children going on to school. They see my grandpappy...all fine in his black tie and writing down words on lily white paper...They come up with what they call the Mississippi Plan...That plan kill my great-great-great-great Black relative. Shoot him through the back”.³³ Kenny, unperturbed, replies, “I can understand that, man. He was Black”.³⁴ This heartbreaking exchange is set next to an up-close photograph of Medgar Evers, a high-ranking member of the Mississippi NAACP who was murdered in 1963 by racists encouraged by the Mississippi Plan, and another up-close photograph of his wife and son crying at his funeral.³⁵

Jordan’s literary and artistic choices serve young Black readers in several ways. For one, Jordan’s obvious utilization of AAVE reassures the target readership their voice is intellectually valid as is because both Standard English and AAVE are “communication systems with regularities, exceptions, and values governing their word designs. Both are equally liable to poor, good, better, and creative use. In short, they are both accessible to critical criteria such as clarity,

³² Ibid, pp. 6.

³³ Jordan, June. *Dry Victories*. Avon Books, 1975, pp. 47.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 46.

force, message, tone, and imagination”.³⁶ Especially during the 1970s at the time of the publication of *Dry Victories*, it is unlikely many Black children were exposed to their own dialect in an academic setting. In writing in AAVE, Jordan builds a sense of camaraderie with young Black readers, truly engaging them with their learning. This not only creates a safe space for Black children in education, but also caters to their understanding of language—the primary demand of the Ann Arbor parents.

Furthermore, the actual content of *Dry Victories* brings to light an untold history of Black pain and resolution. It is unlikely the average American student is taught about the death of Medgar Evers in classrooms, or even the Mississippi Plan—a plot to violently overthrow the Republican Party in charge of the state government.³⁷ Kenny’s acceptance of Black death as a given only further reinforces the notion of Black suffering as a historical constant. Jordan undermines the white historical narrative typically presented in American classrooms, exposing the country’s unjust actions to the next generation of leaders. Examining Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Era through the lens of AAVE without the “filter” of the public school system effectively subverts the white power structure perpetuated not only by the exclusion of AAVE from academia, but also by the flawed, whitewashed history curriculum implemented in K-12 schools—killing two birds with one book.

Jordan’s *Dry Victories* also helps to develop a sense of community, realizing the urgency of this untold history. Kenny and Jerome speak in AAVE about the death of Jerome’s grandfather, and this dialogue is set next to images illustrating the death of Medgar Evers at the hands of white supremacists. This evokes a sense of familial loss because Jerome’s grandfather’s death sparked generational trauma which Jerome relives through his dialogue in AAVE, and pairing this reflection with images of a real-life family torn apart by racial violence only further actualizes the kinship racism assaults. The textual format—a casual, inviting conversation between friends—develops a warm and familiar tone evocative of neighborhood. Discussing the desecration of Black community in AAVE is powerful because young Black readers go home to their friends and families who identify as members of the Black community and speak in AAVE. This linguistic continuity between the text and the home lives of the children allows for a sense of urgency. Kenny and Jerome discuss the normalization of Black death, which remains a reality for readers of *Dry Victories* decades after the fictional death of Jerome’s grandfather and the real death of Medgar Evers. Evidently, Black home life has historically been violated by racism and continues to be violated by racism. The language of Jordan’s work emphasizes this reality by communicating unity and urgency through a continuum of AAVE.

³⁶ Jordan, June. “White English / Black English.” pp. 5.

³⁷ “The Mississippi Plan, Political Deviance!” *African American Registry*, NADA Global, 13 Nov. 2020, aaregistry.org/story/the-mississippi-plan-political-deviance/.

The Power of Black Children’s Literature Written in AAVE in K-12 Classrooms

If Black children grow up reading books solely written in Standard English in school, they will have it ingrained in them. The way in which they speak deems them unfit to pursue an education and achieve academic success due to the implication by the lack of AAVE literary representation the dialect is “other” in the world of academia. This is dangerous, and the work of figures like Jordan help to advocate for the inclusion of Black people in academia through inclusivity. *Dry Victories* successfully promotes Black academic excellence by infusing in young readers their right to belong in educational settings by exploring Black history, an often-overlooked topic, by evoking a sense of community and urgency through the lens of two Black children—Kenny and Jerome—who speak in AAVE.

Dry Victories thus serves as an excellent example of literature schools could include in their repertoires to promote a more inclusive atmosphere for African American students who speak AAVE. Had the Ann Arbor decision adopted a more “radical” approach to supporting speakers of AAVE in K-12 schools, like that of Jordan’s, when presented with the legal opportunity to do so, perhaps the long-term effects of the so-called “landmark” case would have been more significant. The plaintiff ought to have engaged with the needs of the young Black community by consulting with scholars and activists familiar with the role of AAVE in K-12 schools, like Jordan.

Taking action as a white ally requires listening—a lesson of which the majority-white Ann Arbor court room was in desperate need. As Jordan contends, words carry power, and in advocating for the Black voice, Black voices ought to be heard. “Solving” the problems facing the Black community from a white perspective often leads to well-intended mistakes, but mistakes nonetheless, such as the Ann Arbor decision. Cycles of oppression are only perpetuated by the continued sidelining of the Black voice by the white power narrative—something Jordan recognized and attempted to halt through her AAVE-inclusive education approach and children’s literature. True justice for AAVE-speaking children in the American education system will only be made possible if white allies listen to the Black community and truly accept AAVE as a dialect of equal intellect to Standard English.

The Ann Arbor decision made in 1979 recognized the validity of AAVE, legally settling a decades-long debate in the linguistics community. The outcome of this court case also sought to advocate for the support of AAVE-speaking children in K-12 American public schools. However, the court-mandated curriculum shifts fell extremely short of positive change. The plaintiff opted to teach the target students Standard English as opposed to encouraging them to engage with their education in AAVE, effectively belittling AAVE and deeming it unfit for academia. Advocates such as June Jordan, author of *Dry Victories*, a children’s book written in AAVE, asserted recognition of the Black voice in academia ought to come from the inclusion of literature written in AAVE into the curriculum and the allowance of communication (written or verbal) in AAVE. This is especially important in K-12 settings where impressionable Black children are often taught they do not belong. To uplift Black youth and encourage educational fulfillment, the American education system needs to adopt a more radical approach to support AAVE-speaking students in classrooms—fostering inclusion, not accommodation.

Hegemonic Legitimizing of Capital Accumulation

Mohammed Hussain

A defining period in economic history, the transition from feudalism to industrial capitalism that took place in Europe during the medieval era to the dawn of the 20th century was marked by a period of land enclosures that allowed landlords to rapidly accumulate capital and wealth. Relying on a largely Marxist reading of capitalism's lengthy development, this paper will first provide an intellectual background to the debate around primitive accumulation versus previous accumulation. I will then argue that as feudalism collapsed, various ideological tools were used by capitalists and political economists to legitimize the enclosure and accumulation of property, and usher in a new era of industrial capitalism.

While theorists have debated the subject of capitalist accumulation for the last century, the ideas of Adam Smith and Karl Marx remain at the forefront of the conversation. Smith's theory largely holds that the original capitalists accumulated capital and wealth peacefully. Through hard work, frugal habits, and the upkeep of moral values, certain individuals were able to gradually build up wealth while the rest of society was forced—deservedly—to become wage laborers. Such logic fits well into Smith's general economic thought that consisted “of an ideological exposition of the natural harmony among classes”.³⁸ The progression towards a capitalist system, according to Smith, was natural and based on the intrinsic differences between people rather than force or coercion. Marx, on the other hand, characterized this understanding of political economy as childish, arguing that accumulation primarily came about through the violence of capitalists in separating laborers from the means of production.³⁹ This expropriation of capital from the working class is an act Marx saw as the core of the process of accumulation, one which was therefore inherently brutal and unfair. In drawing the distinction between these two ideologies that are the foundations of the opposing views on accumulation, we have a helpful framework from which we can understand a Marxist angle on how both capitalists and traditional political economists have justified the consolidation of common land.

The dominant political and economic system of medieval Europe from the 10th to the 15th century, feudalism was characterized by the coexistence of different socioeconomic groups in society related to one another through their shared usage of large land plots. Individuals belonging to the nobility class known as lords lived in large estates, or manors, and presided over the area of land which was split up into sections and worked on by peasants who largely made up the working class.⁴⁰ Peasants had a number of servile obligations as the lords' local courts

³⁸ Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

³⁹ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁴⁰ Goheen, R. B. “Peasant Politics? Village Community and the Crown in Fifteenth-Century England.” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 1 (1991): 42. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2164017>.

governed the terms by which they were able to inhabit the land, and the taxes they were made to pay. However, they were largely independent and self-sustaining economically because their ownership of plots of land allowed them to produce their own means of survival.⁴¹ Indeed, this was so key to understanding the system that historians have argued “the distinguishing characteristic of the feudal relations of production arises from the fact that the economy is effectively under peasant control”.⁴² Peasants were able to produce their own sustenance largely because lords at the time were not looking to increase their economic productivity so much as they were interested in maintaining their political status. Rather than reinvest into labor and capital, most surplus profit the lords received from peasants was used for political projects and military development.⁴³ As noted by British land historian Robert Brenner, this profit was essentially “unproductive” and “most was squandered in military expenditure and conspicuous consumption”.⁴⁴ More importantly, the Crown of England and the public offices, which had power over lords through lawmaking and royal decrees, ensured peasant land rights were not infringed upon to the degree at which they would cease to be direct producers of their sustenance.⁴⁵ While peasants were undoubtedly under the politico-legal thumb of the lords in many ways and were made to pay rents and customary dues, it is important to reiterate that they ultimately held land sovereignty, sovereignty that would come under threat during the transition to capitalism.

The feudal system showed intensifying signs of decline throughout the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. This was initially due to the inherent political and contradictions of the system; feudal lords, holding political power, increased land-rents on peasants, who produced the economy, to a point where they were unable to sustain themselves and therefore reproduce the economy.⁴⁶ This unsustainable development culminated in a European wide financial crisis, mainly consisting of crop failures and population collapses, most notably the Great Famine of 1315–1317. Economic difficulties only multiplied in the coming decades, as the bubonic plague which struck in the mid 1300s decimated almost a third of Europe’s entire population (Howard 2020). With most deaths caused by famines and the plague occurring among their class, the peasantry was reduced in number considerably. Following the laws of demand and supply of labor, this meant “a decline not only in the level of rent, but equally in the lord’s ability to restrict

⁴¹ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁴² Katz, Claudio J. “Karl Marx on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993): 363–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00993533>.

⁴³ Katz, Claudio J. “Karl Marx on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993): 363–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00993533>.

⁴⁴ Brenner, Robert. “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe.” *The Brenner Debate*, 1985, 10–63. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511562358.003>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ Katz, Claudio J. “Karl Marx on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993): 363–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00993533>.

peasant mobility, and peasant freedom in general”.⁴⁷ In short, the peasants that remained had much greater economic autonomy and bargaining power. As a result, peasants rose up in action all over Europe, demanding improved political rights and greater economic security. Due to their long history of struggle against the nobility, they were well prepared in their fight and had the organization strategies and consciousness to win many of their demands. However, the peasantry’s success against the lords also “destroyed the rationale for concerted action, spelling the end of village solidarity”.⁴⁸ Without a clear common adversary, and the potential for new gains in wealth and power, the working class splintered. This loss of both solidarity and the ability to collectively organize would haunt the peasantry for centuries to come.

By the end of the 14th century, most peasants were free from servile obligations and by the 15th century serfdom had almost altogether disappeared.⁴⁹ As a result, certain peasants, those who had economic and political advantages, began to accumulate land and wealth through entering the market economy. These peasants, now among the higher classes, would come to agreements with landlords to reallocate land into private holdings; this was to begin the system of enclosures. Under this system, plots of land previously held as common land rented by peasants were appropriated and privatized by landlords.⁵⁰ For most peasants, however, though they were no longer bound politically to lords, they also could not look to the manor for protection and a guarantee of land.⁵¹ This was partly able to happen because the Crown lost a considerable amount of power in lawmaking and property rights. With the Protestant Reformation of the 1530’s, the property of the Catholic church was confiscated and increasing tensions between the monarchy and landlords culminated in “the political destruction of absolute monarchy and its feudal appendages in the Civil Wars of the 1540’s and the Whig revolution of 1688”.⁵² By the start of the 18th century, the peasantry had lost almost all claims to land through the state and common law which now granted capitalist landlords the right to expropriate land as theirs and theirs alone. Marx sums this up noting that “the systematic robbery of the Communal lands helped especially, next to the theft of the State domains, to swell those large farms”, referring to landlord plots of land.⁵³

⁴⁷ Brenner, Robert. “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe.” *The Brenner Debate*, 1985, 10–63. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511562358.003>.

⁴⁸ Katz, Claudio J. “Karl Marx on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism.” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993): 363–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00993533>.

⁴⁹ Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

⁵⁰ Brenner, Robert. “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe.” *The Brenner Debate*, 1985, 10–63. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511562358.003>.

⁵¹ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁵² Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

⁵³ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

The increase in capitalist land ownership, and the inability of peasants to sustain themselves on their own farms, created a plethora “beggars, robbers, and vagabonds [that] roamed the English countryside”⁵⁴. This began a criminalization of poverty; peasants without means to survive were brutalized and forced to work through legislation designed to create cheap labor. Marx noted that the final stage in the period of enclosures was the “clearing of estates”.⁵⁵ This referred to the forced removal of peasants from their homes and land, and he provides the clearing of the Gauls as an example. He describes that “from 1814 to 1820 these 15,000 inhabitants, about 3000 families, were systematically hunted and rooted out” with British soldiers enforcing the evictions.⁵⁶ Particularly brutal and symbolic of the process of enclosing was Marx’s observation that an elderly female peasant was burned alive after refusing to leave her hut.⁵⁷

While economic and political circumstances were at play in allowing landlords to enclose land and consolidate capital and wealth to a degree not seen under feudalism, equally important was the intellectual and hegemonic legitimizing that was done to justify the privatization. Throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, powerful capitalists alongside traditionally liberal political economists and agriculturalists argued the new capitalist economy was based on the natural progress of history and freedom, and both incentivized hard work and propelled the nation. These ideas were reproduced in the political, public, and cultural spheres. Under the enclosure system, working class people lost their land, but more importantly, the fundamental right to their land that for centuries had been guaranteed to them through state established, popularized, common law. Society no longer held that people deserved land and, in this way, the very concept of property was transformed.⁵⁸ Land was no longer seen as an end in itself and the right to direct revenue from the land, but rather a means to greater profit, alienated from the direct benefits it provided through farm revenue. Land also had much greater transferable rights than it had ever had before; this allowed for a much more rapid accumulation of capital.⁵⁹ No longer was property based on need, but on labor, and as labor was man’s own, so property was too. The most influential philosophers at the time including John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill all reinforced this idea holding that the “security of enjoyment of the fruits of one’s labour was the reason for property” and without property there would be little incentive to work causing a decline in economic productivity.⁶⁰ Interestingly, in the United States during the same time period, Thomas Jefferson endorsed these views stating that the right to private

⁵⁴ Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

⁵⁵ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Kamenka, Eugene, and C B Macpherson. “On the Changing Concept of Property.” Essay. In *Feudalism, Capitalism and beyond: H.E. Hallam A. O.* London: Arnold, 1975.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

property was “an indispensable safeguard of individual liberty”.⁶¹ Global capitalist ideological hegemony was indeed baring its teeth.

In all these arguments, there was an undeniable thread of individualism; Capitalism encouraged hard work, and rightly rewarded those who did so. As noted by Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter “some people rather than others became, and are still becoming every day, capitalists by superior intelligence and energy in working and saving”.⁶² Perhaps the root of the bootstraps myth prevalent in the United States today, this rationale was perpetuated to eradicate class consciousness and portray landlords as fair players in a grossly unfair economic contest. This argument concerning the personal basis of capitalism, widely ignores its social basis which is concerned with the capitalist ability to continually exponentially accumulate wealth rather than its initial accumulation, a point of much greater interest to Marx.⁶³

As mentioned, proponents of the emerging capitalist economy argued that enclosed farms were much more productive and used this message to emphasize that they were therefore beneficial to the nation as a whole. Economist Arthur Young stated that negative effects on the poor were a worthy sacrifice for national benefits, sentiment also expressed by agriculturalist Joseph Plymley. Plymley even more bluntly argued that a net gain, “and therefore the possibility of compensation, even if it was never actually paid, justified economic change”.⁶⁴ Adam Smith also commented that the property owned by the crown, which was often held as common held, was a “waste,” and was silent on the fact that following privatization, the land was allocated to only a few powerful individuals. Marx dissected these arguments in ridicule, noting that “the nation” to which political economists were ostensibly referring to, did not seem to include the majority of the citizens within it.⁶⁵ Further, arguments that suggested enclosures empowered the peasantry were “directly in the teeth of their own feelings and positive assertions”.⁶⁶ Equally insulting was the capitalist driven idea that land was enclosed through agreements that were made freely and non-coercively by peasants and landlords. This falsity ignored the extreme pressure and, in many cases, force, that was applied to peasants who were reluctant to give up their land.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

⁶³ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁶⁶ Humphries, Jane. “Enclosures, Common Rights, and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.” *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 1 (1990): 17–42. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700035701>.

⁶⁷ Lazonick, William. “Karl Marx and Enclosures in England.” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 6, no. 2 (1974): 1–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/048661347400600205>.

Though originally supportive of peasant land sovereignty, the state emerged as a primary vehicle for capitalist legitimizing. As noted by Marxist geographer David Harvey, the state, “commanded by capital, passes laws to expropriate populations and privatize access to the land”.⁶⁸ Citing increased national success and productivity, government released materials such as the 1844 Report from the Committee on Commons Inclosure affirmed and encouraged the act of enclosure.⁶⁹ Such a betrayal of the working class demonstrates the validity of Marx’s theory that the state is little more than a representative of the capitalist class, utilized to act in their social, political, and economic favor.⁷⁰ At its industrial peak, capitalism had managed to finally convince the people that the free market system was inevitable. The cultural and social hegemony underpinning their economic dominance, capitalists had shaped a working class, “which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of [capitalist] mode of production as self-evident laws of nature”.⁷¹

Our current economic system, capitalism pervades all parts of our daily lives to the degree that it can often seem as the natural, inevitable way of organizing our society. We can easily forget that the capitalist economy and the ideologies it is rooted in, have been cultivated throughout history by those who benefit the most from it. Tracing the system’s journey, specifically how it was brought about through the transformation of feudalism, helps us understand how its narratives and rationales were formed and legitimized.

⁶⁸ Harvey, David, Jordan T. Camp, and Chris Caruso. *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles*. London: Pluto Press, 2020.

⁶⁹ Humphries, Jane. “Enclosures, Common Rights, and Women: The Proletarianization of Families in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.” *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 1 (1990): 17–42. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022050700035701>.

⁷⁰ Marx, Karl, 1818-1883. *Das Kapital, a Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago :H. Regnery, 1959.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Mind over Matter?: How Disproportionate Resources for Mental Health Negatively Impacts College Students and Young Adults

Lauren Baskin

National Suicide Prevention Week is an annual week-long campaign in the United States, created to actively engage health professionals and individuals about the warning signs of suicide as well as how to actively approach mental health as a community. In college especially, mental health is at the forefront of issues that go unnoticed by many. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students, and it is imperative for college campuses to discuss and destigmatize mental health.⁷² In an environment of high stress and activity, it can be difficult for students to prioritize their own well-being, and to even comprehend their own mental health. Though the college years are considered “the best times of your life” by many, it is undeniable that college environments have become more intense, focusing on high social status and academic achievement. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, students were forced to adjust to new environments, learning styles, and isolation during quarantine. Students molded into a new way of life and missed out on a sense of normalcy in their everyday lives. Because of this, many are still feeling the aftermath of their own emotions surrounding the changes within school and social settings. Despite increasing awareness of mental health in many communities, mental health and the wellbeing of a college community is still a highly stigmatized issue among adolescents and young adults.

Mental health presents itself in a multitude of forms, and students of all identities struggle with and face issues that impact their own personal wellbeing. In college students especially, people are impacted in different ways. Mental health issues exist within different realms of a campus community, and students with marginalized identities are often neglected in regards to support. Alongside this, there is a prevalence of mental health disparities among student athletes, mostly due to a lack of personal time and an imbalance of priorities. This issue impacts everyone on college campuses, and it has gone unnoticed for too long. In this endeavor to improve mental health on campuses, it is imperative to factor in the diversity of both identities and experiences, and to provide resources for all individuals.

There are many new experiences presented in college, and some students are unable to find a happy balance between personal time and work. It is evident that college students may deny the wellbeing of their mental health or feel that there are no resources in regards to receiving help. Last year, the CDC reported that, “among 18-to-24-year-olds surveyed in 2020,

⁷² Health Staff, M. C. (2021). *College students and Depression*. Mayo Clinic Health System. Retrieved November 14, 2021, from <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/college-students-and-depression>.

about 25 percent had seriously considered suicide”.⁷³ With an increase in isolation, online school, and the struggles of the pandemic, many students are still processing their own mental health as the world inches back into normalcy. While the fight for mental health awareness has increased, there are still actions to take to provide the proper resources and funding to college students, and to destigmatize how mental health is approached on campus communities.

The coronavirus pandemic has emphasized the importance of mental health in all individuals, but especially in students and young adults. With the development of meditation apps, mental health being represented in the entertainment industry, and even celebrities opening up about their own mental health experiences, it is evident that mental health awareness has aimed to approach younger generations. However, many young adults do not have full access to these resources, let alone quality mental health services. There is still a major gap in resources—and this gap is especially prevalent in resources provided to college students.

Some of the primary causes of mental health issues among college students and young adults are stress over grades, finances, workloads, and even traumatic events such as sexual assault and racism.⁷⁴ The question is not whether mental health issues exist on college campuses, but rather how they are being addressed in regards to support and prevention. Especially in the wake of online school, there has been an increase in isolation and social anxiety among young adults as they resurface back into an in-person college experience.

In the United States, the quality of healthcare is often measured by its monetary value. This idea is present in mental health services, especially where quality of therapy is often gauged by the amount of money it costs. The deficit within mental health services is one of the main contributors to the stigma around mental health and the very corruption that exists within government funded mental health services. For many college students, private therapy may not be an option due to financial inability and time commitments, so many students may receive their own mental health services through the school in which they attend. In regards to many large schools such as the University of Connecticut, the gap between students and mental health counselors is quite large. “Limited manpower and strapped budgets at universities have led to long wait times and a lack of facetime in mental health services. Understanding how to connect with this young demographic and to successfully serve its counseling needs can be another challenge, especially in a world of 24-hour screens”.⁷⁵ In schools all over the country, students have been missing out on proper mental healthcare, and many licensed professionals are overworked with many an abundance of different patients. It is imperative to allocate funding for

⁷³ Svrluga, S., & Anderson, N. (2021, October 16). *College students struggle with mental health as pandemic drags on*. The Washington Post. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/10/14/college-suicide-mental-health-unc/>.

⁷⁴ Covington, T. (2021, September 22). *Mental health statistics in 2021 | the zebra*. thezebra.com. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.thezebra.com/resources/research/mental-health-statistics/>.

⁷⁵ Bradley University. “Closing the Gap between Student Needs and Available Resources.” *Bradley University Online*, 8 Feb. 2021, <https://onlinedegrees.bradley.edu/blog/closing-the-gap-between-student-needs-and-available-resources/>.

more mental health services on campuses. The only way to close this gap is to focus on ways to support and appreciate students' personal struggles. While there have been more improvements over time, there is still a long way to go in order to make mental wellness accessible to all college students, no matter who they are and where they come from.

The negative history of mental health response in America can be traced back to many years of denial and misdiagnosing of individuals suffering mental health issues. The effects of a hyper-capitalist society are prevalent when the wellbeing of individuals is determined by socioeconomic and cultural factors. Many people are raised to be strong and determined, and the competitive nature of both the workforce and the education system influence the idea that being weak or vulnerable is not an option. The "American Dream" implies that success and opportunity equate happiness, but it fails to address that there is often a price to this success. The transactional relationship between many employees and their employers complicates the way mental health is approached in the workforce. Many companies don't feel like they need to provide mental health services over the many other issues they must address within their organization. In colleges and universities especially, the prioritization of mental health becomes overshadowed by the many other issues regarding funding and the overall reputation of the institution. Based on studies conducted by the Imagine America Foundation, "the balance of trying to protect the mental wellness of students amid the other challenges of running a college or university with increasingly limited resources and funding is tricky, to put it mildly"⁷⁶. For many individuals, it is hard to comprehend the necessity of funding for mental health services, and intense gridlock often appears when the government attempts to tackle these issues. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and the ever-present police brutality within marginalized communities, the topic of reallocating funds for mental health services in the police force has driven up intense debate. The phrase "Defund the Police" has been misused over the course of the past two years, and it shines truth on the fact that many people in our society are unaware of the disproportionate treatment of marginalized groups by police, especially individuals who struggle with mental health. Individuals with untreated severe mental illness are involved in at least 1 in 4 and as many as half of all fatal police shootings⁷⁷. In addition, police brutality directed towards people of color brings undeniable grief and uncertainty, and there has not been any effective response in regards to preventing these injustices from taking place. Now more than ever, it is imperative to enforce mental health services and resources within communities, because law enforcement has the ability and means to provide solutions that prioritize the wellbeing of their communities. If funds were reallocated for these services, more people would be properly protected, and situations would not need to escalate to fatality.

⁷⁶ America, I., & America, I. (2020, March 2). *The deteriorating mental health of U.S. college students: Part I*. Imagine America Foundation. Retrieved November 14, 2021, from <https://www.imagine-america.org/deteriorating-mental-health-u-s-college-students-part/>.

⁷⁷ Carroll, H. (2021). *People with untreated mental illness 16 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement*. Treatment Advocacy Center. Retrieved November 14, 2021, from <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/key-issues/criminalization-of-mental-illness/2976-people-with-untreated-mental-illness-16-times-more-likely-to-be-killed-by-law-enforcement->.

UConn is home to some of the best Division I sports teams in the country, and these athletic programs generate millions of dollars in revenue for the school every year. Being an elite college athlete comes with undeniable challenges. Student-athletes are consumed by practices, workouts, games and traveling, and on top of that, a normal academic workload. In a 2016 study conducted by Drexel University and Kean University, nearly one out of every four Division I student-athletes show signs of “clinically relevant” symptoms of depression.⁷⁸ These student-athletes are consumed by their sport, and for many, school is possible because of their athletic ability. Student-athletes provide many things for schools yet are often disregarded in the conversation of mental health and wellness. As of 2021, 25% of college athletes struggle with mental illness, and 10-15% of all athletes experience psychological issues severe enough to warrant counseling.⁷⁹ It is vital for schools to allocate resources and funding to their student athletes, and to provide opportunities for breaks and free time.

One of the most troubling aspects of the pandemic was the disproportionate rate of mental health among people of color and marginalized groups. Racism, police brutality, and hate towards LGBTQIA+ individuals is at an all-time high. This is primarily due to the influx of social media exposure. For college students with these identities, it can be difficult to adjust to the toll it takes on personal mental health. While there has been an increasing desire for diversity on college campuses, there is still a long way to go to bring awareness on a larger scale. In regards to therapy, there needs to be an increase in identity diversity to further accommodate these issues. Therapy is an incredibly sacred practice, and its effectiveness can vary if the individual receiving this care is not exposed to someone who can relate to their own experiences in some way. It is the role of a school to provide students with many options for therapy because mental health is not a one size fits all issue. While the funding needed to enforce more mental health resources is costly, the consequences of poor student mental health can be detrimental to a community.

Is There A Solution?

While there are many factors involved with mental health awareness on a college campus, there are many ways in which any community can improve on its own support and access to resources. For students of all ages, there can be many solutions that ultimately increase student productivity, especially in the transition from online learning to in-person instruction. A survey administered in Fall of 2020 by the Healthy Minds Network revealed that 83% of students said their mental health had negatively impacted their academic performance.⁸⁰ A shift

⁷⁸ Covington, T. (2021, September 22). *Mental health statistics in 2021 | the zebra*. thezebra.com. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.thezebra.com/resources/research/mental-health-statistics/>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ George, Student, B., Student, B. U., Maio, H. A., Alessandra K of BU Parents United, Student, D., Faculty, C., Parent, B. U. U., alani, S., Parent, Abigail, Guly, L. M. K., Sandy, & Schwartzkopff, D. L. (2021, February 17).

in academic expectations can further encourage students to prioritize their own mental well-being. Sarah Lipson, a mental health researcher at Boston University, states that “students of color and low-income students are more likely to be grieving the loss of a loved one due to COVID,” and that they are also “more likely to be facing financial stress.” These factors can negatively impact mental health and academic performance in “profound ways.”⁸¹ Universities can start shifting student expectations by directly funding mental health services, and by reallocating resources beyond this support— such as analyzing student performance and diversifying campus to make the community a safer place.

The fight to end suicide and the stigma surrounding mental health issues in teens and young adults is still a pressing issue in our society. National Suicide Prevention week is a reminder to many the importance of speaking up, engaging in tough conversation, and being a friend to those who may need it. By providing encouragement for mental health resources in schools and universities, students may be reminded that their worth is not defined by their academic achievements, social status, or athletic abilities, and that they are valued in more ways than one. While National Suicide Prevention week happens only once a year, it is a reminder that mental health should be prioritized and accepted, and that everybody should have the resources to positively influence their own wellbeing.

“Emotional pain is not something that should be hidden away and never spoken about. There is truth in your pain, there is growth in your pain, but only if it’s first brought out into the open.”
— Steven Aitchiso

Depression, anxiety, loneliness are peaking in college students. Boston University. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2021/depression-anxiety-loneliness-are-peaking-in-college-students/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Things Are Not Always As They Seem: Eyewitness Misidentification And Wrongful Convictions.

Adam Benitez

The last few years have been tumultuous for the American criminal justice system. Calls for systemic upheaval and reform have suddenly travelled from the fringe of discourse straight to the mainstream. While these discussions tend to become as polarized as any topic in modern American politics, one aspect remains near-universally reviled: The harsh reality of wrongful convictions. Documented since at least the early 1800's, wrongful convictions have been an unbleachable stain that has consistently discredited the justice system and its most ardent supporters.⁸² With such a long and storied history, an abundance of research has been published analyzing the varied causes of wrongful convictions. Sifting through these disparate studies, one will undoubtedly notice an unnerving constant: The prevalence of eyewitness misidentifications.⁸³ Despite incredible advancements in forensic technology, police agencies often rely on eyewitnesses' fallible memory to conduct investigations and construct cases against suspects. Through this mix of procedural error and psychological shortcomings, hundreds of innocent people have been wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit.⁸⁴

Misidentifications occur when an eyewitness to a crime wrongfully identifies a suspect as being the perpetrator of the crime they witnessed, when in fact, that suspect is innocent. Misidentifications most often occur during the lineup phase of the investigative process. During a lineup, police administrators gather five to six people in a room (Or photographs of those people) and ask eyewitnesses to identify the perpetrator among them. Of the five to six people present, one is the suspect, the others are known as "fillers". The fillers are chosen specifically for their resemblance to the suspect, usually in regards to race, age, height, and build.⁸⁵ In most cases, the police administrator conducting the lineup knows who the suspect is.⁸⁶ While seemingly straightforward, this process is often prone to error, not only in its procedure, but also from the limitations of Human memory.

The most basic error of the administrator's is an improper explanation of the lineup to a witness. For the process to be valid and permissible evidence, administrators need to make it clear that the suspect may or may not be present within the lineup, and that the witness is not

⁸² "The Daley & Halligan Bicentennial Commemoration" *Historic Northampton Museum & Education Center*, 20 Nov. 2005 <http://www.historic-northampton.org/daleyandhalligan/daleyandhalligan.html>

⁸³ "Eyewitness Identification Reform" *The Innocence Project*
<https://innocenceproject.org/eyewitness-identification-reform/>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Wells, Gary, et. al. "Eyewitness Identification Procedures: Recommendations for Lineups and Photospreads." *Law and Human Behavior*, vol. 22, no. 6, 1998

⁸⁶ Wells, Gary et. al, "Eyewitness Evidence: Improving Its Probative Value." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, vol. 7, no. 2, Nov, 2006, pg 63

obligated to choose one of the people present in the lineup.⁸⁷ If the administrator does not make this information clear to the witness, the witness may assume that the perpetrator is present in the lineup, and must make a conclusion lest the perpetrator be set free. Clear communication, such as the aforementioned phrase, “may or may not be,” has been shown to reduce the instances of misidentification.⁸⁸

Another pitfall of investigative procedure occurs during non-“blind” lineups (Lineups where the administrator knows who the suspect is). During these types of lineups, research has shown that administrators have a perpetuance to unintentionally make cues or gestures that influence witnesses to identify the suspect as the perpetrator.⁸⁹ By giving off these unintentional cues, an eyewitness is less likely to make their own independent conclusion as to who the perpetrator is.

Moreover, the selection of fillers can greatly affect the witness’s conclusion. In standard practice, fillers are chosen in accordance with the general description of the suspect. By presenting fillers who look similar to the suspect, the witness is less likely to identify the perpetrator simply because they stand out. However, when standard practice falters, the opposite effect occurs and leads to misidentification.⁹⁰ A similar effect can be seen with the very nature of lineups themselves. As mentioned above, lineups are either presented in-person (known as simultaneous) or using photographs (known as sequential). Of the two methods, simultaneous is more often used by investigators.⁹¹ However, a fault of this method occurs when the witness, presented with five or six people of similar appearance, determines the perpetrator not based on a positive identification, but on who present looks the most similar to their memory, leading to misidentifications.⁹²

While errors of the administrator’s can often be blamed for misidentification, there are also a number of innate psychological factors that tend to make eyewitness accounts less than reliable. For instance, Human memory itself is imperfect. Research has shown that memories, especially those of a high-stress nature, decline in clarity over time.⁹³ As memories begin to fade and gaps form between them, the mind still attempts to retrieve the information. However, without the raw memory intact, the mind will bridge gaps using other, sometimes unrelated

⁸⁷ “Eyewitness Misidentification” *Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy*

https://dpa.ky.gov/who_we_are/KIP/wrongfulconvictioncauses/Pages/Eyewitness-Misidentification.aspx

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Mecklenburg, Sheri. “Report to the Legislature of the State of Illinois: The Illinois Pilot Program on Sequential Double-Blind Identification Procedures”, submitted March 17, 2006.

⁹⁰ Wells, Gary, et. al. “Eyewitness Identification Procedures: Recommendations for Lineups and Photospreads.” *Law and Human Behavior*, vol. 22, no. 6, 1998

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² “Eyewitness Misidentification” *Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy*

https://dpa.ky.gov/who_we_are/KIP/wrongfulconvictioncauses/Pages/Eyewitness-Misidentification.aspx

⁹³ Peavy, Guerry, et. al. “Effects of Chronic Stress on Memory Decline in Cognitively Normal and Mildly Impaired Older Adults.” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 166, no. 12, Dec. 2009

information. Referred to as “unconscious transference,” this phenomenon leads to the construction of near-false memories, where details such as the facial features and skin tone of a suspect can be distorted from reality.⁹⁴ In regards to race specifically, a more succinct phenomenon known as the “cross-race effect” has been observed. Research has shown that witnesses are less likely to accurately identify a suspect of another race.⁹⁵ This harsh reality regrettably shines through the statistical data, as according to the non-profit The Innocence Project, of those exonerated through DNA evidence, 70% were minorities.⁹⁶

In a similar vein, a cross-gender bias exists, wherein males are less likely to accurately identify females, and females are less likely to accurately identify males.⁹⁷ Another bizarre facet of Human memory comes from the phenomenon wherein children and the elderly are less likely to positively identify a suspect than middle-aged or young adults.⁹⁸ Regardless, other factors compound to weaken the validity of eyewitness’s memories. For example, the presence of a weapon has been shown to reduce the accuracy of identification, as witnesses tend to spend more time focusing on the weapon and less on the perpetrator.⁹⁹ Similarly, the presence of others, whether that be multiple witnesses or perpetrators, tends to decrease the likelihood of identifying the perpetrator.¹⁰⁰

With all of these misidentification problems highlighted, the question must be asked, just how prevalent are wrongful convictions? The Innocence Project estimates that 2-5% of inmates currently serving prison sentences are innocent, and with the the Bureau of Justice Statistics most recent estimate of 1,430,800 U.S. prisoners, it is likely that 28,616 inmates are currently serving sentences for crimes which they did not commit.¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² Admittedly, however, the data is not perfectly poignant, as not every instance of wrongful conviction can be traced back to misidentification, with issues of false confessions, false forensics, and police misconduct being regrettable realities. As flawed as the system seemingly is then, how can it be fixed? Luckily for investigators, the answer is fairly simple. Instead of skirting past the clear definition and communication of instructions, investigators need to take the time to ensure that the witness is aware of their role in the process and the lack of obligations they are beholden to. Instead of conducting non-”blind” lineups, conduct double-blind lineups, where the administrator is

⁹⁴ Ross, David, et. al. “Unconscious transference and mistaken identity: When a witness misidentifies a familiar but innocent person.” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol, 79. no. 6, Dec. 1994

⁹⁵ Hugenberg, Kurt. “Why we are unable to distinguish faces of other races (and sometimes our own).” *Association for Psychological Sciences*, 1 Aug 2007

⁹⁶ Grimsley, Edwin. “What wrongful Convictions Teach Us About Racial Inequality.” *The Innocence Project*, 26 Sep. 2012, <https://innocenceproject.org/what-wrongful-convictions-teach-us-about-racial-inequality/>

⁹⁷ “Eyewitness Misidentification” *Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy* https://dpa.ky.gov/who_we_are/KIP/wrongfulconvictioncauses/Pages/Eyewitness-Misidentification.aspx

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ “Wrongful Convictions in the United States.” *Orient Law Offices* <https://www.orentcrimallaw.com/blog/wrongful-convictions-infographic/>

¹⁰² “Prisoners in 2019.” *U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics*, Oct 2020, https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p19_sum.pdf

unaware of who the suspect is. Instead of conducting simultaneous lineups, conduct sequential lineups using photographs.

While rates of misidentification certainly could drop if these rather simple measures are put in place, wrongful convictions will continue to plague society nonetheless. As former Supreme Court Justice William Brennan declared, there is "nothing more convincing than a live human being who takes the stand, points a finger at the defendant, and says 'That's the one!'"¹⁰³ While certainly dramatic and different from the process of a lineup, Justice Brennan's words illustrate an important point about the power of identification. Ask yourself this, if a victim of a crime believes that they have identified the person who has raped, kidnapped, or tortured them, what right do we as a society have to doubt them? Legally, investigators and jurors have every right to, but what about morally? It seems obvious the answer to that question is no, as many times it is easier on the conscience and on the taxpayer to send an innocent person to prison, than to leave a victim without justice. Too often, a lineup is simply a tool used by investigators to cut corners. It allows them to seal convictions on the strength of a memory, not on a thorough investigation. Yet, investigators cannot be solely blamed, as they are only enabled by society's over-willingness to accept firsthand testimony as truth. This is not to say that witness's accounts should be thrown out altogether. However, they should never form the basis of a conviction alone, as in many cases, the possibility of a false conviction outweighs the relief given to a traumatized witness. While that witness is free to join support groups and find comfort in the compassion of others, the falsely convicted are forever labelled as monsters by society, and whether in prison or as free people, will remain outcasts locked away by others' misplaced fear.

¹⁰³ *Watkins v. Sowders*, 449 U.S. 341 (1981)

The Senator and the Citizen: Comparing the Agendas of the U.S. Senate and Populace

Christian Chlebowski

Introduction

Public perception of the United States House of Representatives and the Senate has been almost unilaterally pessimistic for much of the past two decades.¹⁰⁴ While there are many potential reasons for this heavy disapproval of Congress, earlier research indicates it is caused most directly by the legislative actions of Congress and public trust in the institution, which suggests that constituents are, at least unconsciously, aware of actions undertaken by Congress and are able to express their approval (or lack thereof) regarding legislation enacted and the institution as a whole.¹⁰⁵

The purpose of this research is to investigate this relationship between senator and citizen on key votes on legislation. The overall question this study aims to answer, accordingly, is: how closely do the key votes of United States senators align with the beliefs and attitudes of constituents on major legislation (as identified by the organizers of the Cooperative Election Study) during the 111th through 116th Congresses?

Prior Studies

The first researchers to quantitatively study responsiveness were Miller and Stokes, who defined responsiveness as the degree of correlation between the preferences of a constituent with the policy actions of their legislator; the more similar the two indicators are, the more responsive the congressperson is to their constituents.¹⁰⁶ Robert Erickson used this definition in 1990 when he attempted to quantify the perceptual agreement between senators and constituents (as opposed to Miller and Stokes, who did the same in the House of Representatives) using a two-pronged approach. His first step was to directly compare senators' roll call ideological scores (as quantified by the American Conservative Union) with their ideological reputation among

¹⁰⁴ Gallup. "Congress and the Public." Gallup.com. Gallup, January 29, 2019. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1600/congress-public.aspx>.

¹⁰⁵ Durr, Robert H., John B. Gilmour, and Christina Wolbrecht. "Explaining Congressional Approval." *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 1 (1997): 175-207. doi:10.2307/2111713; Chanley, Virginia A., Thomas J. Rudolph, and Wendy M. Rahn. "The Origins and Consequences of Public Trust in Government: A Time Series Analysis." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2000): 239-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3078718>; De Boef, Suzanna and Luke Keele. "Taking Time Seriously." *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (2008): 184-200. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25193805>; Algara, Carlos. "The Collective 'Congress' on the Ballot? A Voter and Aggregate-Level Analysis of Collective Responsibility in Congressional Elections." *Congress and the Presidency* (2021). doi:10.1080/07343469.2020.1814903.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, Warren E., and Donald E. Stokes. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 1 (1963): 45-56. doi:10.2307/1952717.

constituents (as measured by the National Election Study). Erickson then compared the ideological reputations of senators with the ideological preferences of state constituencies.¹⁰⁷

Subsequent works, including that of Hayes, built on this finding by analyzing data from the National Annenberg Election Study.¹⁰⁸ Hayes used the data to correlate roll call votes with economic subconstituencies to examine responsiveness through the lens of income and wealth, and he ultimately found that responsiveness differs according to economic status, with the most responsiveness occurring between senators and upper-income class constituents, followed by the middle class, and then by the lower-income class (which ultimately saw no detectable responsiveness).¹⁰⁹

This finding raises the issue of unequal responsiveness, which has also been heavily studied. For example, Wright and Berkman and Warshaw found that senators “are more attentive to their constituents’ views later in the electoral cycle...Senators move toward the electoral middle when elections approach”^{110 111 112}. Warshaw also found, however, that senators were still responsive to public opinion, as did Stratmann and Ahuja, who found that senators two years out from re-election campaigns were more responsive than senators four years away.^{113 114 115} These findings indicate that while senators may vote against the wishes of their constituents occasionally, thoughts of re-election are never completely absent from the mind (theoretically leading to alignment between votes and constituent opinions).

Expectations

Multiple hypotheses enable the testing of this research question on both a broad and a more focused, specific level. First, I test whether (individual) senators are responsive to their constituents on key votes on major legislation from the 111th through 116th Congresses. The Responsiveness Hypothesis strives to answer the research question as proposed by using Cooperative Election Study public opinion polling and Senate roll call voting over this time frame to determine if such a relationship exists. (A discussion of this data and its advantages can

¹⁰⁷ Erickson, Robert S. “Roll Calls, Reputations, and Representation in the U.S. Senate.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1990): 623-642. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/439900>.

¹⁰⁸ Hayes, Thomas J. “Responsiveness in an Era of Inequality: The Case of the U.S. Senate.” *Political Research Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (September 2013): 585-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912459567>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Wright Jr., Gerald C., & Michael B. Berkman. “Candidates and Policy in United States Senate Elections.” *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 2 (1986): 567-588. doi:10.2307/1958274.

¹¹¹ Warshaw, Christopher. “Responsiveness and Election Proximity in the United States Senate.” May 2016. http://chriswarshaw.com/papers/senate_representation_160524.pdf

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Stratmann, Thomas. “Congressional Voting over Legislative Careers: Shifting Positions and Changing Constraints.” *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000): 665-676. doi:10.2307/2585838.

¹¹⁴ Ahuja, Sunil. “Electoral Status and Representation in the United States Senate: Does Temporal Proximity to Election Matter?” *American Politics Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1994): 104-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X9402200107>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid

be found in the “Data Sources” section below.) Due to the impacts of increased polarization (i.e. closer elections in more ideologically heterogeneous states leading to senators voting as a majority of constituents want, so as to earn more votes at re-election) as the guiding theory behind this research, this hypothesis predicts a high correlation between senator and constituent preferences.

My second expectation is that senators are more responsive to constituents depending on the topic of the vote. Due to the high dependence of constituents on social and economic (domestic) policies, I expect high responsiveness on votes concerning these bills. Because the average constituent knows very little about foreign policy, especially due to the infrequency with which it appears to directly impact constituent lives as opposed to domestic policy, I expect less responsiveness on foreign policy and national security votes.¹¹⁶ Additionally, because cabinet positions are inherently partisan appointments (given they are appointed by the president to achieve his or her political agenda) and because appointments to Supreme Court positions are political objectives of both parties, I expect senators’ votes on executive nominations to follow a party line as opposed to constituent attitudes.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the Issue Relevance Hypothesis predicts higher responsiveness on social and economic votes than on executive nomination and foreign policy/national security votes.

Data Sources

The problem that has accompanied, and indeed inhibited, historical attempts to measure and test congressional responsiveness is the difficulty inherent in identifying the attitudes of constituents. In a 2010 study, Ansolabehere and Jones demonstrated that constituents harbor beliefs regarding public policy and proposed legislation, leaving the only gap between theory and practice (with regard to conducting quantitative research) being a method of gathering copious amounts of data and information. Since 2006, however, the Cooperative Election Study (CES) has filled this gap by annually surveying thousands of constituents from all fifty states and the District of Columbia to identify demographic information, political affiliation, and attitudes regarding politicians and legislation.¹¹⁸ The resulting CES datasets identify political demographics, which are key to the analyses of the two hypotheses examined in this project.

The CES has many benefits in addition to providing information regarding citizen attitudes towards legislation, specifically in the size of the datasets, as well as the ability to

¹¹⁶ “U.S. Adults’ Knowledge About the World.” The National Geographic Society, Gallup, and the Council on Foreign Relations, December 2019.

https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/NatGeo_CFR_US%20Knoweldge.pdf; Bennett, Stephen Earl, Richard S. Flickenger, John R. Baker, Staci L. Rhine, and Linda L. M. Bennett. “Citizens’ Knowledge of Foreign Affairs.” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 1, no. 2 (March 1996): 10-29.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X96001002003>; Almond, Gabriel A. 1960. *The American People and Foreign Policy*. Revised Edition. New York: Praeger.

¹¹⁷ Republican National Committee, 2020. https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/docs/Resolution_Platform_2020.pdf; Democratic National Committee, 2020. <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/party-platform/>.

¹¹⁸ Cooperative Election Study. <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/>.

stratify the data. Each year from 2009 to 2020, the CES interviewed an average of 37,711 participants. These large sample sizes are important because they reduce the potential impact of measurement error and can therefore provide a much better picture of the ideological landscape of the states. Further, the organizers of the CES enabled the post-stratification of data with “common weights,” which attempt to better match the respondents of a given year’s survey to the overall composition of a given state or territory. It is also important to note that the legislation considered to be “key votes” by this study are selected by the organizers of each year’s CES study, leading to a total of 33 bills utilized in this project over the time period. The average number of pieces of “original” legislation—considered Senate bills included in CES surveys for the first time—analyzed in each year of this study’s timeframe (excluding 2011 and 2019) is 3.3 bills.

One limitation of using CES data is that there were two years of the survey’s administration, 2011 and 2019, in which no questions were asked regarding bills considered in that year’s Congressional session. Data from 2011 and 2019 are therefore excluded from this study, leading to an analytic timeframe of 2009-20 with data from 2009-10, 2012-18, and 2020. Overall, this limitation is dwarfed by the positives of using CES data—namely its large sample size, its stratification, and its surveying of opinions towards important legislation.

To prepare a more complete dataset against which the aforementioned hypotheses can be tested, I connect the CES data with data from a few other sources. First, the Senate’s Senators of the United States, 1789-Present and Congress’ Biographical Directory of the United States Congress are used to identify individual senators’ party affiliation, first term, and years to re-election. Further, congress.gov’s extensive database will be used firstly to pair each CES roll call question with an actual piece of legislation introduced in Congress, and secondly to identify the votes of senators on said legislation. Information released by the United States Census provides demographic information about the residents in each state during the time period studied. I included five such demographic results for each state: percentage African American, percentage female, percentage possessing a bachelor’s degree or greater (of ages 24 and older), percentage aged 65 or older, and percentage in poverty. Due to similarities in each of these demographic populations in each state every year of this time period, I used the 2010 demographic data for study years 2009-14, and the 2015 demographic data for study years 2015-20.

Methodology

To test the Responsiveness Hypothesis and Issue Relevance Hypothesis, I used a unique combination of the capabilities of Stata and Excel. I was able to identify the average level of support for each key vote in each state using the CES datasets in the Stata interface, which were then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet containing information concerning each individual senator. This yielded a spreadsheet for each year, 2009-20, with a) demographic information about each senator (i.e., name, state represented, years to re-election), b) each senator’s votes on identified key legislation, c) demographic information regarding the state constituency, and d)

the average level of constituent support for key votes. I was then able to find both each senator's and each state constituency's average level of support of the key legislation for each year.

To test the second hypothesis, the Issue Relevance Hypothesis, I used further classifications of the data to divide CES key votes into the four Congressional Research Service categories of: a) social policy, b) economic policy, c) foreign policy and national security, and d) executive nominations. It is important to note that there were five instances in which the assigned policy area did not correlate with my designation. Those are the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010, the two CRS-classified "Transportation and Public Works Bills," and the two 2020 articles of impeachment against President Trump.

The total of 33 key votes from 2009-2020 were divided into relatively equally-sized groups of 12 (social policy), seven (economic policy), seven (foreign policy and national security), and seven (executive nominations).

With the bills split up into these four categories, and with senator votes identified for every bill, I was then able to find the average number of times each senator voted in favor of bills in each category in each given year (yielding a social policy, economic policy, foreign policy/national security, and executive nomination support average). Similarly, I was able to find the average constituent levels of support for each of the four categories of legislation using the imported CES average support numbers. I then imported these datasets into Stata, where I performed regression analyses to answer the hypotheses discussed in the "Expectations" section above.

Results

In this study, as in many of the studies discussed above, I defined responsiveness as the connection between the behavior of senators and the opinions of their constituencies. To test the first two hypotheses outlined in the "Expectations" section above, I generated a regression model using senator votes on key legislation, constituent attitudes towards key legislation, and demographic and partisan information regarding senators and their constituents.

First, to test the Responsiveness Hypothesis, I looked at the bivariate regression between senator vote (the dependent variable) and constituent attitudes (as measured by the 2009-20 CES). I found a positive, strong, and statistically significant relationship over much of this timeframe. This positive and strong correlation indicates that the more a state population supports a bill, the more likely a senator is to vote in favor of that legislation. However, a bivariate model does not faithfully depict responsiveness; without the inclusion of a series of control variables, the results above prove misleading.

To account for the impacts of different demographic and identity information, I included eight control variables in my "complete" (multivariate) model of responsiveness. Once these controls were added into the model, the statistically significant relationship between senator vote and constituent, which was seemingly obvious in the bivariate model, disappeared. Instead, a statistically significant relationship between senator vote and party emerged, with infrequent

relationships to the other control variables. Only 2010 retained a statistically significant relationship between senator vote and constituent attitudes. These results indicate minimal support for the Responsiveness Hypothesis.

The Issue Relevance Hypothesis similarly found minimal support. As with the results of the first hypothesis, the bivariate data indicated strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships between constituent support and senator vote, but these disappeared once the controls were incorporated. This second hypothesis predicted higher correlations between senator vote and constituent opinion on social and economic policies and lower correlations on foreign policy/national security and executive nominations, but the results indicated that there was not a statistically significant relationship in any year there was a key vote on social policy, economic policy, or foreign policy/national security. Interestingly, two years exhibited a statistically significant relationship between senator vote and constituency opinion on executive nominations: 2010 and 2020. In both of these years, however, there was also a statistically significant relationship between senator vote and senator party. Because there is no data in support of the Issue Relevance Hypothesis, this hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the statistical analysis provides minimal evidence in favor of the Responsiveness Hypothesis and no evidence in support of the Issue Relevance Hypothesis.

Discussion

I find minimal evidence of senator-constituent responsiveness in any of the models created to test the posited hypotheses. The data simply do not seem to support any indication that senators were responsive to constituents on key bills during this time period. Instead, they seem to indicate that senators were more responsive to their party and partisan alignments. A likely reason, perhaps the most likely reason, for this has to do with the increased politicization and polarization of Washington, D.C., especially surrounding these key legislative acts. A majority of the bills considered by this project heavily aligned with party platform, and therefore it is highly possible that party priority took precedence over constituent priority.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

While these findings raise the question of whether responsiveness to constituents has deteriorated since historical analyses such as those of Arnold and Ansolabehere and Jones, this study also generates countless opportunities for future research studies to investigate responsiveness not only through a quantitative, but also a qualitative lens.^{120 121} It is clear that

¹¹⁹ Republican National Committee, 2020. https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/docs/Resolution_Platform_2020.pdf; Democratic National Committee, 2020. <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/party-platform/>.

¹²⁰ Arnold, Douglas R. "Can Inattentive Citizens Control Their Elected Representatives?" In *Congress Reconsidered*, 5th ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 1993: 401-416.

¹²¹ Ansolabehere, S. and Jones, P.E. "Constituents' Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (June 2010): 583-597. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00448.x>.

more studies must be conducted to truly understand the complicated and ever-changing nature of the relationship between a congressperson and those they are elected to serve.

In light of this research and much debate in the political arena over the connection between congresspeople and constituents, one thing remains perfectly clear: the United States Senate, just like the country it serves, remains a continually evolving and developing body. While senators are elected and retire, party platforms change, and entire populations shift, there is one relationship that will connect these groups for as long as America persists: that of the Senator and the Citizen.

Ideological Hegemony and Distortion of Language in Contemporary Political Discourse

James Cokorinos

Contemporary political discourse is laden with roadblocks to mutual understanding and honest critique, but one obstacle to advancing discourse that is too often overlooked is the distortion and misapplication of political language itself. The very words we use to describe different events and phenomena in the world of politics have become so corrupted in many cases as to be unrecognizable. Whether this distortion is the product of honest misunderstanding, intentionally manufactured by political institutions, or a combination of the two (as I argue), the damage done to public political discourse cannot be overstated. As political scholars, we have a responsibility to improve public capacity for political discourse by being diligent in our application of terminology and giving active resistance to our colleagues whose ideological orientation leads them to promote such distortions.

Without much trouble, we can call to mind dozens of political terms which in contemporary discourse seem to have lost all meaning or have been so thoroughly corrupted as to have their meaning turned on its head. Perhaps the best example of this cynical (political) reversal lies in the history of the familiar ideological grouping “Libertarian.”

Our contemporary English use of the term “libertarian” traces its roots back to the French word “libertaire,” a term first given political significance by 19th-century French anarchist Joseph Déjacque (keen readers do not fear, we will visit the “A” word later).¹²² In the case of “libertarian,” we have the rare convenience of being able to wholly attribute all modern uses to one person—Déjacque—who is directly responsible for coining the term.¹²³ Déjacque wrote a letter defending the rights of women to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (a mutualist widely considered the father of Anarchism) titled “De l'Être-Humain mâle et femelle” (On the Human Being, Male and Female), in which he first used the term “libertarian” as synonymous or at least compatible with “anarchist”.¹²⁴ The word took hold in France with the advent of so-called lois scélérates (villainous laws), which made the publication of explicitly anarchist texts illegal. Adopting terms like “libertarian” was one way anarchists at the time were able to continue their political discourse and exploration of political theory while avoiding state persecution.¹²⁵ Publications that made frequent use of the term included Déjacque’s own “Le Libertaire,” Albert Libertad’s “L’Anarchie,” and a later “Le Libertaire” published by French anarchists Sebastien Faure and Louise Michel. Robust political and social discourse took place in these journals, which (among hundreds of other publications) were incredibly popular and influential in France, particularly

¹²² Déjacque, Joseph. Letter, “De L’être-humain Mâle et Femelle,” May 1857.

¹²³ Marshall, Peter. “Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism,” 2012, 641

¹²⁴ Déjacque, Joseph. Letter, “De L’être-humain Mâle et Femelle,” May 1857.

¹²⁵ Nettleau, Max, Heiner Becker, and Ida Pilat Isca. “A Short History of Anarchism.” London: Freedom Press, 1996.

during the Third Republic.¹²⁶ The word “libertarian” traces its roots to precisely these publications and to the distinguished tradition of French anarchism they represent.

These days, Libertarianism bears an entirely different meaning to its original use, especially in the United States. Chief among these differences is a commitment to protecting the institution of private property, among other distinctly right-wing propositions—all far removed from the anarchist ideals from which libertarianism takes its name. For example, the primary goals of the American Libertarian Party are things like the abolition of taxation and social welfare programs, and broadly the promotion of unrestricted capitalism with no state intervention in economic matters whatsoever.¹²⁷ Libertarianism today takes on a distinctly right-wing profile, and attempts to distance itself from “left-libertarian” anarchists. What’s more, ideological efforts to obfuscate or retcon the roots of Libertarianism have constituted a major political program. Several prominently placed Google results for libertarian queries (typically publications from conservative think-tanks) deny any evidence of an anarchist history of the term, and most sources (besides the more democratically-sourced Wikipedia) suggest that Libertarian ideology did not emerge until the 1950s. These revisionist histories have come as part of a larger effort to co-opt libertarian terms and ideals into some artificial right-wing tradition. Fortunately, those involved in the political distortion of these terms were kind enough to document their appropriation of the word publicly.

The conservative academic Dean Russell wrote in 1955 “Leftists have now corrupted that once-proud term [liberal] to identify themselves and their program of more government ownership of property and more controls over persons.¹²⁸ As a result, those of us who believe in freedom must explain that when we call ourselves liberals, we mean liberals in the uncorrupted classical sense. At best, this is awkward and subject to misunderstanding. Here is a suggestion: Let those of us who love liberty trade-mark and reserve for our own use the good and honorable word ‘libertarian.’”¹²⁹ Russell and his colleagues were quite successful and have molded the term in modern history to describe a strain of conservatism focused on the disempowerment of the state (outlined above). Contemporary use of the “Libertarian” has since been completely alienated from its original meaning and exchanged for a cynical perversion of its original principles. Russell’s friend Murray Rothbard declared victory in his late 1970s publication, “The Betrayal of the American Right,” in which he recounts “One gratifying aspect of our rise to some prominence is that, for the first time in my memory, we, ‘our side,’ had captured a crucial word from the enemy... ‘Libertarians’ ...had long been simply a polite word for left-wing anarchists,

¹²⁶ Nettleau et al., “A Short History of Anarchism,” 1996

¹²⁷ Libertarian National Convention (29th : 2020 : Orlando, Florida) Platform of the United States Libertarian Party. September 30, 2020. <https://www.lp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-LP-Platform-0720.pdf>

¹²⁸ Do not allow this brief, decontextualized assertion to mislead you. Russell’s distaste for contemporary *liberals* stemmed primarily from social (and frankly, totally superficial) policy issues, not any robust theoretical understanding. The supposed departure from foundational liberal thinkers of his contemporaries was totally imagined in this invocation. The difference in interpretation of, say, Locke and Mill that Russell finds between he and modern Liberals is not nearly as cynical as he suggests and in no way justifies this pearl-clutching self-victimization.

¹²⁹ Russell, Dean. “Who Is a Libertarian?” *The Freeman*, May 1955.

that is for anti-private property anarchists, either of the communist or syndicalist variety. But now we had taken it over...".¹³⁰ And so we find in the case of "Libertarian" a set of political actors who deliberately appropriated a term from a diametrically opposed political school of thought to their own for the simple reason that it was popular, dignified...in Russell's words, "honorable."

Such bad-faith deployment of political terms—even from people ostensibly working as political scholars—should come as no surprise. In fact, the story of "Libertarian" marks a broader historical trend in the sources and subjects of co-optation and distortion. Specifically, the range of terms which have been misapplied demonstrates an unmistakable leftward skew. In other words: leftist ideologies, concepts, and ideals have proven historically to be the terms most frequently co-opted and intentionally distorted in public discourse. We can observe this pattern in familiar (but frequently misunderstood) terms like Socialism, Anarchism, and Communism, each of which are worth exploring in their own right—and each of which have faced an active effort to remove their public understanding from any formal theoretical basis. Each exists with a secondary, received meaning designed not only to discredit the thinkers behind them, but to limit productive political discourse. By promoting unfaithful or incoherent phantom-ideologies, political actors remove entire bodies of work and understanding from political discourse and dictate the terms on which we engage with political theory.

I do not want to be too abstract with this analysis nor lose any skeptical readers for a lack of concrete examples and application. Perhaps it will be useful, then, to explore a few more terms and elucidate differences in their formal and received definition. After all, an important function of higher-ed credentialing in the study of political science ought to be demonstrating our ability to supply competent, faithful, and productive definitions for the concepts and ideologies used in contemporary political discourse—much in the same way that psychologists help us talk about our brains and astronomers help us talk about the stars.

"Socialism" stands out as a piece of political language in dire need of attention. Its received definition is best captured by Dr. Richard Wolff, who famously quipped "Socialism is when the government does stuff, and it's more socialism the more stuff it does, and if it does a real lot of stuff...it's communism!"¹³¹ Over time, this has come to be the full extent to which most Americans understand these ideas (which is to say, not very much at all). The rest of Dr. Wolff's lecture (often omitted) does an excellent job of framing the ideology as it exists in the American political consciousness—in particular, the popular misconception that socialism describes a set of relationships between citizens and government. Any serious review of the underlying literature and socialist theory reveals that this is not the case at all. Socialism, we find, describes an organization of society where the means of production are socially owned.¹³²

¹³⁰ Rothbard, Murray N. "The Betrayal of the American Right." Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007.

¹³¹ Wolff, Richard D. "Socialism for Dummies." Lecture, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.

¹³² Wolff, Richard D. "Understanding Socialism." United States: Democracy at Work, 2019.

¹³³ ¹³⁴ The term encompasses both market and nonmarket models and a variety of state roles.¹³⁵ While we find important distinctions in models of socialism and in schools of socialist thought, we can confidently reject the idea that errors in popular use of “socialism” are the product of some sort of internal ideological infighting and ambiguity. Commonalities in the myriad ideologies encompassed by “socialism” are reducible to a simple proposition: if a policy would give workers more control over the implements and benefits of production, then it is socialist. A rule that some proportion of every firm must be worker-owned is socialist; a rule that mandates indoor mask-wearing is not.

We find a similar situation with the word “communism.” In the formal sense, communism describes a higher stage of society which is stateless, classless, and moneyless (having transcended the need for each).¹³⁶ ¹³⁷ Ironically, communism resides in the popular consciousness as a social condition in which the state has overwhelming power and authority—as we recall, when the government is doing a real lot of stuff.

Anarchism, too, suffers the wrath of popular misconception. For anarchism, we find “dissolution of unjust hierarchies” translated to “no rules!” While specific, precise principles quickly reveal themselves in even a cursory review of literature—or in the etymology of the word itself—anarchism does not enjoy faithful interpretation in modern discourse.¹³⁸ Anarchists’ analyses of coercion, hierarchy, and the social function of the state are absent from political discourse in nearly all cases. Often, the ideology is conflated with illegalism and cast out from serious consideration—despite the ideology’s robust intellectual tradition.

What explains all these distortions? How can it be that political terminology is so gravely misunderstood and abused in public discourse? In my analysis, the misapplication of political language is best understood as two sides of ideological hegemony. Specifically, distortion and appropriation of language is both a tool and a manifestation of prevailing ideological currents. There is a specific, reciprocal relationship between political language and political institutions, a dialectic. A material analysis seems to follow naturally from this proposition. In short, it is in the interests of the owning class, of elites, of those who shape modern information flows and set the agenda for the public conscience, to manipulate language in a certain way—and they have the social position to do so.¹³⁹ Should it surprise us, then, that so few of our peers are incapable of

¹³³ “The ABCs of Socialism.” United States: Verso Books, 2016.

¹³⁴ Badie, Bertrand, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, and Leonardo Morlino. *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2011.

¹³⁵ Wolff, “Understanding Socialism,” 2019

¹³⁶ Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. “The Communist Manifesto” England, 1848

¹³⁷ Wolff, Richard D. “Understanding Marxism.” United States: Democracy at Work, 2019.

¹³⁸ Chomsky, Noam. “The Kind of Anarchism I Believe in, and What’s Wrong with Libertarians” Interview by Michael S. Wilson. *Alternet*. May 28, 2013.

¹³⁹ Herman, Edward S. and Noam Chomsky. “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media.” United Kingdom: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011.

giving a competent description of communism? That a sitting U.S. Senator can pen an opinion piece declaring that “Build Back Better is Democrats’ down payment on socialism?”¹⁴⁰

Well, of course not. In a society where information is as deeply commodified as it is, and with streams of media and academia so readily influenced or manipulated by capital owners and social elites, political language—that is, the way we think about and describe the world—is quite an effective tool of enforcing ideological hegemony, and for maintaining existing power structures without disruption. If you cannot describe a problem or cannot name solutions, then your dialogues on it are much less likely to be productive; most of your thinking will be bogged down by misunderstood ideas and arguments presented in their worst form. The extent to which language can be obscured and common understanding stifled, then, is the extent to which challenges to the status quo can be suppressed.

A definitive work on the topic of political language which has so far gone unaddressed in this article is George Orwell’s famous essay “Politics and the English Language.”¹⁴¹ He writes:

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink.¹⁴²

Orwell is correct. Disingenuous actors all too often are able to use esoteric, vague, or cynically appropriated words to conceal their underlying goals and motivations to great effect. We should, however, complicate our understanding by recognizing that deliberate, sustained insincerity by one party can lead to sincere misuse of terms by another. Orwell’s analysis is uncritical in this sense—it fails to see how differential power and status can affect the impact that one person’s speech has on another. All speech is not created equally.

This idea of imbalance and reciprocity brings us back to the language-institution dialectic mentioned earlier. To advance our understanding further, we must also recognize that an understanding of hegemony which places all responsibility for the degeneration of terms on institutions or elites (in other words, from the top-down) strips too much agency from the individuals involved. Individual participation in such a system is also required at some level, and we should also confront the way that our changing appetites may exacerbate this problem by actively encouraging the distortion which caused problems in the first place. Orwell gives a perfect analogy:

¹⁴⁰ Thune, John. "'Build Back Better' is Democrats' Down Payment on Socialism." Fox News (New York, NY), December 10, 2021. <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/build-back-better-democrats-down-payment-socialism>.

¹⁴¹ Ironically, Orwell himself has not been immune to the kind of degenerative misinterpretation we’re talking about. I hesitate to even invoke his name given the extent to which his ideas have had the meaning wrung out of them by relentless misapplication.

¹⁴² Orwell, George. “Politics and the English Language.” United Kingdom: Horizon, 1946.

An effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.¹⁴³

But this realization is not as grim as it may appear at first glance. Indeed, the mechanism is reversible—it may be true that people are just no longer interested in the meaning of words, or in the theoretical basis for one political ideology or another—but this suggests that solutions are reversible as well. Just as the deterioration of language may be led by a decentralized public, so too can the saving of political discourse.¹⁴⁴ I say this to inspire a sense of duty and motivation in my peers and colleagues. The issue of degenerating political language is one which we have a direct responsibility (and in theory the proper capacities) to solve, and we should not be fooled into believing that this is a problem out of our reach. Powerful social forces and institutions appear arrayed against productive discourse and without a doubt represent a formidable hurdle, but we cannot resign ourselves to the belief that their dominance is absolute. A commitment to faithful scholarship and diligent application of ideas may take great strides in repairing political language yet. Our future dialogues and, in turn, the course of society, depends on it.

¹⁴³ Orwell, “Politics and the English Language.” 1946

¹⁴⁴ And for a problem of linguistics, we should certainly hope that decentralized solutions exist.

Understanding the Austrian Contribution to the Socialist Calculation Debate

Isadore Johnson

Introduction

As technology continues to advance, some feel as though the economic system of capitalism will become outdated and that the new processing power of computers will usher in an era of scientific socialism, in which decisions are further centralized by the state. Many people today argue in favor of centralized decision making, thinking that the information processing problems can be solved with more processing power. These discussions are reminiscent of the socialist calculation debate that raged on in the 1920s and 1930s about whether an economy without prices or markets would be able to function. Austrian economists overwhelmingly believed that economic calculation would be impossible without markets, private property, and exchange, while neoclassical economists believed that they would be.

The standard account of the debate suggests that the Austrian contribution to the debate on whether socialism could work was about posing questions. Economists Ludwig Von Mises, and Friedrich Hayek would bring up informational challenges associated with socialism, which would later be overcome by socialists and neoclassical economists. However, the Austrian account of the socialist calculation debate believes that the standard account misinterprets the arguments of Austrian adherents because of differences in terminology and assumptions about the economic process. As long as the Austrian contribution fails to be understood, mainstream economics is likely to continue making the mistakes that led it to believing in the efficacy of the Soviet Union. Menger's subjectivism was not considered topical, Mises's rational calculation problem failed to be understood, and Hayek, rather than rejecting his mentor's approach furthered it.

Menger

Although Menger was not a direct participant in the socialist calculation debate, much of the Austrian calculation problem comes from his discovery that value is subjective. By pointing out that value is subjective, Menger implies some issues with the Marxist and neoclassical frameworks: mainly that someone from above could dictate a consistent value of a good or service. Having trade requires prices for goods and services, which requires private property. This idea is associated with the subjective theory of value because in order to obtain these trades, there needs to be some form of discovery that allows these gains to happen, which would be impossible without a form of private property and prices. If value is subjective, then it is impossible to calculate the relative happiness of individual trades. Since all trade is voluntary, (which is to say people wouldn't agree to it if it wouldn't benefit them), then overriding voluntary exchange at best, results in one party being harmed, if not both. Socialism, because it

does not have private property, and private property is necessary for prices, it lacks the ability to trade. Instead of using trade as a tool, socialism is run through a central planning board. The knowledge generation from trade is never discovered, making socialism inefficient if not self-destructive.

Mises

Mises, an early Austrian economist, began the socialist calculation debate by declaring the “theoretical possibility” of socialism”.¹⁴⁵ While the standard account of the calculation debate accurately understands that his argument is a challenge to the possibility of successful socialism, it fails to understand the context of whom the argument was addressed to and the broader state of economics prior to his argument. Mises’ primary argument was that rational calculation in our system is based on money. Each factor of production and intermediate product needs to be priced, in order to achieve profit or trade. If the factors of production cost more than the product, the creator of the product loses money. Since pricing stemmed from a mix of subjective factors, local availability and more; it was necessary to have a capitalist system that allowed for pricing these goods. Pre-1920, the Marxian model of economics was the predominant view of socialist economics, Marxism. Marxism demanded the abolition of prices, currency, and private property. The USSR attempted to abolish markets and prices, because it was in-line with current socialist thought.¹⁴⁶ Evidence of their failure alongside Mises’s arguments, suggests that his criticism of the Marxists, that economic calculation is impossible under socialism, was right. The walking-back of their position, by partially reinstating markets, tacitly admits defeat to at least some of Mises’s claims against them.

Enrico Barone, a socialist responder to Mises, argued that in a perfect static equilibrium system, appropriate valuations could be made in order to balance supply and demand, which as a result, implied economic calculation. However, he appears to misunderstand Mises’ argument.

Mises’s claim was never about the nature of a static economy because it would lack what made an economy an economy in the first place - dynamism. Fundamentally, Mises disagreed with the neoclassicals and Marxists that economic equilibrium is a permanent assumption that’s able to be made. Since neoclassical economists and Marxists thought that it was possible to have formally similar allocations of goods and services in a static economy, they saw prices as unimportant. Therefore, when socialists saw benefits like pareto optimality, longer time horizons, and the reduction of inequality, they saw socialism as a theoretical improvement.

Although socialists could sketch similar societies based upon the gains of trade in the real world, and tweak things to their biases, they failed to understand the precondition that allowed people to obtain both gains from trade and scarcity: prices. Since markets are dynamic, everyone is in permanent discovery, and it seems unreasonable to assume that all the information dispersed

¹⁴⁵Lavoie, D. (1981). A Critique of the Standard Account of the Socialist Calculation Debate. (43)

¹⁴⁶ Lavoie, D. (1981). A Critique of the Standard Account of the Socialist Calculation Debate. (45)

throughout the market was accessible to central planners. Price, rather than being merely a signifier, was an effective tool to apportion goods to people who would put them to good use.

Mises also brings up lots of other economic insights that were worthwhile and failed to be considered. Mises showed that interpersonal valuation is only possible through spontaneous order. The use of prices coordinate anarchic production, and provide a benefit to those who use their inputs effectively.¹⁴⁷ The criticisms of Mises' show formal similarities in a static world between centrally planned and anarchically (and rivalrous) planned economies. However, these criticisms fail to reckon with the strongest Austrian argument, that removing price without making a tool to replace it makes calculation impossible in the first place, and provides no incentive to end up having accurate central planning information.¹⁴⁸ The only explanation why a socialist economic planning board could be formally similar to price signals would involve making ridiculous assumptions, such as ignoring the challenge of collecting the necessary data particular to time and place. In order for a central planning system to be possible and do the necessary calculations, one would need to assume that the economy was static, and unmoving. Later criticisms of Mises concede the importance of markets in consumer goods - but like those of their comrades, these criticisms fail to understand the importance of pricing capital goods, which as Mises points out, would be impossible without private production. Mises seems aware of his critics' folly as "They want to abolish private control of the means of production, market exchange, market prices, and competition. But at the same time they want to organize the socialist utopia in such a way that people could act as if these things were still present. They want people to play the market as children play war, railroad, or school."¹⁴⁹ Mises' contribution provides a theoretical basis on which socialist calculation is impossible. Failing to recognize the role of prices pushes many economists to endorse policies that make the economy less efficient.

Hayek

Much like Mises, Friedrich Hayek's contributions to the debate were similarly misunderstood. Many believe that Hayek walked back his mentor's (Mises) claims by noting that in a static economy, economic calculation was possible. Thus, the idea that socialism was theoretically impossible was wrong. Hayek was also presumed wrong because newer models of socialism believed that trial and error, through both experimentation with various prices of capital goods and through auctioneer systems done by the state, had the potential to rival capitalism's efficiency. Unfortunately, like many other presumptions assumed by socialists, this one was also incorrect. Hayek's criticism of central planners largely included the objections from experimentation and auctioneer systems. Hayek argued that these relied on similar faulty assumptions about the role of prices in a dynamic economy. The first devastating critique Hayek

¹⁴⁷Lavoie, D. (2015). *Rivalry and central planning: The socialist calculation debate reconsidered*. (49-54)

¹⁴⁸ Lavoie, D. (2015). *Rivalry and central planning: The socialist calculation debate reconsidered*. (49-54)

¹⁴⁹Caplan, B. (2004). Is socialism really "impossible"? 37

makes to central planners is that utilization of knowledge is not given to anyone in totality, so the best option that can be hoped for is attempting to secure the best use of resources that members of society could be aware of. There will never be a single mind which could work out the implications of perfect calculation.¹⁵⁰ Hayek illustrates this argument by pointing out that efforts to reduce all knowledge to broad, universal, objective statements fails to understand the role of local knowledge. Being trained in a specific industry, or reading specific people, or understanding a special circumstance allows people to profit in a largely capitalist system where arbitrage is allowed.¹⁵¹ However, a socialist system would fail to incorporate the local knowledge because of its outsourcing of prices to the state. Hayek goes on to describe this tendency to see only scientific information as valuable, calling the phenomenon scientism, and explains that broad, universal auctioneering approaches fail to incorporate local knowledge, and are thus less rational. For instance, the specifications of a product and its utility may not be the same, and planners may be unaware of important differences between products.¹⁵² Hayek points out that all economic activity is a form of planning, and the issue is not a plan versus not a plan, but rather a question of who plans. Central planning, even with auctioneers, fails to be aware of the local conditions because it fails to utilize local actors who could be benefitted by providing accurate information.

A secondary problem of central planning is that plans constantly change, and a system that doesn't reward effective planning fails to generate much of it. Hayek's example of a manager is another good example of why planning would fail to work as well if done centrally. Keeping costs down is a struggle, and engineers and other producers often aren't focused on keeping costs down. Constant deliberate adjustment is necessary, and for managers with limited resources, the cost of a good in terms of price functions in such a way that the whole economy acts as one market, reflected through many intermediaries.¹⁵³ Interestingly enough, local prices connect, bringing about a solution that could have been arrived at by a perfect mind, despite information being dispersed among the people throughout the process.¹⁵⁴ When socialists criticize the net outcome associated with dispersed information, they fail to realize the marvel that is a market. Adjustments in a capitalist system require only a few people knowing the cause of a shortage or a surplus, but prices cause many to move in the correct direction. Thus, the impetus would be on socialists to prove reasons why a central planning board would be able to be reasonable.

¹⁵⁰Hayek, F. (1945). *The Use of Knowledge in Society*. (519).

¹⁵¹Hayek, F. (1945). *The Use of Knowledge in Society*. (523).

¹⁵²Vaughn, K. I. (1980). *ECONOMIC calculation UNDER socialism: The Austrian contribution*. (545-547)

¹⁵³Hayek, F. (1945). *The Use of Knowledge in Society*. (523, 525).

¹⁵⁴ Hayek, F. (1945). *The Use of Knowledge in Society*. (527).

The final hurdle that Hayek proposes is even more challenging. Even if a trial-and-error system was successfully able to be put into place by an incredibly smart machine, there would likely be an accounting period where prices would be adjusted. The kicker is that without market prices, the relative cost of goods and services would not be current. If the accounting period is long, and goods aren't entirely alike, or in the same place, the level of detail necessary to satisfy human wants would not exist. By contrast, a market system reflects people's ordinal preferences and prevents shortages better than any trial-and-error system could.

While Hayek's argument follows Mises's line of reasoning, that rational economic calculation would be impossible, or at least suspect, in a socialist country. Hayek's focus was on the nature of information, and the degree to which a central mind would be unable to effectively allocate resources, and to some degree takes opponents on their own turf. Hayek points out that even by standard neoclassical definition, equilibrium prices would not be the norm in a market socialist world, and without pricing capital goods, there'd be no way of ensuring that people economize. This idea, rather than repudiating his mentor, instead expounds upon Mises' reasoning, providing informational reasons why dynamic economies require markets.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Austrians provided sound reasoning for why even market-socialist economies fail, they at best have won a pyrrhic victory. They certainly haven't convinced the economics profession about the widespread desirability of private property and market institutions. Instead of incorporating the decentralization of knowledge, many economists cheer on government planning, accept cert-of-need legislation, and keep pushing policies that raise barriers to entry in many industries.

Overall, the weakness of communication is a big liability to the Austrian economists, and more contemporary ones remain obscure in economics departments, despite having won Nobel prizes. This is frustrating because it's unclear how possible it is for the Austrian school, and similar pro-market schools to make an impact, because no one understands or cares about the issues they find important. I'm hopeful that this contribution to understanding the socialist calculation debate will begin to provide a little more clarity about the positions of Menger, Mises, and Hayek to allow scholars of all stripes to understand their arguments more comprehensively.

Statehood vs Independence vs Commonwealth

Apaulo A. Krawic Krifter

Introduction

Throughout Puerto Rico's history as a colony, it has had many issues regarding its political status and relationship with the United States. The argument for independence propagated by the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), promotes full independence from the U.S. and complete sovereignty for Puerto Rico and its international and domestic relations. The argument for statehood, mainly supported by the New Progressive Party (PNP), seeks to admit Puerto Rico into the Union. It argues Puerto Rico should be recognized as a state and its people deserve proper representation in Congress. Finally, the commonwealth argument is put forward by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), which seeks to preserve the current status of Puerto Rico as a colony of the U.S. with self-governance and, as of recently, expand the Island's sovereignty. Despite the existence of these arguments and their supporters, who have long pushed Congress to act upon the people of Puerto Rico's democratic choices, no action has been taken on any front. Additionally, the struggle to solve Puerto Rico's political status has influenced all three parties in their government platforms and policies. After providing the historical background that has led to Puerto Rico's political status issue, this paper will explore the three arguments and the political parties that promote them, the implications of each, and how each argument has influenced the corresponding party's political platform.

Historical Background

Following the US invasion of Puerto Rico in July 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed between Spain and the United States which led to Spain transferring the sovereignty of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to the United States.¹⁵⁵ This is largely seen as the start of the imperialistic rule of Puerto Rico. As the region became the first colony of the United States, many of its inhabitants were left unprotected as they were not considered American citizens nor were they protected by the constitution; they were merely subjects of the United States. Shortly after, in 1901, the Foraker Act was enacted by Congress. This established a civilian administration on the Island but strengthened the federal government's control over it as well. The act also allowed the U.S. president to appoint a governor to the island, who then continued the military government policy of having only English taught in schools. In 1917, the Jones Act was signed into law by Woodrow Wilson. This act replaced the previous Foraker Act by establishing a bicameral legislature, but gave the appointed governor even more power, and the president direct oversight of certain key agencies in the Puerto Rican government.¹⁵⁶ The Jones

¹⁵⁵ Torruella, Juan R. "Ruling America's Colonies: The Insular Cases." Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository. 2013. <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylpr/vol32/iss1/3/>.

¹⁵⁶ "BRIA 17 4 C Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence?" Constitutional Rights Foundation. <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-4-c-puerto-rico-commonwealth-statehood-or-independence>.

Act also imposed second-class U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans as inhabitants of the Island are not granted representation in Congress or the right to vote for the president.¹⁵⁷ Further, under this act, Congress was able to choose what parts of the Constitution applied to the people of Puerto Rico, hence why the Bill of Rights does not apply to them.¹⁵⁸

Afterward, on July 3 of 1950, Congress passed the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act which recognized Puerto Rico's authority over matters of internal governance, and allowed Puerto Ricans to draft their own constitution.¹⁵⁹ This law also led to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the island's new political entity, in 1952 which proclaimed that Puerto Ricans would have complete responsibility for their self-governance under its own constitution. However, this new status did not give Puerto Ricans any actual assertive power in their self-governance as Congress-- a body of government in which Puerto Ricans have no vote or power-- ultimately governed the Island in its totality. Luis Muñoz Marín, the first democratically elected governor of Puerto Rico, argued that the only difference made by Puerto Rico's commonwealth status was that the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico became a consensual relationship instead of a coerced relationship.¹⁶⁰ Within this new political entity, Puerto Rico was lifted into uncertainty as it was balanced between independence and inclusion. This allowed, with the inclusion of certain legal anomalies brought upon the Insular Cases decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1901, for legal tax loopholes that allowed corporations based in Puerto Rico to be exempt from federal taxes.¹⁶¹ Thus, the commencement of what is now known as Operation Bootstrap gave way, leading Puerto Rico into a modern, developing economy.

Political Status of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico has three political parties all of which have different ideologies for how the country should be run. The party whose governor is currently in power is the New Progressive Party (NPP). The NPP, founded in 1967 by Luis A. Ferré, has always campaigned for statehood. Their main arguments for statehood are centered on the belief that Puerto Rico should be admitted into the Union as a state. This is due in part to their belief that Puerto Ricans, ever since

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ "Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act of 1950," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, <https://www.ifes.org/election-materials/puerto-rico-federal-relations-act-1950>, p.319

¹⁶⁰ Immerwahr, Daniel. *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020., p.257

¹⁶¹ MacEwan, Arthur. "The Effect of 936." The United States Senate Committee on Finance. 2016. [https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Arthur MacEwan and J. Tomas Hexner \(Submission 6\).pdf.](https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Arthur%20MacEwan%20and%20J.%20Tomas%20Hexner%20(Submission%206).pdf), p.4

receiving American citizenship, have been denied the right of representation in Congress.¹⁶² In addition to this, the NPP believes that statehood would be beneficial to the people of Puerto Rico because it would guarantee them federal funds that are given to other states as well as attract foreign investments to Puerto Rico.¹⁶³ The Popular Democratic Party (PPD), which is the current party in control of the legislature, has a similar view to the NPP, and believes Puerto Rico should be a commonwealth. They believe that as a commonwealth, although Puerto Rico would still be under control by Congress, they would still enjoy the benefits of American citizenship, a constitution that provides for self-governance, a right to elect a governor and a bicameral legislature, and over \$10 billion dollars in federal funding. In addition, the PPD has recently proposed an “enhanced” version of the commonwealth in which Puerto Rico would be granted the right to vote for the president of the U.S. and an elected member with voting power in Congress. This act would also add a bill of rights to the constitution of Puerto Rico and would allow the region to trade with other countries and organizations.¹⁶⁴ This brings us to the third and last party, the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP). The PIP was founded shortly after Luis Muñoz Marín authorized the establishment of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in order to maintain the status quo and give Congress power over Puerto Rico. This angered several members of the PPD as they felt betrayed by their own party, whose goal was independence. It led to them severing ties with the PPD to form the Puerto Rican Independence Party. At its core, the PIP shares similarities with the NPP in the sense that both groups believe that maintaining the status quo, the commonwealth, of Puerto Rico would leave many Puerto Ricans disenfranchised, as well as hold back socio-economic development on the island. However, the Puerto Rico Independence Party, as its name suggests, believes that the only way to achieve equality and socio-economic development for Puerto Rico is through independence.¹⁶⁵ Through independence, Puerto Rico would become its own sovereign state, with its own constitution, government, and membership in the United Nations.¹⁶⁶ In addition to this, Puerto Rico would lose all federal funding and the US military would most likely have to lease its military bases in Puerto Rico.¹⁶⁷ Considering all three options, this brings us to consider what their benefits and drawbacks are and how they would affect Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico has gone through many hardships and political clashes when deciding on what political status to adopt and the future remains uncertain. It is important to note that the

¹⁶² "Puerto Rico Promete." Partido Nuevo Progresista. [https://assets.website-files.com/5f3fdb701694ae391ad573cd/5f908349ae373e359c31decf_Plataforma de Gobierno PNP 2020.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5f3fdb701694ae391ad573cd/5f908349ae373e359c31decf_Plataforma%20de%20Gobierno%20PNP%202020.pdf), p.190-192

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ "BRIA 17 4 C Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence?" Constitutional Rights Foundation. <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-4-c-puerto-rico-commonwealth-statehood-or-independence>.

¹⁶⁵ "Programa De Gobierno 2020." Patria Nueva. 2020. <https://patrianueva.juandalmau.com.>, p.165

¹⁶⁶ "BRIA 17 4 C Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence?" Constitutional Rights Foundation. <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-4-c-puerto-rico-commonwealth-statehood-or-independence>.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

decision regarding Puerto Rico's political future will ultimately belong to Congress. This is important to recognize as it shows that the power of Puerto Rico's three parties, as well as the region's citizenry, is limited. All three parties have legitimacy in their arguments and thus must be considered when talking about Puerto Rico's future. The case for statehood stems from the belief that Puerto Ricans, being second-class American citizens, have a right to demand admission into the Union because of the shared history with the United States in the last 120 years. In addition, statehood brings up the fact that the disenfranchisement of Puerto Ricans has led to the territory falling behind on a global scale when compared to other states and their economic development.¹⁶⁸ From an economic standpoint, statehood would open up the doors for more federal funding for programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, allowing access to many who would otherwise not have any access to healthcare.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the NPP emphasizes that with statehood, Puerto Rico would be able to facilitate more foreign and domestic investors to invest on the Island, creating an ideal technological hub for companies who would want access to Latin American markets.¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, what the NPP and the argument for statehood fails to recognize is the U.S. imperialist mindset and its desire to keep Puerto Rico as a strategic colony. This has been the case for the relationship between Congress and Puerto Rico throughout history, with examples ranging from the Insular Cases, the mass sterilization of women in Puerto Rico during the 1950s and 60s, and recently, the passage of the PROMESA Law, in an attempt to restructure its \$72 billion debt.¹⁷¹ This all points towards the fact that Congress is still determined to keep Puerto Rico as a colony as no attempts to decolonize the Island or admit Puerto Rico into the Union have been made. Additionally, because of statehood, it would imply that it would separate the unique culture, history, and identity of Puerto Rico, essentially saying that Puerto Ricans are Americans that are of Puerto Rican descent, delegitimizing its identity and assimilating it to that of the United States.

The argument for Puerto Rico to adopt the status of an enhanced commonwealth, made by the PPD, comes from its initial roots during Luis Muñoz Marín's time as governor. This argument holds that Puerto Rico would benefit from its relationship with the United States because it would reap the benefits of American citizenship, some sort of self-governance, and access to federal funding.¹⁷² Additionally, the "enhanced" commonwealth proposes that Puerto Rico should have the right to vote for the president and have a member of Congress with voting power, a bill of rights amended to the constitution of Puerto Rico, and allow it to trade with other

¹⁶⁸ Posted August 2, 2017. "How Mississippi Is Catching up - and Puerto Rico Is Not." Puerto Rico Report, August 2, 2017. <https://www.puertoricoreport.com/how-mississippi-is-catching-up-and-puerto-rico-is-not/#.YY7Lai-B2wg>.

¹⁶⁹ Cheatham, Amelia. "Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, November 25, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis#chapter-title-0-7>.

¹⁷⁰ "Puerto Rico Promete." Partido Nuevo Progresista. [https://assets.website-files.com/5f3fdb701694ae391ad573cd/5f908349ae373e359c31decf_Plataforma de Gobierno PNP 2020.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5f3fdb701694ae391ad573cd/5f908349ae373e359c31decf_Plataforma%20de%20Gobierno%20PNP%202020.pdf)., p.33

¹⁷¹ Cheatham, Amelia. "Puerto Rico: A U.S. Territory in Crisis." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, November 25, 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/puerto-rico-us-territory-crisis#chapter-title-0-7>.

¹⁷² "Programa De País Para La Segunda Transformación De Puerto Rico." Partido Popular Democrático, 2020. <https://simplebooklet.com/OpQKCL3XyN8PM6OM8KxwuA>. p.347

countries; powers only conceded to states.¹⁷³ Although all of these proposals would be ideal for Puerto Rico, “enhanced” commonwealth only pushes it into political uncertainty as it would still be considered a colony with some of the same benefits of states and other benefits of sovereignty, something Congress would surely not allow. Additionally, the PPD’s plan for socio-economic development is strongly based on Operation Bootstrap-era policies with tax incentives for American corporations and keeping current socio-economic policies running, although they have been proven to hurt the local economy. Lastly, the commonwealth fails to acknowledge the colonial status of Puerto Rico and the fact that it has historically been controlled by Congress.

The third and last option for Puerto Rico is independence. The case for independence can be traced back to when Puerto Rico was a colony of Spain, and many attempts at sovereignty were made. In its essence, independence shares the same ideological base as statehood, as both recognize the disenfranchisement of Puerto Ricans and their colonial past. What separates the independence movement from the statehood movement is that they emphasize that the US is legally obligated to grant Puerto Rico the democratic process of choosing between the different options of decolonization, specifically independence.¹⁷⁴ In addition to this, they believe that the US owes Puerto Rico reparations because of its colonial status, and thus, they argue that it is only right that they allow Puerto Rico to become its own sovereign nation.¹⁷⁵ Through independence, Puerto Rico would be able to participate in global trade agreements and have membership in the United Nations.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, if Puerto Rico becomes an independent country, it would be considered one of the poorest countries in the region and would struggle economically as it would have to rely on foreign aid in its first years as it works to re-establish itself as an economic powerhouse in the Caribbean.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the PIP believes that focusing on the development of its own natural resources, instead of depending heavily on foreign investments and manufacturing, would lead to greater socio-economic development in the long run.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, it would allow Puerto Ricans to have a greater sense of national identity as they would solely identify as Puerto Ricans instead of Puerto Ricans with American citizenship.

Conclusion

¹⁷³ "BRIA 17 4 C Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence?" Constitutional Rights Foundation. <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-4-c-puerto-rico-commonwealth-statehood-or-independence>.

¹⁷⁴ "Programa De Gobierno 2020." Patria Nueva. 2020. <https://patrianueva.juandalmau.com.>, p.165

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "BRIA 17 4 C Puerto Rico: Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence?" Constitutional Rights Foundation. <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-17-4-c-puerto-rico-commonwealth-statehood-or-independence>.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ "Programa De Gobierno 2020." Patria Nueva. 2020. <https://patrianueva.juandalmau.com.>, p.96

The issue of Puerto Rico's political status has been of much debate even before the U.S. invasion on the Island. With all three parties presenting strong arguments for their case, it is clear that Puerto Rico still remains divided on this issue as no clear consensus has been reached. More so, the fate of the Island remains in the hands of Congress as they ultimately have say and power on the status of Puerto Rico. In addition to this, I believe that no matter the number of plebiscites and referendums the Puerto Rican government holds, the status of Puerto Rico will not change unless some sort of drastic change is done on a political level and more Puerto Ricans are able to agree on one option instead of being heavily divided on this issue. I believe that independence is the better of the three options as it not only recognizes the colonial history of Puerto Rico and the abuse of the United States but it also strives for the development of its socio-economic status through the usage of its bountiful resources, mainly in the agricultural industry, and its unique position between North and South America.

The Need for National K–12 Civic Literacy Curriculum in the United States: the Future of Preserving Our Democracy

Kieler Langemo

Introduction

The United States public education system was one of the first state-sponsored institutions founded on the basis of preserving American values by reinforcing their importance through instilling knowledge in the next generation.¹⁷⁹ Education itself is a tool that, when used successfully, provides individuals with the power to make decisions toward fostering meaningful social connections and the growth of human potential.

The content of public K–12 education in the United States is defined by state-mandated curriculum, which are sets of frameworks composed of individual learning standards. These learning standards define specific pieces of information or courses of action that students are expected to understand or complete. For example, a state’s Social Studies curriculum may consist of United States History frameworks that might include the following learning standard: Analyze the economic, intellectual, and cultural forces that contributed to the American Revolution. The issue that arises in this system is that each state, from Florida to Oregon, provides resident students with a public education consisting of curriculum frameworks that vary, both in content and in quality, from state to state. Multiple national initiatives, such as the No Child Left Behind Act and the Common Core State Standards Initiative, have attempted to solve this varying-curriculum dilemma through a state-sponsored standardization of reading, mathematics, and science curriculum. Although it is true that reading and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) provide students with the academic knowledge necessary to succeed in undergraduate university education, it lacks in educating students about their communities, the people that live in their communities, and the world to which their communities belong. Civic literacy curriculum aims at providing students with a well-rounded understanding of society and human relations. This article rejects the common misapplication of civic literacy as simply a study of American government and voting rights, and instead aims at reinforcing civic literacy as a multifaceted discipline characterized by an understanding of global society, immersion in experiential learning, and participation in public engagement.

Civic Literacy Curriculum: Then and Now

¹⁷⁹ Winthrop, Rebecca. 2020. “The need for civic education in 21st-century schools.” Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>.

Public education, as an institution, was created in the United States to uphold the responsibility of forging “a person’s civic character and propensity to participate” in society and prepare students to become competent citizens.¹⁸⁰ The core belief behind this purpose of instilling civic education in all citizens was to ensure that all Americans understood the importance of the relationship between citizens and their government. Public education, an institution in which nearly all Americans engage, was the institutional epitome to raise democratic leaders.

Despite the integral role that civic literacy played in the founding of the United States’ public education system, only eight of the fifty states require high school students to take a yearlong civics or government course in order to graduate.¹⁸¹ At the same time, the US Department of Education has pushed several initiatives, such as the aforementioned No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which requires states to administer annual age- and subject-specific standardized tests in order to receive federal funding for public schools. NCLB legislation aims at holding states accountable for providing American students with an equitable education. However, the majority of existing standardized tests (created in response to NCLB) assess reading, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning standards and not arts and social sciences. In fact, 44% of US states administer standardized tests for social studies, compared to 100% of US states that administer standardized tests for both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.¹⁸² These numbers become more dramatic when they are put into context: of those 44% that do administer social studies standardized testing, approximately 27% of US states administer only the US citizenship test, meaning only 32% of US states administer standardized tests for social studies other than the US-citizenship test.¹⁸³

Furthermore, the United States now spends one thousand times more on STEM education per student than on the social sciences, such as history and civics.¹⁸⁴ This allocation of federal funding is evidenced by student performance: the National Assessment of Educational Progress Report Card in Civics reveals that 25% of American K-12 students were capable of scoring proficient in civics and government.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ McConnell, Ted. n.d. “DISENGAGEMENT AND LACK OF CIVIC EDUCATION.” California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools. Accessed November 29, 2021. http://www.cms-ca.org/disengagement_and_lack.pdf.

¹⁸¹ “Data: Most States Require History, But Not Civics.” 2018. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/data-most-states-require-history-but-not-civics>.

¹⁸² “State Education Practices (SEP)-State Assessments.” n.d. National Center for Education Statistics. Accessed November 29, 2021. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/8_sa.asp.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Winthrop, Rebecca. 2020. “The need for civic education in 21st-century schools.” Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>.

¹⁸⁵ McConnell, Ted. n.d. “DISENGAGEMENT AND LACK OF CIVIC EDUCATION.” California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools. Accessed November 29, 2021. http://www.cms-ca.org/disengagement_and_lack.pdf.

Importance of Civic Literacy Curriculum

Civil literacy curriculum shapes students into productive members of society. The central theme surrounding civic literacy is building interpersonal social skills in students, creatively outlined in the “6 Cs” framework: collaboration, communication, content mastery, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence.¹⁸⁶ The heart of civic literacy is social, and all learning is social. The skills that are gained through civic literacy programming underlie the skills necessary for success in all areas of not only education, but in life. Outlined below is the three-fold definition of civic literacy.

Understanding Global Society: Content Mastery and Critical Thinking

In order to actively engage as a citizen of the world, students must first possess a general understanding of how society operates. This information includes a comprehensive review of how government in the United States works and the role of the American citizen as a voter, both of which are concepts that current civic literacy curricula address well. However, it is important to expand on these concepts by incorporating an in-depth study of the people that we call Americans, including how we define cultural, racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious boundaries and how the conflicts that have occurred between and within them have both shaped and been shaped by American institutions. Beyond an understanding of the United States, it is also important to incorporate an international comparative analysis of different institutions and peoples as a means of educating students to understand global society. Limiting oneself to the boundaries of one’s nation limits one’s ability to think critically about the world and how the many societies interact within a global system. Through the mastery of this content, students will be able to apply it collaboratively and communicatively in small and large group settings.

Experiential Learning: Collaboration and Communication

In addition to understanding global society, it is important for students to immerse themselves in experiential learning: the process of learning by doing. Experiential learning relies on the following two elements: (1) a designed learning experience that evokes social-emotional learning where students have the opportunity to take initiative, and (2) opportunities for critical analysis and reflection.¹⁸⁷ Examples of experiential learning that may be applied to civic literacy curricula include service learning, internships, cooperative education, and study abroad programs. Designed experiences outside of the classroom allow students to collaborate with

¹⁸⁶ Winthrop, Rebecca. 2020. “The need for civic education in 21st-century schools.” Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>.

¹⁸⁷ “Experiential Learning » Center for Teaching & Learning.” n.d. Boston University. Accessed November 29, 2021. <https://www.bu.edu/ctl/guides/experiential-learning/>.

people and environments outside of their domain, increasing opportunities for community awareness and the strengthening of collaborative relationships through communication.

Public Engagement: Critical Innovation and Confidence

With the combination of an understanding of global society and experiential learning, students are capable of applying what they have learned by engaging in public settings. Public engagement requires people to be innovative by standing up for causes that they believe are important. Doing so takes advantage of social and entrepreneurial skills. Examples of public engagement include organizing community projects, giving public presentations to community members, engaging in public protesting for policies that may harm specific community members, or even voting. Lawmakers agree that youth who participate in public engagement become adults who participate in public engagement.¹⁸⁸ Civic literacy curricula provide students with the confidence necessary to take part in these actions.

Potential Explanations

One potential explanation for the lack of civic literacy curriculum in the United States is the fact that the curriculum standards developed by state-level departments of education are vague compared to standards for reading and mathematics, for example. As evidenced by the curriculum frameworks of both Massachusetts and New Mexico, introductory language surrounding civic-related courses references citizenship as a concept and offers compelling investigative questions regarding the concept, but the standards themselves fail to offer an objective target that quantifies civic literature and its instruction.

Alternatively, teachers and school administrators may be ill-prepared to instruct civic literacy due to lack of funding. Because the majority of funding is diverted to the instruction of reading and STEM, the social sciences, including civics, do not receive the appropriate resources to provide the comprehensive programming that is necessary in instructing civic literacy. Aside from funding, schools are also reallocating time away from the social sciences in favor of increasing instruction time in reading and mathematics. In a study conducted in all fifty states, 71% of districts surveyed reported that instructional time had been reduced in at least one other subject in order to increase the allotted time for reading and mathematics.¹⁸⁹ The reasoning behind the reallocation of funding is in part due to NCLB legislation. The U.S. Department of Education has prioritized the instruction and assessment of reading and STEM in order to

¹⁸⁸ Vasilogambros, Matt. 2021. "After Capitol Riot, Some States Turn to Civics Education." The Pew Charitable Trusts. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/05/19/after-capitol-riot-some-states-turn-to-civics-education>.

¹⁸⁹ McConnell, Ted. n.d. "DISENGAGEMENT AND LACK OF CIVIC EDUCATION." California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools. Accessed November 29, 2021. http://www.cms-ca.org/disengagement_and_lack.pdf.

compensate for a working class that lacks in technical and scientific literacy and knowledge necessary to accommodate an expected rise in jobs within STEM-related industries.¹⁹⁰ This argument is innately unsound because, as a result of intensifying reading and STEM education, students are receiving less education in social sciences, a critical area for children to master the art of soft skills (communication, team work, critical thinking, and decision making, for example) that nearly all employers value.

The content of civics literacy is often interpreted by some to be highly controversial. In order to understand global society and the responsibilities of citizenship, it is imperative that students are both exposed to and engage with events and relationships involving conflict, including slavery and institutional racism that underly the founding of the United States as a nation, as well as any ongoing discrimination against citizens of cultural, ethnic, sexual, religious, and other personal-identity communities. Concerns over controversial instruction arise over the debate of whether or not to include critical race theory (CRT) into public civics education. Funding for civics programs is often stumped by conservative lawmakers who believe that funding civics education will lead to the instruction of CRT as an “un-American indoctrination” in our public schools.¹⁹¹

Potential Solutions

Assessing civic knowledge is one avenue toward resolving the lack of civic literacy curriculum crisis in the United States. As seen with reading and STEM, standardized testing requirements encourage schools to allocate funding and resources to the particular area being tested. However, the addition of a standardized test runs the risk of limiting other programs that are not currently mandated by similar testing, such as physical education, health, the arts, and career-technical education. Currently, some states require high school students to pass the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service civics test required for naturalization.¹⁹² This approach, however, does not assess students for their knowledge gained during experiential learning opportunities, nor does it account for the public engagement that students may

¹⁹⁰ Wexler, Natalie. 2019. “Math and Science Can't Take Priority over History and Civics.” *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*. January 14. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2019/01/13/math-and-science-cant-take-priority-over-history-and-civics/?sh=34392ad0199e>.

¹⁹¹ Vasilogambros, Matt. 2021. “After Capitol Riot, Some States Turn to Civics Education.” *The Pew Charitable Trusts*. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/05/19/after-capitol-riot-some-states-turn-to-civics-education>.

¹⁹² Vasilogambros, Matt. 2021. “After Capitol Riot, Some States Turn to Civics Education.” *The Pew Charitable Trusts*. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/05/19/after-capitol-riot-some-states-turn-to-civics-education>.

participate in outside of the classroom. Furthermore, the requirement of passing a test should not be the primary method of instilling civic knowledge in students. Although some schools require the test as a graduation requirement, there is no guarantee that schools will provide civic literacy education. Instead, states must implement the curriculum and provide the resources that allow for students to not only receive adequate instruction, but that encourages them to engage with people and communities. Any standardized test administered in the subject must serve as a supplementary material to the aforementioned instruction and engagement.

Citizens and lawmakers may push for education reform that enacts specific legislation requiring the implementation of a national set of civic literacy standards that are both specific and inclusive of the three-fold definition of civic literacy: understanding global society, experiential learning, and public engagement. Furthermore, because of the fact that civic literacy is challenging to measure across geographic and demographic boundaries, it is important that state-specific standards address the needs of specific populations that are served by the individual state's public education institutions.

Conclusion

The United States is at a pivotal point in its history. The public education system must adapt to a population that is growing up in an increasingly globalized world characterized by the rise of accessibility to political rhetoric and action. Education should serve as a malleable institution capable of providing K-12 students with a comprehensive civic literacy curriculum that prepares them to live as citizens in the twenty-first century, as well as engage thoughtfully in society, all while being expressive of the values that uphold our democracy.

The Undoing of the National Rifle Association

Isabella Langlois

The battle for gun rights has been at the forefront of the conservative movement after a fateful day for the National Rifle Association in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1977. On that day, leadership transitioned from traditional marksmanship advocacy to staunch defenders of the Second Amendment. Led by Executive Vice President Harlon Carter, and eventually Wayne LaPierre, the National Rifle Association has exhausted every single political battle against gun control, using the powerful gun lobby. More recently, the balance of power has shifted. Gun violence has impacted American society to an extreme level, with between 40,000 - 60,000 deaths per year. This year, 2021, is on pace to be the worst year yet for gun violence in terms of homicides, suicides, mass shootings, etc.¹⁹³ A large proportion of these deaths could have been prevented had it not been for the gun lobby's immeasurable influence in crushing all gun control bills. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) makes an important point in his book, *The Violence Inside Us*, that gun control advocates should "concede the constitutional right to private firearm ownership, and gun-rights advocates [should] concede the constitutional ability of government to regulate aspects of this right."¹⁹⁴ This point is important because it would land lawmakers on a far more reasonable debate. However, the National Rifle Association functions to impede any progress. With that being said, this article will focus on the corruption within the gun lobby and the National Rifle Association as gun control advocates rise in power through grassroots efforts, expressing both emotional and rational sentiment towards common-sense gun reform.

A Brief History of the NRA

It is important to analyze the roots of the National Rifle Organization in order to understand its evolution. In 1871, two soldiers from the Union Army formed the NRA in New York with the sole purpose of advancing rifle marksmanship after seeing its failure during the Civil War. For nearly one hundred years, the NRA, modeled after the National Rifle Association of the United Kingdom, opened ranges and hosted international competitions, educating people on best practices and safety. The organization struggled to find funding until lifetime member President Theodore Roosevelt established the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice in 1903. This government agency "allocated funds to bring teams of competitors from state national guard and every branch of military service to compete in matches" which indirectly established "a line of dependence by the NRA on government funds."¹⁹⁵ With that, the federal

¹⁹³ "Gun Violence Archive 2020." 2021. Gun Violence Archive. <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>.

¹⁹⁴ Murphy, Chris. 2020. *The Violence Inside Us*. New York: Random House New York. pp. 81.

¹⁹⁵ Smyth, Frank. 2020. *The NRA - The Unauthorized History*. New York: Flatiron Books. pp. 39.

government sought the assistance of the NRA to prepare young Americans to be able to effectively participate in war as sharpshooters.

In response to a rise in gun violence within organized crime during the 1920s and '30s, Congress proposed and passed the first federal gun control bill in 1934. The National Firearms Act sought to tax and require registration of machine guns in an effort to limit new sales as well as ban sawed-off shotguns, silencers, and any gun with a barrel under eighteen inches.¹⁹⁶ Entirely antithetical to the organization today, the NRA supported this legislation. Regarding an extension to that law, Executive Vice President Franklin L. Orth went as far as to say, "it is a fact that known felons, juveniles, and other unfit persons have been able, with relative ease, to purchase concealable firearms by the mail-order route in circumvention of state laws... Public opinion demands that some control be applied to this traffic and public opinion will be served."¹⁹⁷ This hard line taken by Orth is seldom heard today from leadership within the NRA. It is ironic that modern leadership hides from the history of the NRA by only celebrating its history beginning in 1977, when the organization made a hard turn towards political divisiveness.

In 1977, at the annual convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, the old guard of the NRA was ousted by the Federation for NRA. According to the *American Rifleman*, the NRA's magazine, the focus of the convention was to decide if "the Association focuses on shooting competition and environmentalism to gain media approval, or if it should prioritize political advocacy for gun-owners' rights."¹⁹⁸ The old guard was hesitant to continue the newly formed lobbying wing, especially after Lee Harvey Oswald obtained the rifle that killed President John F. Kennedy through an NRA magazine. The new faction of leadership refused to be complacent, assembling 30,000 reformers to lobby votes for the new guard at the meeting. This base of support led to the election of Harlon Carter as executive vice president, and the NRA quickly descended into the organization that it is today. The next year, Wayne LaPierre joined the NRA-ILA as a liaison, and in a few short years, he became the executive vice president and CEO of the organization. While there was trouble before him, it only became worse in the years to follow.

Corruption in the NRA

When Letitia James ran for the New York Attorney General's (AG's) office in 2018, she vowed to take on the NRA, with the goal to dissolve the organization and their nonprofit status as a whole. Her inquiry began in early 2019; by August 2020, her office issued a press release citing grievances against various executives for "failing to manage the NRA's funds and failing to follow numerous state and federal laws, contributing to the loss of more than \$64 million in

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 50.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. 75.

¹⁹⁸ NRA Staff. 2019. "Cincinnati '77: Birthplace of the Modern NRA." *American Rifleman*. <https://www.americanrifleman.org/content/cincinnati-77-birthplace-of-the-modern-nra/>.

just three years for the NRA.”¹⁹⁹ In the most basic of terms, Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre used funds from membership dues to purchase lavish suits, property, and travel. Additionally, the connection between the NRA and Oklahoma-based advertising agency Ackerman-McQueen, dating back to 1984, has led to an abundance of legal battles.²⁰⁰ Though this relationship ceased in 2019, Ackerman-McQueen played an integral role for the NRA as an unofficial arm of the organization.

Leadership decisions at the highest level helped set the stage for the nation’s most powerful special interest group to become tainted, causing an internal civil war that would reveal years of corrupt decisions. In 2018, Oliver North was approached by the NRA board of directors to become president of the NRA, an unpaid position given the organization’s nonprofit status. In a deceitful fashion, LaPierre managed to create a contract for North with Ackerman-McQueen worth more than \$2 million that would be billed back to the NRA, the illegality of which was unbeknownst to North.²⁰¹ Concurrently, at the direction of North in an effort to restore good faith, William Brewer’s law firm was conducting an internal audit of the entire organization’s finances, and Ackerman-McQueen refused to comply. The situation came to fruition during the second night of the annual convention in Indianapolis in 2019. North “had been forced out by the gun lobby’s leadership after his own failed attempt to remove the NRA’s longtime CEO in a burgeoning divide over the group’s finances and media operations.”²⁰² Oliver North would not seek re-election and did not show up for the convention on the second night.

According to the press release from AG James’ office, LaPierre exploited the organization for his own financial benefit by traveling in a private jet to the Bahamas eight times in three years, costing \$500K to the NRA, and being gifted a yacht from a vendor. Additionally, LaPierre traveled to Africa on membership dues, spent \$3.7M on travel consultants, secured a \$17M post-employment contract without board approval, spent millions on private security with no oversight, and secured contracts for former board members and employees. This is just a glimpse of insight into corruption under LaPierre.²⁰³

This type of deceitful behavior, and the promotion of gun manufacturers, is what the NRA membership pays for. In fact, “the association has reduced spending on its avowed core mission — gun education, safety, and training — to less than 10 percent of its total budget, it has

¹⁹⁹ New York Attorney General. 2020. “Attorney General James Files Lawsuit to Dissolve NRA.” Letitia James - NY Attorney General. <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2020/attorney-general-james-files-lawsuit-dissolve-nra>.

²⁰⁰ Smyth, Frank. 2020. *The NRA - The Unauthorized History*. New York: Flatiron Books. Pp. 117.

²⁰¹ Jenks, Andrew, and Zak Levitt. 2020. “Gangster Capitalism,” Season 2, Episode 1: Let Loose the Dogs of War. Podcast.

²⁰² Pane, Lisa M. 2019. “Oliver North out as NRA president after leadership dispute.” AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/north-america-us-news-ap-top-news-in-state-wire-ok-state-wire-d5d90ab1596f478c8f20d4dbe3f7397>.

²⁰³ New York Attorney General. 2020. “Attorney General James Files Lawsuit to Dissolve NRA.” Letitia James - NY Attorney General. <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2020/attorney-general-james-files-lawsuit-dissolve-nra>.

substantially increased its spending on messaging” surrounding wealthy NRA members cars and planes.²⁰⁴ It really is ironic to see how the NRA today juxtaposes against the NRA 50-or-so years ago, especially as mass shootings and overall gun violence are on the rise. More recently, the NRA attempted to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and sought to relocate to Texas to avoid all accountability. These efforts failed according to a press release from AG James’ office that stated that “the NRA did not file in the bankruptcy petition in good faith.”²⁰⁵ It is clear that the organization is in disarray and standing on its last legs.

Gun Control Advocacy

In April 1996, 35 people were murdered by a Colt AR-15 semiautomatic rifle in Tasmania, Australia. Within a year, “Prime Minister John Howard coordinated with states to restrict the ownership of automatic and semiautomatic rifles and shotguns... the government bought back 650,000 firearms.” This has decreased the number of mass shootings to zero.²⁰⁶ In a perfect world, the United States would have had the same response in 1966 after the University of Texas massacre, continuing to adjust policy as needed according to new technology and upticks in violence. However, Senator Murphy argues that “our only deficit -- and the only deficit that matters in politics -- was of political muscle and organization.”²⁰⁷ Historically, the NRA has had the political muscle and organization necessary to respond to mass shootings, which typically evoke the most outrage from gun control advocates. They utilize their classic fear-mongering talking points and financial power on Capitol Hill. However, the balance has changed rapidly in recent years. In response to the rise of mass shootings, various organizations have joined together to advocate for gun policy on Capitol Hill and at state legislatures. A few major gun control advocacy organizations include: Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action, Students Demand Action, March for Our Lives, Giffords, Brady Campaign to End Gun Violence, etc. According to Everytown’s website, their goal is to bring evidence-based solutions to communities harmed by gun violence as well as register voters, elect candidates with gun safety in mind, demand action from elected officials, change how America thinks about gun violence, and to end gun violence.²⁰⁸ In addition to grassroots organizing, some of these organizations also partake in lobbying. Most prominently, Everytown, Giffords, and Brady

²⁰⁴ Spies, Mike. 2019. “Secrecy, Self-Dealing, and Greed at the NRA.” The Trace. <https://www.thetrace.org/2019/04/nra-financial-misconduct-ackerman-mcqueen/>.

²⁰⁵ New York Attorney General. 2021. “Attorney General James’ Statement After New Party Moves to Intervene in NRA Dissolution Case.” Letitia James NY Attorney General. <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2021/attorney-general-james-statement-after-new-party-moves-intervene-nra-dissolution>.

²⁰⁶ Taylor, Adam, and Amanda Coletta. 2021. “Here’s how other countries have responded to mass shootings.” The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/03/23/mass-shootings-response-other-countries-gun-laws/>.

²⁰⁷ Murphy, Chris. 2020. *The Violence Inside Us*. New York: Random House New York. pp. 251.

²⁰⁸ Everytown for Gun Safety. n.d. “About Everytown.” Everytown for Gun Safety. <https://www.everytown.org/about-everytown/>.

donate large sums of money to gun-sense candidates every year, according to Open Secrets.²⁰⁹ In fact, during the 2018 midterm elections, the NRA was outspent by gun control groups for the first time ever, resulting in the worst midterm defeat for Republicans since the Watergate Era. It is clear that these grassroots efforts are tipping the scale in the direction of gun control advocates.

It is hard to pinpoint which mass shooting created the largest shockwave through the country: 28 children and teachers at Sandy Hook, 50 nightclub goers at Pulse Nightclub, 58 concert attendees in Las Vegas, 17 students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and so on. But on February 17th, 2018, when Emma González said to a crowd, “to every politician who is taking donations from the NRA, shame on you,” it became clear that the NRA had a challenge.²¹⁰ Emma and her peers from Stoneman Douglas High School started March for Our Lives in response to the Parkland shooting. I was grateful to discuss the issue at hand with David Hogg, one of the founders of March for Our Lives (MFOL) and a current board member on the MFOL Action Fund. Since 2018, Hogg and a network of activists have worked with lawmakers to establish extreme risk protective orders, otherwise known as Red Flag Laws, allocate federal funding for gun violence research at the CDC and NIH, raise the age to purchase a gun to 21, and ban bumpstocks. Their efforts to bring the youth to the forefront of this movement led to the youth turning out in record numbers for the midterm elections in 2018, which was an instrumental year for gun safety candidates. Most notably, the MFOL team was partly responsible for AG James looking into the finances of the NRA.

On November 19, 2018, the attorney for MFOL sent a letter to AG James stating that the board of directors had not “appropriately fulfilled their fiduciary obligations to the organization to ensure that it operated for the public benefit as a charity and not for private interests,” going on to cite many of the grievances that are included above from the statement released by the AG.²¹¹ Although it has been challenging to pass laws at the federal level, Hogg highlighted that they have been able to pass many laws in Florida as well as various other states that advance their mission. One particular tactic they use in garnering legislative support is through a policy team of student lobbyists, having met with 44 different offices in 2020 alone. In addition to this, students participate in town halls, rallies, and direct action in order to advocate for gun control measures.

I also had the opportunity to interview former Moms Demand Action CT Chapter leader and federal legislative lead, Alexis Gevanter, about her role in the gun control advocacy movement. She recently ran for Connecticut State Senate as a gun-sense candidate. She became involved with Moms Demand Action in 2017 in response to the Las Vegas shooting. She

²⁰⁹ Open Secrets. n.d. “Gun Control.” Open Secrets.
<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?ind=Q12&cycle=2020>.

²¹⁰ CNN Staff. 2018. “Florida student Emma Gonzalez to lawmakers and gun advocates: ‘We call BS.’” CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/17/us/florida-student-emma-gonzalez-speech/index.html>.

²¹¹ Underwood, Barbara. 2018. “Re: National Rifle Association of America.” March for Our Lives.
<https://marchforourlives.com/letter-to-nyag/>.

explained that Moms Demand Action is a grassroots organization that functions to educate, advocate, and get involved in the electoral process to elect gun-sense candidates. There are no paid lobbyists, no financial incentives, and strict governing rules. Gevanter highlighted the fact that “grassroots organizations that allow you to do something and not just donate money are empowering for activists and advocates” to get more people involved and committed to the cause. This is contradictory to the tactics of the NRA, whose main tactic is to put money behind A-rated candidates. Advocacy on Capitol Hill and at state legislatures consists of meeting with lawmakers with data-based policy advocacy, holding press conferences, and hosting rallies. This is all done with the goal of changing the current gun culture. Gevanter noted that common-sense gun laws have the public support that they need, with even 70% of the NRA member base supporting universal background checks. However, as long as the NRA continues to represent gun manufacturers (and not their actual pro-Second Amendment member base) through lobbying, money will likely come before policy change for many lawmakers.

It is clear that the NRA historically has a lot of power that is deeply embedded in Washington D.C., and state legislatures. Gun legislation aside, the influence of money in politics has prioritized corporations and special interest groups over actual constituents that are likely harmed by these policies. This can be resolved through serious campaign finance reform, and perhaps a moral reckoning for many lawmakers. Without reform, the only way to defeat groups like the NRA is by countering their work, grassroots organizing, and holding them accountable. For now, as long as they continue to be riddled with lawsuits and excessive expenses, less effort will be paid to lobbying for gun rights. In a time when mass shootings are no longer breaking news, the solution is clear. In 1971, Saul Alinsky, a grassroots organizer said, “the major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon opposition. It is this that will cause the opposition to react to your advantage.”²¹² Gun control advocacy groups will continue to maintain pressure on the NRA. The 2018 midterm defeat that brought in many gun-sense candidates was promising, and it is likely that in a few election cycles, Congress will be able to push common sense gun legislation through. With that being said, there is hope for gun control advocates to finally have their field day in Congress.

²¹² Alinsky, Saul D. 1971. *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*. N.p.: Vintage Books.

Welcome, Striketober!

Zachary Martin

As families prepare their costumes, Jack-o'-lanterns begin to be carved, and spooky stories are being told, something is giving the corporations of this country an even greater fright. On October 14, 2021 the United Auto Workers Union started a strike that included 10,000 workers, making it the largest US strike in two years. On October 13, 2021, the International Alliance of Stage Employees authorized a strike which included 60,000 people. On the same date as the UAW, 37,000 workers at Kaiser, a healthcare company, authorized a strike behind closed doors. It is not just the unions resisting employers, however. According to The Washington Post, nearly 3% of the entire American workforce quit their job in August, one of the largest instances of this in United States History²¹³. These developments may cause concern for some, as they will potentially negatively impact our beleaguered supply chain. However, the developments are also a sign of the American worker finally gaining a stake in the market, one that has been denied to them for too long. No longer are workers disposable cogs in the machine to be discarded upon the first squeak. They are now starting to be recognized as independent economic actors who should be afforded sufficient dignity. To understand why so many strikes are occurring, one must understand three things; the role of unions in the labor market before the pandemic, how Covid shifted the status quo, and how things are now. An understanding of these three subjects will bring clarity to the current state of labor conditions in the United States today. The transformation towards new labor relations may have some growing pains, but is far better than the status quo.

Following The Second World War, the United States enjoyed a period of prosperity as it was the only nation involved in the War that had retained its manufacturing capabilities. Unions played an instrumental role in ensuring that the middle class shared a large part of that prosperity. Due to union activism, there were improved working conditions as well as consistent wage growth across the nation. According to Harold Meyerson, a political columnist for The Washington Post, even non-union workers saw their wages grow when unions had more power, "This had an effect on non-union workers as well....Non-union workers in heavily unionized industries....their employers had to compete with union employers²¹⁴. This raised wages for everyone." In this way, Unions allowed workers to share in the prosperity of their country and helped even those not in their membership. They undoubtedly played a crucial role in creating the American middle class. For all their successes, union power drastically declined while Ronald Reagan was president, largely due to the introduction of stringent right-to-work laws. These laws allowed Unionized workers to opt-out of paying dues even if they were represented

²¹³ Rosenberg, Eli and et al. "A Record Number of Workers Are Quitting Their Jobs, Empowered by New Leverage." The Washington Post, WP Company, 13 Oct. (retrieved December 10, 2021).

²¹⁴ Staff, NPR. "State of the Unions: Labor and the Middle Class." NPR, NPR, 16 June 2012, <https://www.npr.org/2012/06/16/155186594/state-of-the-unions-labor-and-the-middle-class>.(retrieved December 10, 2021).

by the Union. This weakened the unions financially, weakening their functional capabilities. The effects of this have been disastrous for workers in the present day; “As unions have declined...the average wage in some sectors has fallen...Without a middle class helped by unions, Meyerson says, the U.S. would continue down a path of massive inequality of wealth and low levels of mobility.” Unions built the middle class, and without them the middle class is failing. This downward trend may have been altered, however, by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the entire American workforce to rethink their work lives. Massive layoffs have occurred throughout the country, millions have lost their health insurance, and working conditions have grown exponentially worse due to pandemic related restrictions and social disruptions. On top of that, essential workers have seen a drastic increase in their hours without any compensatory pay. These issues have caused the American working class to rediscover their union roots, “This past fall, for example, nurses, respiratory therapists, radiologists and other workers who belong to Teamsters Local 332 at Ascension Genesys Hospital near Flint, Michigan banded together with unions at five other regional hospitals to push administrators to implement hazard pay and guarantee higher staffing levels...After the Local 332 union secured a letter of agreement from Ascension Genesys guaranteeing some hazard pay, other unions used that agreement as leverage to get their hospital to extend the same bonuses to them, too.”²¹⁵ ‘The coalition is picking up momentum amid the pandemic,’ says Nina Bugbee, president of Teamsters Local 332.” Unions have even formed in largely republican states where right-to-work laws have made it very difficult to organize workers. “...a delivery driver for Cash-Wa in North Dakota had never belonged to a union before he took his current job and hardly considered himself an activist. But when his employer failed to take adequate safety precautions, Sandman says he took it upon himself to lobby his non-union coworkers to join the union and hold the company accountable. ‘They’ve seen the benefits and the number of union employees has increased,’ he says.” Because of the pandemic, this class issue has transcended the usual red-blue divide. The past year has forced every member of the working class to organize, in order to simply survive. Now that the pandemic is lifting, this momentum has not abated.

In the opening paragraph, I listed the new strikes occurring in this year of transition. Yet, it is not only unions who are withholding labor from the marketplace. Even on the individual level, there has been a reconsideration of work, “There is also growing evidence — both anecdotal and in surveys — that a lot of people want to do something different with their lives than they did before the pandemic”²¹⁶. The coronavirus outbreak has had a dramatic psychological effect on workers, and people are reassessing what they want to do and how they want to work, whether in an office, at home or some hybrid combination.” People no longer want to work long hours for measly pay in jobs they hate. Instead, they want more flexible hours, higher pay, and jobs they enjoy. A big reason for this is that they want to spend more time with their families. An

²¹⁵ Abrams, Abigail. “Pandemic Fuels Union Interest among Frontline Workers.” Time, Time, 25 Jan. (retrieved December 10, 2021).

²¹⁶ Long, Heather. “Analysis | It's Not a 'Labor Shortage.' It's a Great Reassessment of Work in America.” The Washington Post, WP Company, 10 May 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/07/jobs-report-labor-shortage-analysis/>. (retrieved December 10, 2021).

effective way of achieving this, on top of individually withholding labor, is joining a union. As Leo Hindery Jr argued in a piece for Forbes, “Stronger union membership must be a pillar of our nation’s recovery plan²¹⁷. When unions are strong, America is strong: Unions boost wages of both union and non-union workers, create a more balanced economy, and improve the health and safety of the workplace. By contrast, when unions are weak, inequality skyrockets.” Even now, in the early stages of revived union activity workers are seeing increased benefits. A newfound sense of worker solidarity is taking shape.

The pandemic was a catastrophe for not only the United States but the entire world. However, destruction always brings change. As bad as Covid was and is, perhaps it can usher in a new period of worker solidarity. Striketober is upon us, and I welcome it.

²¹⁷ “Commentary: Why Stronger Labor Unions Would Speed up America's Post-COVID Recovery.” Fortune, Fortune, 20 Oct. (retrieved December 10, 2021)

One Nation, Over God?: Tracing the Ascension of American Independence from Religion

Joey Miller

Do you, as an American citizen, have a purpose? Has it always been that way? Across the broad and storied history of this country's inception, a consensus-backed cultural definition of what comprises an American and their responsibilities has, itself, been the definition of “elusive.” In modern conversation, one may hear debate centered around demographics or immigrant status but few conversations today touch on one of the original, centermost veins of early American identity: faith. While the first amendment’s free exercise and establishment clauses may neuter the fervor and frequency of such religious deliberation today, one need look no further than domestic 17th and 18th century accounts to understand the gradient upon which American theocracy has diminished over time. In assessing these primary sources, it is clear that the 18th century served as an integral period of time for the divorce of the servitude of Christian faith from government. This secular separation was reflective of its inherent removal from citizen identity as well, a process rooted in broad shifts in understanding cause-and-effect in the material plane.

Instructive in setting the stage for the burgeoning country’s religious ideology, the example of John Winthrop stands as a telling origin of the predominant faith governing early American colonies. In 1630, in a preparatory sermon for the first large waves of Puritan settlers into the American colonies, Winthrop disabused his audience (even 400 years later) of any illusions they may be under surrounding the purpose of himself and his people in the New World. Winthrop emphasizes the religiosity impelling their European exodus, establishing a blueprint for their future communities as a “City upon a Hill,” a spiritual and communal utopia to be founded in testament to God.²¹⁸

The consequences for failure were grave. Were Winthrop and his christened cohort to fail in this endeavor, they would permit their faith’s enemies to “speak evil” of their mission and their God, and tarnish the sacred name of their savior.²¹⁹ This self-imposed perfectionistic push for sanctuary motivated much anxiety within current communities, which seldom if ever found themselves unconcerned with their standing with the most high. They aspired to live in a “state of grace,” or an ostensibly sin-free existence. To fail the Lord would be to displease him, and ensure not only a failure of the colonies, but one’s own condemnation to eternal damnation. Compounding this anxiety was the cognitive and emotional tinderbox of the “Covenant of Grace,” a Puritan doctrine which held that God’s will towards events and individuals is unknowable, but may manifest throughout the material plane. Early colonists would feverishly

²¹⁸ Giles B. Gunn, *Early American Writing* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 112.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

attribute many natural phenomena to the will of God, reading into simple phenomena as divine communications of wrath or approval.

For the Puritans, supporting their theocratic government and its mission to form a perfect community in God's name was attained with strict adherence to the faith and this principle, in order to court the aforementioned divine favor. Ultimately, the gnawing teeth of perfectionism within the community exposed simple and salient truths about the role of religion in their government and in the lives of individuals, and the extent to which both relationships were inextricably linked. Of many Pilgrim practices, few exemplify this dynamic more clearly than their most iconic court proceedings.

Ann Hutchinson, an ardent disciple of Massachusetts minister John Cotton, was hardly a formal religious figure, but after developing a near-cultish following through weekly sermon reviews conducted from her home, her influence became notable, and to the government, punishable. Were it not for her criticism of the newly-introduced Doctrine of Justification, she may have been permitted to continue holding such sessions- but the Pilgrim Icarus that she was, she persisted until 1637, when a Governor John Winthrop tried her with having asserted that all non-Cotton preachers were “not able ministers of the gospel,” which was tantamount to a clear dereliction of her purported duty as a traditionally pious, compliant Puritan resident of the colony.²²⁰ Hutchinson's trial speaks in equal measure to both the role of the citizen and government in early America. Because political figures and religious figures were one in the same, Hutchinson's transgressions were naturally tried as criminal due to their blasphemous nature.

Illustrative of the Puritans' misunderstanding of natural action and natural consequence are the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, during which numerous women were accused of witchcraft. Unfortunately, the evidential standards for the science-deprived courts and culture were far below what a reasonable juror may require today. The practice of supernatural acceptance and acknowledgement facilitated much of what transpired in the trials, and was innate to the proceedings themselves. That “[torture] by invisible hands” was even admissible in court is a transparent indictment of the Puritan's legal system and Earthly perspective.²²¹ Additionally, that witchcraft was a crime spoke to the expectations and definition of a pious citizen in early America. However, in the face of a growing population, diversifying resident bodies of faith, and evolving culture abroad, this mindset's viability could not endure.

With the advent of the European Enlightenment, new philosophies came to the New World, illuminating thought and changing the trajectory of the domestic government permanently. Notable, intermediary figures such as theologian John Edwards were vital to this transition. Most famous for his volcanic 1741 sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Edwards did preach warnings of great wrath (with infamous energy), but attempted to discern

²²⁰ Ibid., 165

²²¹ George Lincoln Burr, *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases: 1648-1706* (Kila, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2009), 216.

greater relationships between the material and immaterial worlds. He favored a “Doctrine of Absolute Sovereignty,” emphasizing that all people possess a capacity for living in a state of grace, despite the persistent inscrutability of God’s will.²²² This spirit of personal determination may have animated his support for separation of church and state, a marked departure from Puritan tradition, and a telling prologue for the country’s future.

Few men better exemplify the newly-formed attitudes and principles of the country’s governing body better than Thomas Jefferson, who was elected to the Presidency in 1800. From tolerance to full-throated endorsements of his record of supporting secular governance, Jefferson’s election signified a general support for his track record of secular thought. In his home state of Virginia, Jefferson authored the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (a forerunner to the provisions of Jefferson’s later seminal work, the first amendment), articulating his personal philosophy on religious freedom and the separation of church and state. Under the statute, no man would be compelled to support any religion, through act or tax.²²³ In essence, no government-sponsored religion could exist under this framework, eliminating the format of decades past. In doing so, Jefferson introduced a new political structure formally divorcing governance from worship. Perhaps fundamental to a separate church and state, his perspectives also stood as a comprehension of the barrier between the physical and immaterial realms. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson clearly refers to the “laws of nature” and “nature’s God” separately, distinguishing between the workings of the universe and their supposed creator- a tepid acknowledgement of human consequences for human actions in this world, and a far cry from pilgrim presumptions of all physical phenomena as indications of God’s wrath or favor. Effective though his writings may be in illustrating the newly faith-free American governing style, similarly telling are the works of his peers, and one pensive Pennsylvanian in particular.

Far from a man of God, American polymath Benjamin Franklin enjoyed a life largely independent of organized religion. A scientist, inventor, writer, diplomat, printer, publisher and philosopher (among other titles), Franklin found great monetary success in leading the Pennsylvania Gazette, as well as the yearly publishing of Poor Richard’s Almanack, which enabled him to engage in a number of different luxury pursuits of intellect. One such venture entailed detailing the ideal citizen, leading him to draft 13 virtues (included in his 1788 autobiography) which he believed this archetype to embody. Among them were justice, tranquility, humility, chastity and more, all of which ran parallel to Christian values.²²⁴ Notably absent from this behavioral blueprint? Piety, the historical staple of colonial practice. As a man who achieved the closest approximation of American cultural royalty (both contemporaneously and presently), and one so immersed in the nature of the material world, for Franklin to espouse endorsements of agnostic living was a representation of a decided shift in popular understanding. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the views of a cultural and political icon of the time was

²²² Gunn, *Early American Writing*, 332.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 443.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 366.

largely characteristic of both contemporaneous cultural and political climates. No longer was the ideal of every American expressly theological, but rather centered around the objective of being a generally productive and positive influence in the world around them. In order to achieve a better community, the responsibility was now vested in the secular actions of individuals, rather than any divine responsibility.

If one rightly assumes that the structure of American government has largely been predicated on her citizen's perspectives/identities, then, with complete certainty, one can assert that the understanding of an American evolved through the 18th century. From theocracy to republic, no longer were they purely devout servants of both the Lord, and a government constructed in His name. Facilitated by changing demographics, the Great Awakening, and the American Revolution, governing in America came to mean conducting and implementing public policy over a people no longer united in common theological purpose.

Gender, Politics, and the Veil: The Role of the Hijab in Political Symbolism

Nidhi Jayakumar Nair

“A woman in a hijab is preferable to me over a thousand Friday sermons. She is a moving tank”
- Mahfoud Nanh

“The way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society’s uniqueness” -Frantz Fanon

Introduction

Throughout the course of history, the veil has been an integral part of womanhood in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region). Traditionally, the veil has marked the symbolic separation of men and women and the spheres in which they exist. Furthermore, the veil is also seen as a form of “portable seclusion”, and a commitment to a particular community and specific moral practices.²²⁵ However, veiling has been an immensely politicized aspect of life in the MENA region, heavily influenced by post-colonial nation-building, the dynamic interconnections of religion and culture, gendered politics, and Western influences, especially in Algeria, Iran, and Egypt.

Understanding the political and cultural implications of the veil requires a historical knowledge of veiling in Islam. In her book *Questioning the Veil: Open letters to Muslim Women*, Marnia Lazreg details the theological origins of the veil. The Qur’an references the importance of modesty for both men and women and urges people to cover certain parts of their body (from the waist to the knee for men, and from the bosom for women). However, no formal translation of the Qur’an mentions a head or face veil. In fact, the tradition began as a Muslim custom which was appropriated from the Prophet Muhammed’s family and molded to fit the different cultures in which it was used. The veil had multiple uses and interpretations. It was seen as a vehicle for visual sexual segregation, a means of controlling male sexual desire, and an indicator of wealth and class status, as wealthy women could afford to veil themselves fully or partially, whereas lower-class women who worked in the fields could not adopt the same trend. Interpretations of the veil have evolved over the years in different ways across countries in the MENA region.

Algeria: Colonization and the Veil

²²⁵ Papanek, Hanna (1982), *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia*

Colonization transformed the use of the veil across the MENA region in the nineteenth century. The French colonization of Algeria is a case in point. The French forced Algerian women to adopt European norms to signal a symbolic win over Algeria. To this effect, they staged “unveiling ceremonies” across Algeria in 1958, which demonstrated “solidarity” between Algerian women and their modernized, emancipated French “sisters”.²²⁶ These ceremonies were also held during the Algerian War of Independence amidst significant political turmoil, thus simultaneously exacerbating tensions and initiating the status of the hijab as a political weapon. Ironically, the veil even functioned as a literal weapon by disguising and enabling female guerrilla fighters. This role of women’s dress code was highlighted in the 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers*, in which the veil is used as a vehicle of anonymity by female guerrilla fighters planting bombs in French dominated areas during the Algerian War of Independence. In forcing European norms onto Algerian women, the colonizers were also accused of prostituting Algeria as forced unveiling was seen as an effective strategy to debase Algerians and their traditional identity.²²⁷ Algeria’s history demonstrates how Western colonizers have mobilized the veil as a political symbol by channeling Oriental beliefs and attempting to depict the backwardness of Eastern culture in an attempt to justify the “virtuous” quest of colonization.

In the post-colonial landscape of the twentieth century, the emergence of several independent nation states across the globe was further complicated by the injection of modernization and Western ideas into these societies. In many post-independence urban areas, Algerian women temporarily stopped wearing the veil. However, with the rise of state-building and nationalism in these new states, the “women’s question” became inextricably linked with veiling in countries in the MENA region. Male elites in many newly emerging states felt an intense need to draw distinctions between the East and the West, or what they saw as traditionality and modernity, respectively. An integral part of this discussion was detailing the different domains or spheres in which men and women should exist.

There was an implicit selective appropriation of Western modernity, wherein the Western way of life was seen as useful when it came to the public sphere—material benefits—which men would be assigned to occupy. On the other hand, women were made to represent the private sphere—the home and the hearth—which was seen as the core of the spiritual, pure identity of the country. As leaders of these countries did not want further encroachment by colonizers upon the private sphere, there was a resurgence in the use of the veil in these countries to further delineate the domains and assert the moral superiority of the private sphere.²²⁸ Postcolonial Algeria embraced this rationale in an effort to cleanse the public sphere of the “contamination” imposed upon it by French colonizers, such as public soliciting, prostitution, and forced unveilings. Lazreg posits that Algerian elites sought to destroy any remnants of colonialism and its perceived “moral depravity,” so they decided Islam would become the primary way to assert Algerian identity. They also injected religiosity in the everyday by strictly defining every aspect

²²⁶ Lazreg, Marnia (1994), *The Eloquence of Silence*

²²⁷ (Fanon, 1959)

²²⁸ Chaterjee, Partha (1993), *The Nation and Its Fragments*

of women's lives, including her clothes, and thus this anti-imperialist view further reinforced the idea of the veil as a symbol of resistance against the cultural dominance of the French.

Egypt: Postcolonial National Iconography

Another major postcolonial struggle related to veiling is the utilization of veiled women in national iconography to make suggestions about national purity and backwardness. This is exemplified by Egypt's struggle to identify a female national symbol, which stirred patriotism, pride, and nostalgia in its populace. As Beth Baron describes in her article "Egypt as a Woman," "Egyptians agreed that the nation was to be represented as a woman, [but] they disagreed as to which 'woman' would be chosen and what being a 'woman' meant".²²⁹ This usage of women in the national iconography is ironic because these images do not accurately represent real-life Egyptian women. After all, post-colonial Egyptian women were excluded from political participation, had fewer rights, and were even prohibited from seeing the gendered images of their own nation. Veiling was another source of strife in national iconography, wherein new states wanted to simultaneously be seen as free and modern (i.e. associated with unveiling) and traditional and nationally pure (i.e. associated with mandating veiling).

Egyptian nationalist reformers in the 1950s also faced this issue with the introduction of women into the workforce. The seclusion of women from the public sphere has deprived Egypt of a virtually untapped labor market, and reformers identified the veil as a marker of women's seclusion, and more broadly, the country's backwardness.²³⁰ Women's unveiling in Egypt signified their official entrance into public life, albeit in a constrained fashion. While many nationalists saw this as the figurative "final step" towards overthrowing colonialism, Egyptian society still grappled with the widely prevalent idea of domesticity, which was associated with women. Thus, it is clear that "at the nexus of imperialism and nationalism, the veil became variously the representation of women, culture, oppression, liberation, piety, tradition and fanaticism", and this multi-symbolism of the veil further cemented its status as a political metaphor.²³¹

Iran: The Evolution of the Veil and State Mandates

The politicization of the veil is further reinforced by veiling and unveiling mandates, such as those instated in Iran in 1979. Beyond stripping women of the choice of whether or not to veil, these compulsory laws, which also existed in countries like Algeria and Turkey, sparked outrage in Islamic and secularist communities alike. Forced unveiling in these states, though touted as "progressive" reform, are seen as an assault against Muslim women. The secularist Iranian king, Reza Shah, used physical force and other legal measures to forcibly unveil women, such as

²²⁹ Baron, Beth (2005), *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics*

²³⁰ Bier, Laura (2011), *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt*

²³¹ Moruzzi, Norma Claire (2013), *Gender and the Revolutions*

preventing veiled women from working or entering public spaces. Like in Algeria, these actions were seen as massive violations of women's identities.²³² In 1979, after the Islamist Ayatollah Khomeini came into power, post-revolutionary Iran's clerical regime imposed a compulsory wearing of the hijab wherein women who opposed the hijab were fined, fired, or imprisoned. At this point, secular women in Iran started treating the headscarf as a powerful rebellious symbol. This forced veiling stood in stark contrast to Shah's unveiling efforts. The veiling mandates instituted by Iran demonstrate that veiling should not indicate a universal oppression of women in Islamic countries, and that context-specific analysis of situations should instead inform one's judgement. After all, during the 1979 revolution, veiling was a revolutionary symbol, whereas in contemporary Iran, coercive Islamic laws have transformed the symbolic meaning entirely.

Iran's history demonstrates the constant tug of war between the inchoate formation of gender consciousness and female identity in the MENA region and the forced idea of womanhood and femininity imposed on women imposed by regimes. This constant dichotomy of political behaviors exhibited by MENA regimes have gained a disturbing permanence and shown us forceful veiling and unveiling mandates have had a dual effect on women's lives in the MENA region. Firstly, they have temporarily empowered some groups of women in the country while oppressing others (such as secularists and Islamists, respectively), and secondly, the free use of hijabs as political metaphors has continually violated women's rights.

East versus West: Western Conceptions of the Veil

The use of hijabs as political metaphors has not just been restricted to the East. In Western countries, the veil has been used as a symbol meant to evoke pity, sympathy, and anger in support of women in the MENA region. After 9/11, the War on Terror resulted in a rise in the ethnocentric depiction of Muslim women as "imprisoned within the veil," and the need for Westerners to act as saviors and liberate veiled women from the "tyranny" imposed upon them (especially in the context of the liberation of Afghan women by American troops). As Lila Abu-Lughod highlights in "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?," "There is an essential need to accept the fundamental premise of humans as social beings that are capable of forming their hopes and desires based on their communities, and it is important to simply denounce the veil as a medieval imposition".²³³ While cultures with veiled women have a range of political demands placed upon them, they are often subjected to reductive discourse adopted by outsiders centered around veiling.

There is also an unwillingness to discuss the role the United States plays in encouraging the very gender violence in the MENA region it claims to stamp out. The U.S.'s provision of funding, arms, and other resources to militants in those areas of the world, especially armies in

²³² Zahedi, Ashraf (2007), *Contested Meaning of the Veil and Political Ideologies of Iranian Regimes*

²³³ Abu-Lughod, Lila (2002), *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others*

Afghanistan and Pakistan, was glossed over in 2000s public discourse. This effectively drew attention to both the lack of free will made available to women forced to wear veils in those areas, and the importance of the U.S. as the “savior” of these women.²³⁴ The West also characterized veiled women as the perpetual victim, always at the mercy of fundamentalists, and a “backward” threat to Western civilization. There seems to be a clear lack of nuance in these discussions, as opposed to a detailed exploration of the influences of foreign actors, colonialism, geography, state building, and institutions in the MENA region.

This reductive characterization of the veil as the symbol of Muslim identity has also exacerbated tense situations in countries with large Muslim immigrant populations, like France. In its ardent efforts to keep public spaces secular, France banned headscarves from public schools in 2011, and this was, in part, a result of re-veiling trends in Western countries. Many second and third- generation Muslim immigrants to Western countries have started wearing the veil to advertise their cultural identity, and in *Questioning the Veil*, Lazreg argues this re-veiling has unintentionally made the veil the primary symbol of Islamic identity, and thus an easy target for state control and opposition.²³⁵ In the Western world, this relates to the constant argument of whether the veil acts as a symbol of freedom to choose or of repression, and how attempts to exercise faith with a public symbol, like the veil, have actually ended up reducing the freedoms of Muslims.

Conclusion

Through case studies in Algeria, Egypt, and Iran, it is apparent that the veil has had multiple interpretations throughout history, from its use as a revolutionary symbol in Iran and Algeria to its use as a symbol of backwardness in newly-emerging states. Furthermore, the veil seems to represent duality in many societies. In post-colonial states, the veil represented the growth of the country into a new era, as well as its attachment to its traditional identity. In many immigrant populations, the veil represents a proud ownership of cultural identity, whereas in a country like Iran which implements forced veiling mandates, it represents the loss of personal autonomy and dignity. Many decisions pertaining to women’s dress code and the issue of the veil have been made by politicians and other involved members of the political arena, most of whom are male and have no “skin in the game,” thus further reinforcing the lack of dignity extended to women by states that seek to control their choices. While the veil remains a contentious issue, it also highlights the diversity of veiled women who are not a monolith, but instead fully capable, autonomous human beings continually stripped of their free will. The incessant politicization of the veil should not prevent women from making their own decisions, and we should push for an abandonment of the reductive lens through which Muslim women are viewed. It is essential that

²³⁴ Hirschkind, C., Mahmood S. (2002), *Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter- Insurgency*

²³⁵ Lazreg, Marnia (2009). *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women*

the veil's historical and political symbolism does not precede the inherent humanity and dignity of the woman who wears it.

The Fall of Afghanistan and its Effects on the U.S. Overseas Basing Strategies

Devin O'Brien

This summer, Afghanistan succumbed to Taliban forces that had resurged upon the announcement that the United States would pull out its remaining troops by 9/11. Many were left aghast to see the nation fall so quickly and concerned by the security implications of this event. Experts have begun to react to this now pressing reality that the Taliban may not only be emboldened to conduct more attacks, but also that Afghanistan may once again become a safe haven for terrorism that threatens the United States.²³⁶ This past September, NATO held a meeting for its Military Committee, where Afghanistan and Iraq were major topics of discussion. From this meeting, the United States showed clear interest in forging agreements for more bases and intelligence sharing.²³⁷ However, security experts are now doubting the effectiveness of this strategy as the United States normally conducts it. The recent fall of Afghanistan marks a major strategic loss but will serve as a critical time for the United States military to rethink its overseas basing strategies and face the next generation of security threats.

In order to assess the significance of the fall of Afghanistan, it is necessary to evaluate the importance of the United States' assets in Afghanistan. Of the many bases the U.S. operated in Afghanistan, probably the most significant was Bagram Air Base. It was an incredibly large base at 30 square miles, with two airstrips which could allow cargo planes, bombers, fighter jets, and drones to operate. This base was critical for the Joint Forces to bring in precious supplies to support the troops at the front, but it could also be used as a site to launch offensive operations from.²³⁸ The utility of this base did not go unnoticed by Congress, as shown by a 2006 report that suggested the U.S. might consider a long term partnership with the Afghan government to maintain a strong presence and keep the Taliban under control.²³⁹ The report also noted that Uzbekistan had forced the U.S. out of a key base in July 2005, making a presence in Afghanistan all the more pressing.²⁴⁰ Aside from the opinions of Congress, other foreign powers saw the importance of military access to Afghanistan as well. NATO acknowledged maintaining a presence in Afghanistan as being extremely important to help prevent the spread of terrorism in

²³⁶ Bery et al. "The Deteriorating Situation in Afghanistan: Expertise from the Wilson Center." Wilson Center, August 16, 2021. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/deteriorating-situation-afghanistan-expertise-wilson-center>.

²³⁷ Baldor, Lolita C. "After Afghanistan Pullout, US Seeks NATO Basing, Intel Pacts." AP NEWS. Associated Press, September 18, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-greece-united-states-migration-europe-2f336407bf5e8c8084227d12f3e91b3d>.

²³⁸ "Afghanistan: Two Decades of the US at Bagram Base." BBC News. BBC, July 2, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57693593>.

²³⁹ Feickert, Andrew. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism." crsreports.congress.gov, January 6, 2006. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL32758/5,6>

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

the Secretary General's Annual Report of 2020.²⁴¹ All of these points are evidence of interest and recognition of the strategic value of using Afghanistan as a forward staging area for U.S. troops, for purposes of domestic goals and international security.

Placing such a massive military presence in Afghanistan was a carefully calculated decision due to its proximity with China and Iran. U.S. military leadership has pushed for such a large presence in Afghanistan in order to deter China and Iran from pursuing any military goals that the U.S. does not approve of.²⁴² By not having any access to Afghanistan, the U.S. loses some of their deterrence, because a key component of deterrence is capability. In this context, capability is asking if a threat of violence can be realistically carried out. U.S. capability becomes greater by having a large base in Afghanistan because its proximity to China and Iran creates more options for the U.S. to respond to threats quickly. Therefore, losing access to Afghanistan is a major blow to the military and intelligence communities, and explains the urgency of the Pentagon to acquire new agreements. Recently however, there have been more calls to reassess basing strategies. In the wake of losing a major regional partner in the Middle East, it appears there is no time like the present for the Pentagon to respond to the many calls from defense experts and change U.S. basing strategies as the search for new agreements begins.

One of the reasons why now is such a crucial time for the U.S. military to act is due to how fast the regional powers are shifting in Afghanistan. There is perhaps no greater example of the threats evolving after the fall of Afghanistan than the potential of the Chinese military taking over Bagram Air Base. Reports have emerged claiming that China is considering investing in and occupying the former U.S. base, but China flatly denies these claims.²⁴³ Adding credence to the suspicions of Chinese interest in Afghanistan is an investigation by the Washington Post that found a clear Chinese military presence in a strategic chokepoint in a Tajikistan valley, right next to Afghanistan.²⁴⁴ The key message to be taken from this is that China recognizes both the importance of Afghanistan strategically, and is emerging as a great power ready to challenge the U.S. What the U.S. lost, China may gain, not only in a potential hub of military air power for Central Asia, but a symbolic victory as well. The world is changing, and this is why the U.S.

²⁴¹ Stoltenberg, Jens. "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2020." Nato.int. NATO, March 16, 2021. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/sGAR20-en.pdf, 76.

²⁴² Lostumbo et al. "Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits." Rand.org. RAND, 2013. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR201/RAND_RR201.sum.pdf, xxi.

²⁴³ Shinkman, Paul D. "China Weighing Occupation of Former U.S. Air Base at Bagram: Sources." US News and World Report, September 7, 2021. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2021-09-07/china-weighing-occupation-of-former-us-air-base-at-bagram-sources>.

²⁴⁴ Shih, Gerry. "In Central Asia's Forbidding Highlands, a Quiet Newcomer: Chinese Troops ." The Washington Post. WP Company, February 19, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-central-asias-forbidding-highlands-a-quiet-newcomer-chinese-troops/2019/02/18/78d4a8d0-1e62-11e9-a759-2b8541bbbe20_story.html.

wants more basing agreements. Now, it is important to examine what changes to the strategy should be made.

One key lesson to learn in the fall of Afghanistan is the inherent political risks that come with seeking overseas bases. Defense think tank RAND points out that the previously mentioned ousting of U.S. forces by the Uzbekistan government is not exactly uncommon. Placing trust into potentially unstable governments, which may quickly decide to turn against Western influence, is not exactly a winning strategy when it comes to choosing allies.²⁴⁵ Losing bases in Afghanistan once again shows that placing too many assets overseas in unstable locations is a problematic way to fight wars. This must be considered in the search for new basing agreements in order to ensure the U.S. has reliable, continued access to key strategic areas.

However, strategic placement of military bases is only one aspect of a defense strategy. The costs of operating overseas bases are incredibly expensive as well. RAND conducted an analysis which found, “There are efficiencies to be gained from using fewer, larger bases rather than a more distributed posture. This effect, by itself, would be a significant contributor to cost reductions were forces realigned from overseas or inactivated in place”.²⁴⁶ In the efforts to recoup the losses of Afghanistan, it is important for the government to consider that consolidating bases may be a far more cost-effective strategy. This is also of course more palatable to the American taxpayer and can allow for more resources to be allocated to other pressing projects. Less may in fact be more if the reduced number of bases are more capable, and an efficient deterrence posture can be created. Losing access to Afghanistan is a great difficulty because the U.S. loses a number of important bases. This makes it all the more pressing to find suitable new basing agreements following newer defense strategies in order to maintain a strong deterrence posture, without the cost being too great.

Cost and political stability concerns aside, bases must be carefully placed, and as briefly mentioned, capable. Defense think tank CNAS points out that another tenant of U.S. military strategy has been creating a “forward tripwire presence” using overseas bases.²⁴⁷ They warn, “Without the threat of an effective military response in the event of conflict, a tripwire presence loses its viability, as it doesn’t ‘trip’ anything. Instead, it runs the risk of becoming a vulnerable target, a hostage, or irrelevant”.²⁴⁸ Simply consolidating a few bases to save costs may be a miscalculation. As new agreements are created and new bases are established, it must be ensured

²⁴⁵ Lostumbo et al. “Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits.” Rand.org. RAND, 2013.
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR201/RAND_RR201.sum.pdf, xxiii

²⁴⁶ Ibid, xxv

²⁴⁷ Dougherty, Christopher. “Why America Needs a New Way of War.” CNAS.org. Center For A New American Security, June 12, 2019. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+Report++ANAWOW++FINAL2.pdf>, 11.

²⁴⁸ Dougherty, Christopher. “Why America Needs a New Way of War.” CNAS.org. Center For A New American Security, June 12, 2019. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+Report++ANAWOW++FINAL2.pdf>, 12

these bases have the teeth to create the desired deterrence effect. Although smaller, spread out bases have worked in the past against less capable terrorist threats, the U.S. is now being forced to reevaluate strategic priorities. A terrorist resurgence in Afghanistan is something that must be monitored, but Iran seeking nuclear weapons is a larger problem for global security. This greater threat absolutely requires more capable bases to deter Iran. Nonetheless, Washington knows its sights must shift from the Middle East to the greater threats of China and Russia.

The fall of Afghanistan means that terrorism rebounding in the region must be considered a serious threat, but it is clear that larger threats now face the U.S. The 2018 National Defense Strategy identified that the Middle East was no longer the primary focus for the military. Instead, attention will be shifted primarily on Russia and China, with additional focus on Iran and North Korea.²⁴⁹ This represents a huge shift in strategic priorities. After spending decades fighting in the deserts and mountains of the Middle East, military planners will have to prepare for future conflicts in areas such as the South China Sea, and the Asian steppes. Afghanistan did have strategic positioning and losing access creates a considerable disadvantage, but acquiring new basing pacts for the sole purpose of countering terrorist threats from Afghanistan is a short sighted solution for the larger strategy Washington is being forced to adopt.

For any who reject the idea of the U.S. playing such a major role in national security, there is still more to consider. Many claim other members of NATO could perhaps shoulder more responsibilities in defending the world. But, an article penned by two security experts warned that calls to force other NATO members into taking more action may backfire. This is because, “all too often these troops lacked essential enabling capabilities necessary for the battles into which they had been thrust”.²⁵⁰ Simply asking for other nations to bear more responsibility is therefore not always a reliable option. If the U.S. wants to ensure global security, they will most likely need to be the leaders of this effort. Even as history changes and the U.S. must evaluate its future as a global military power, it appears the U.S. will remain in the spotlight.

In the face of such huge changes, the Pentagon does not need to panic. Robert Hathaway of the Woodrow Wilson Center points out that the U.S. has been in a similar situation before: the Vietnam War. The two withdrawals have been compared due to their messy, last minute evacuations, but there is still more to learn. Losing the Vietnam War was a major setback to American credibility that ultimately did not dethrone America as a hegemon.²⁵¹ The loss in Afghanistan certainly hurts American credibility, but should not be considered an irreparable loss. He adds that it will be a tall task to address military issues, but it is doable, and will

²⁴⁹ Mattis, James. “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy - U.S. Department of Defense.” [dod.defense.gov](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf). U.S. Department of Defense, January 19, 2018. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, 1.

²⁵⁰ Petraeus, David, and Vance Serchuk. “Big Ideas for NATO's New Mission in Iraq.” *Foreign Policy*, March 6, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/06/iraq-islamic-state-military-nato-advisors/>.

²⁵¹ Bery et al. “The Deteriorating Situation in Afghanistan: Expertise from the Wilson Center.” Wilson Center, August 16, 2021. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/deteriorating-situation-afghanistan-expertise-wilson-center>.

reconcile many fears.²⁵² A scramble to reassert American dominance is neither helpful nor necessary. The potential for the Chinese military to move into Afghanistan is somewhat embarrassing to the American image. But ultimately, it does not have to impact American military might. In new pursuits for basing agreements, the military gets an opportunity to reassert itself in a way that better prepares it for future conflicts.

Understanding national security in the modern age is becoming increasingly more challenging as more states acquire the technology to create sophisticated and powerful weapons. General attitudes are that the United States must adapt before conflict arises and Russia or China make a first move. Ensuring a peaceful world most likely means the United States will have to keep a robust overseas presence in order to assure allies of its commitment and remind adversaries of the power of the United States military. The key to creating this military strength will be a grand balancing act. Political stability, commitment, cost, power projection, and location of new bases must be carefully planned in order to place the U.S. in the best possible position to face future conflicts. The fall of Afghanistan serves as a perfect time to pivot towards conflicts of the future and ensure American strength through a careful evaluation of overseas basing strategies.

²⁵² Ibid

Democratic Judicial Practice in Authoritarian Governments as a Result of Globalization

Sydney Przekop

Introduction

During the twenty-first century, globalization has increased exponentially. The economy and the people who comprise it are more interconnected than ever. Authoritarian countries often feel excluded from these global opportunities unless they are seen as legitimate by their democratic counterparts. Political scientists have studied the conflicting principles of democracy and authoritarian institutions, as well as how they can occasionally work together. “Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes” by Tamir Moustafa, “Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of Law in the Political System” by Francis Kahn Zemans, “Beyond Global Convergence: Conflicts of Legitimacy in a Chinese Lower Court” by Siad Liu, “A New Era for Labor Activism? Strategic Mobilization of Human Rights Against Blacklisting” by Filiz Kahraman, and “After the Revolution: Sovereign Respect and the Rule of Law in Egypt” by Ellis Goldberg and Ahmed Zaki help illustrate complex relationships between authoritarian and democratic institutions. These articles demonstrate three effects globalization can have on authoritarian regimes: 1) how authoritarian governments operate their judiciaries, 2) why they have integrated some traditionally democratic aspects, and 3) how they compare to democratic judiciaries. In an increasingly globalized world, if authoritarian countries want to be considered legitimate they need to implement democratic practices in their governments, particularly in the judiciary and the ways in which they acknowledge human rights. Once this is established, the question then becomes, to what extent do democratic practices need to be implemented to ensure authoritarian regime legitimacy? The aforementioned articles support the notion that authoritarian governments implement the bare minimum democratic judicial and human rights values so as to appear “legitimate” by democratic standards, thereby allowing authoritarian regimes to reap its benefits on the international stage without having to lose their core authoritarian values.

Defining Legitimacy

Legitimacy means that a government has control over its people through consent as opposed to coercion. Therefore, “legitimate” countries are trusted and respected globally, ultimately leading other countries to work with them. As globalization has increased, many of the leading nations have incidentally had democratic institutions. These democracies protect their own interests and will not conduct business in countries that do not have legal systems that will fairly protect these interests. Unfortunately, these legal systems are rarely seen in authoritarian regimes. For this reason, in the article, “Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes”, Tamir Moustafa claims that a function of authoritarian judiciaries is to bolster legitimacy. In “Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of Law in the Political System”, Francis Zemans claims that democracies are perceived as legitimate because they use “law as a framework within which

governmental actors can operate legitimately, setting limits on governmental power” but authoritarian governments do not want to set these limits.²⁵³ However, in order to gain legitimacy, they must at the very least appear to be implementing them.

Many authoritarian nations have found that preserving their judicial institutions portrays to the world an image of restraint. Moustafa outlines that many authoritarian regimes, such as Egypt and China, are now regarded as more reliable by the international community than they were under Mao and Nassar simply because they appear to have opened their political system through the use of their courts. These regimes are aware of the gains they have received from this change in perception and thus feel that those gains outweigh the costs of sacrificing a small fraction of power to the judiciary. These gains include being an active part of the global economy. New economic opportunities have allowed authoritarian regimes to grow their revenue. Judicial reform is therefore an important part in achieving authoritarian regimes’ goal of creating functional market economies to attract global capital.

In post-Mao China, the legal system as a whole has expanded rapidly and can be considered one of the reasons for their increasing economic success. Sida Liu confirms this reasoning for the transformation of the Chinese judiciary by studying the legal institutions in the Hebei province of China in his article “Beyond Global Convergence: Conflicts of Legitimacy in a Chinese Lower Court”. The lower courts in China are under pressure to act the way officials and locals want them to. Because the government wants a market economy to be the foundation for China’s reformed legal system, they have to borrow from Western, mainly democratic, examples. With the basis of the judiciary being founded in western traditions, new laws and codes are, therefore, based on western models. These western models include: corporate law and contracts, administrative regulation, and litigation. As seen in many democratic western nations, Liu observed that the Chinese government is encouraging the professionalization of the judiciary. Furthermore, “more than 3/4th of all civil cases are mediated in the judicial system [...] which indicates that the goal of civil litigation in the courts is to resolve disputes rather than to establish legal rules”.²⁵⁴ When the public sees officials making efforts to mediate civil cases it serves as a symbol to promote “investor confidence” and global legitimacy. This supports the idea that authoritarian governments want to keep their core values intact while appearing to be conforming to western ideals, with the sole intent of gaining legitimacy.

Legal Mobilization in Democratic vs Authoritarian Governments

²⁵³ Zemans, Frances Khan. “Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of Law in the Political System.” (*The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3, The American Political Science Review, Sep 1983), 693.

²⁵⁴Liu, Sida. “Beyond Global Convergence: Conflicts of Legitimacy in a Chinese Lower Court.” (*Wiley*, American Bar Foundation, 2006), 96.

Francis Zemans describes that legal mobilization in democratic nations is based on the fact that “the enforcement of laws depends upon individual citizens to initiate the legal process”, therefore, “individual citizens acting largely in their own interests strongly influences the form and extent of the implementation of public policy and thereby the allocation of power and authority”.²⁵⁵ An example of how democratic government’s judiciaries provide citizens with opportunities for legal mobilization is explained in “A New Era for Labor Activism? Strategic Mobilization of Human Rights Against Blacklisting” by Filiz Kahraman. In March 2009, it was exposed that mass numbers of construction workers in the United Kingdom were being blacklisted, meaning these employees could not find jobs with other companies after being fired from their previous job. Companies would threaten to fire and blacklist their employees if they went on strike. When this was discovered, activists wanted labor rights to be viewed as human rights by not only those in their activist group but by the rest of the world, therefore, their goal was to find a way to spread this way of thinking. “The BSG [Blacklist Support Group] started as a grassroots organization. Litigation at the domestic level has been a key factor in exposing blacklisting and building the movement initially”.²⁵⁶ Though litigation was not their primary goal, it is a valuable tool for resistance movements to begin to make social change. The courts played a vital role in creating precedents to support labor rights, including at least a dozen court rulings. In these rulings, the courts made decisions that upheld workers’ rights to collective bargaining and striking without retaliation from their employers, thereby emphasizing that workers’ rights are human rights. Authoritarian nations often do not have avenues to fight for labor rights; however, this type of activism in the democratic world puts pressure on authoritarian governments to adopt labor reform in order to maintain their legitimacy. Many authoritarian nations, like China, are known for their cheap labor. Cheap labor is associated with a lack of labor rights, nevertheless, this cheap labor attracts many countries to outsource their production to China. Therefore, countries in a similar situation to China must decide to hurt their economy or lose legitimacy by following global labor reform efforts.

Even though the authoritarian government may seek to limit large collective action, individuals can use their rights in local courts to have their grievances heard, and sometimes receive the desired result. For example, Chinese administrative courts that are designed to hear disputes against local officials have reported that “plaintiffs win 40% of the cases that they initiate, in whole or in part”.²⁵⁷ Therefore, like in democracies, judges have some discretion over their legal decisions, and are therefore not always forced to fall in line with the regime. This

²⁵⁵ Zemans, Frances Khan. “Legal Mobilization: The Neglected Role of Law in the Political System.” (*The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3, The American Political Science Review, Sep 1983), 690.

²⁵⁶ Kahraman, Filiz. “A New Era for Labor Activism? Strategic Mobilization of Human Rights Against Blacklisting.” (*Law & Social Inquiry*, American Bar Association, 2018), 1292

²⁵⁷ Moustafa, Tamir. “Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes.” (*The Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, Annual Reviews, 3 Sep 2014), 284

demonstrates how the instability of authoritarianism can allow the judiciary to provide citizens with some degree of legal mobilization.

Balancing Democratic and Authoritarian Institutions

When both democratic and authoritarian elements are present in one nation, the conflicting ideals can be too much for the country to handle. The calculated risk authoritarian nations take when allowing aspects of democracy into their judiciary can backfire. Authoritarian nations like Egypt have historically struggled with balancing authoritarian and democratic elements as Ellis Goldberg and Ahmed Zaki discuss in their article focused on the role of courts in Egypt. “After the Revolution: Sovereign Respect and the Rule of Law in Egypt” by Zaki and Goldberg demonstrates how increased legal mobilization can have unintended effects and get out of hand. This article focuses on the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the circumstances that led up to it. When the Egyptian revolution took place, Egypt had started implementing democratic-like avenues for legal mobilization, creating conflict between the rule of law and the authority of the state. Historically there has been a pattern of instability in Egypt as evident by their many Constitutions: each of which fluctuate between expanding and limiting the power of the judiciary. The concept of *haibah* (meaning the government is unrestricted by laws) has been embedded in Egypt. Therefore, it creates an environment where “the state has a terrifying or awe-inducing aspect that is a necessary part of its authority” and “that which reduces this awe thereby also reduces the ability of the state to provide public order”.²⁵⁸ This instills a fear in the Egyptian people of social order collapsing without state authority. The country’s connection to European law can also explain their history of a strong state authority, primarily because “it is widely believed that Egyptians played a dominant role in the adoption of laws modeled on the French civil code to increase the power of the central state”.²⁵⁹ The tension between state authority and rule of law intensified when the judiciary strongly began to view itself as independent from the arbitrary actions of the executive. When this became apparent the executive initiated the “massacre of the judiciary” in 1969. There was “regime rhetoric about a [...] the need to “purify” the judiciary of members with insufficient sympathy for the state’s socialist policies hid the regime’s fear of a judiciary that enjoyed a relatively high degree of independence and commitment to the rule of law”.²⁶⁰ Therefore, they strengthened the executive with the 1971 Constitution. On January 25th, 2011, the courts voided the Constitution of 1971 and joined the demonstrations by protestors further denouncing the executive. However, there were those who feared that chaos would ensue without a strong executive who could use their unquestioned state authority to coerce public order. Others used their newfound freedom to protest, making their opinions known through large, often dangerous or disruptive acts. The

²⁵⁸ Goldberg, Ellis and Zaki, Ahmed. “After the Revolution: Sovereign Respect and the Rule of Law in Egypt.” (*Brille*, Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, 2012), 18-19.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

courts could have used this opportunity to form a new government where they could create “a strong and independent legislature and a strong executive” to balance their strength out.²⁶¹ The authors hypothesized that “if balance is not achieved independence may prove to be challenging for the judiciary [...] the rule of law may also prove to be difficult to maintain in the face of a state bent on maintaining its authority through the use of force”.²⁶² Unfortunately, the second outcome became reality, and the courts did not maintain their strong independence as yet another powerful executive formed in the country. This serves as a primary example of the desire to enter the globalized market leading to the spread of democratic ideas to an authoritarian regime in the form of democracy in their judiciary. However, in many instances, globalization is not a strong enough force to erase the authoritarian values deeply rooted at the core of governments in countries like Egypt.

Conclusion

Through the careful study and analysis of political scientists like Moustafa, Zemans, Goldberg, Zaki, Liu, and Kahraman the relationships between globalization, democracy, and authoritarianism become evident. Zemans’ argument explains to us that democracies are legitimate because they use the law as a check on governmental power. However, in an authoritarian state, the government is supposed to be all powerful, yet, as Moustafa explains, they wish to bolster a democratic sense of legitimacy through reformation of their judiciaries. Liu’s article uses China as an example of this. The Chinese judicial reformation was modeled after Western ideas for the purpose of appearing legitimate because China wanted to improve its economy by tying it to the global economy. However, Liu learned that they still limited the enactment of new legal rules, maintaining their strong central government. Even though authoritarian governments will try not to change widespread governmental policies, sometimes action in the Democratic world puts pressure on them to do so. Kahraman’s article on the 2009 UK blacklisting scandal demonstrated how groups of individuals can use legal mobilization to make real change. These labor rights reforms also have the secondary effect of putting pressure on authoritarian nations to make the same reforms if they want to maintain their legitimacy. However, authoritarianism is so deeply rooted in the histories of some countries, like Egypt, that they cannot handle the integration of an increasingly democratic-modeled, independent judiciary and will eventually revert to strong authoritarianism. To summarize, authoritarian governments implement just enough of the democratic-like judicial and human rights values so as to appear “legitimate” on the surface, thereby allowing them to reap its benefits without having to lose the authoritarian values at their core.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 32.

²⁶² Goldberg, Ellis and Zaki, Ahmed. “After the Revolution: Sovereign Respect and the Rule of Law in Egypt.” (*Brille*, Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, 2012), 32.

A Guide to Senate Bill 8, the New Restrictive Abortion Law in Texas

Jacob Sondik

Throughout the last half-century, the debate over the right for pregnant women to have an abortion has been a highly charged political struggle that has ignited both the pro-life and pro-choice communities. Despite the landmark Supreme Court ruling of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 that affirmed the right for a pregnant woman to have an abortion up to twelve weeks, the debate over abortion laws has been constantly changing at the federal level²⁶³. Recently, the abortion debate has been back in the spotlight, specifically at the state level.

In May of 2021, the Texas state legislature passed Senate Bill 8, a law that bans abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy. This has caused outrage from the pro-choice community, those who in favor of allowing pregnant women the choice to get an abortion, as six weeks is oftentimes not enough time for women to know if they are pregnant.²⁶⁴ Senate Bill 8 has further implications to the legality of abortion in Texas, effectively eliminating abortion access in the state.

The impacts of SB 8 are already evident in Texas. Doctors and executives at the two-dozen abortion clinics in the state of Texas have turned away hundreds of patients. Some patients who had already booked appointments were told that they could not receive an abortion, due to cardiac activity being detected.²⁶⁵ This can be seen at the Houston Planned Parenthood location, which typically preformed around two dozen abortions a day. After SB 8 was issued, that same center only performed a total of fifty-two abortions in the ten days immediately following the law.

Due to the restrictiveness in Texas, many women living in the state have been forced travel to Oklahoma City to receive abortion appointments. It may appear that this is not significant due to Oklahoma's proximity to Texas, however the driving distance for Texas women to the nearest abortion clinic in Oklahoma is 247 miles, potentially spending a full day's earnings to afford the gas to get there and back.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ "A Recent History of Restrictive Abortion Laws in Texas," ACLU of Texas, September 20, 2021, <https://www.aclutx.org/en/recent-history-restrictive-abortion-laws-texas>.

²⁶⁴ Senate Bill 8 is centered around abortion bans 6 weeks into pregnancy

²⁶⁵ Paul J. Weber, "Explainer: The Texas Abortion Law's Swift Impact, and Future," AP NEWS (Associated Press, September 16, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/health-austin-texas-lawsuits-coronavirus-pandemic-e4352ad8f095612ac249bb8477ddc637>.

²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Nash et al., "Impact of Texas' Abortion Ban: A 14-Fold Increase in Driving Distance to Get an Abortion," Guttmacher Institute, October 28, 2021, <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/08/impact-texas-abortion-ban-14-fold-increase-driving-distance-get-abortion>.

Various other states are also not completely accepting of legal abortion laws. For example, Louisiana has a two-visit requirement for women looking to receive an abortion.²⁶⁷ This requirement forces women to make two visits to an abortion clinic and receive an ultrasound from their medical providers before an abortion can take place. As of May 2021, The Supreme Court took the side of the Louisiana, reinstating the FDA's requirement that patients pick up abortion pills in person, despite the coronavirus pandemic.²⁶⁸

Since the implication of SB 8 women seeking abortions have already faced its negative repercussions. This restrictive measure passed by the Texas state legislature is not the first nor last attack on abortion measures, with a long history behind the motivation to promote the pro-life agenda. While at the surface, one may think that this legislation may have come out of nowhere, the motivation behind SB 8 has been years in the making at the Texas state legislature level.

The "Women's Right to Know Act," passed in 2003, is a law that mandates medical professionals to give misleading information about abortion procedures and provide alternatives for pregnancy termination. ("A Recent History of Restrictive Abortion Laws in Texas", n.d.)²⁶⁹ In 2005, Texas was able to pass a law which banned abortion procedures after 24 weeks of pregnancy. The law also required the need for parental consent for those seeking an abortion under the age of 18. House Bill 2 was passed in 2013, which further added to these abortion restrictions.²⁷⁰

HB 2 included provisions such as abortion after 20 weeks post-fertilization being banned, barring patient risk, and mandated doctors administering abortion medication to follow a state-mandated protocol. This escalated further in 2019, as Texas passed Senate Bill 22, banning government affiliation with abortion providers or their affiliates. This prevents state governments from entering partnerships with clinics that are affiliated with abortion providers. The services of these providers include community support for basic health care like birth control, gynecologist exams, cancer screenings, and more, showing how the implications for restrictive abortion measures stretch beyond the realm of solely abortion procedures.

Restrictive abortion legislation has socioeconomic implications as well. Women that are denied abortions have an increased chance of unemployment and having a household income

²⁶⁷ WWNO - New Orleans Public Radio | By Bobbi-Jeanne Misick, "U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Abortion Pill Access Matches Louisiana's Restrictions," WWNO, January 14, 2021, <https://www.wwno.org/latest-news/2021-01-14/u-s-supreme-court-decision-on-abortion-pill-access-matches-louisianas-restrictions>.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ "A Recent History of Restrictive Abortion Laws in Texas," ACLU of Texas, September 20, 2021, <https://www.aclutx.org/en/recent-history-restrictive-abortion-laws-texas>.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

significantly below the poverty line.²⁷¹ Along with this, there are other crucial socioeconomic factors that are at hand, with TAC contributors emphasizing the disproportionate impact of these restrictive health measures on women in the African-American community, further deepening healthcare disparities.²⁷² The pro-choice community's opposition is evident since the measure's enactment on September 1st, at both the societal and judicial levels.

Women's Marches have taken place across the country in response to the legislation passed by Texas, with rallies occurring in Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and several Texas cities as well. The President of Planned Parenthood, Alexis Johnson, highlighted the importance of recognizing that restrictive abortion measures are not unique to Texas. She stated that there have been 600 restrictions on abortions in 47 states, calling to action those looking to protect reproductive rights.

The Supreme Court finds itself in a powerful position, holding control over the enactment and constitutionality of legislation like SB 8. Pro-choice members held out on the hope that the court would grant the emergency request to stop the law, but the court did not issue its decision ahead of the September 1st deadline. Eventually, the court ruled a 5-4 result against the emergency request, citing procedural grounds.²⁷³ The Justice Department quickly acted in response to this decision, filing a brief earlier this week that urged the court to temporarily block the law. The brief mentioned the precedent set by the court itself, and how SB8 would overturn decades of this precedent.²⁷⁴ The court seemingly looked to fast-track this process, Justice Samuel Alito, who is in charge of the federal appeals court that has responsibility of Texas, asked Texas officials to send in their response to the Justice Department by October 21st at noon.

The brief sent in by the Justice Department highlighted the question of constitutionality of this law, and its relation to cases that the court is scheduled to hear later this year, with the case on a major Mississippi abortion law on the horizon in December.²⁷⁵ However, the Justice Department was clear in its brief to differentiate between the two cases. It argues that the United States is allowed to sue Texas directly, even if private parties cannot.²⁷⁶ The difference is that SB

²⁷¹ "What to Know about the Texas Abortion Law and Its Implications," Medical News Today (MediLexicon International), accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/texas-abortion-law-implications-for-womens-health-and-safety#Other-concerns>.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ KevinWilliamB, "Supreme Court Will Consider Fast Track Appeal of Texas Abortion Law," CNBC (CNBC, October 19, 2021), <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/18/supreme-court-will-consider-fast-track-appeal-of-texas-abortion-law.html>.

²⁷⁴ Adam Liptak, "Justice Department Asks Supreme Court to Block Texas Abortion Law," The New York Times (The New York Times, October 18, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/18/us/politics/texas-abortion-law-supreme-court.html>.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ian Millhiser, "Texas's Anti-Abortion Law Is Back at Scotus. Here's What's Different This Time around.," Vox (Vox, October 19, 2021), <https://www.vox.com/2021/10/19/22728389/supreme-court-doj-texas-sb8-abortion-jackson>.

8 was crafted to avoid the courts' involvement, as Millhiser states. It forbids any "officer or employee of a state or local government entity in Texas from enforcing it."²⁷⁷

It is evident that the battle over abortion rights has no end in sight, with both proponents and opponents of SB 8 and other restrictive laws pertaining to reproductive rights keeping the fight on this long-debated issue relevant. While the Supreme Court's conservative majority is predicted to do everything in its power to uphold this legislation, the Justice Department and those who are in opposition of abortion bans will not cease their fight, as millions across the country wait on what will come from the latest chapter in the nation's history that has gone back and forth in its enforcement of protection of reproductive rights. With crucial decisions coming in the near future, both sides of the legislation will look to gear up and battle harder than ever before.

²⁷⁷ Ian Millhiser, "Texas's Anti-Abortion Law Is Back at Scotus. Here's What's Different This Time around.," Vox (Vox, October 19, 2021), <https://www.vox.com/2021/10/19/22728389/supreme-court-doj-texas-sb8-abortion-jackson>.

Oil, Legitimacy, and the Bogeyman: The Persistence of Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa

Gladwin Sy

Introduction

For much of the time during and following the Cold War, the world seemed to hold its breath for the Middle East. Beginning in the 1970's, the third wave of democratization swept through the globe as Latin American and Asian countries transitioned to democracy and the Soviet bloc began collapsing. It seemed natural, then, that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) would follow suit. But as the 20th century came to a close, Saddam Hussein was still ruling in Iraq, Qaddafi continued his abuse of the Libyan people, Bashar al-Assad was just about to come into power in Syria, Hosni Mubarak was twenty years and counting in Egypt, and the rest of the region looked much the same.

In the years following of the Arab Spring of the early 2010's, the MENA region has much resembled an evolving patchwork-quilt of full democracies or states in the process of democratization, such as Tunisia, flawed or regressing democracies, such as Turkey and Israel, and various repressive states, like Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Libya. As of writing, Freedom House presents Tunisia and Israel as the only "free" countries in the region-it should be noted, however, that Palestinian territories where Israel exerts political influence are not free.²⁷⁸

As a large region that has always been culturally diverse, it is difficult to fathom a singular explanation for why authoritarianism persists in this area of nearly 600 million people. The rationales for its continued resistance to democratic reformation are challenging to untangle and ascertain, but certain aspects of authoritarian entrenchment have become thematic of states. In the Middle East and North Africa, regimes have risen and maintained their grips on power through various strategies; depending on historical context and natural resources, these strategies may include: rentierism, the use of religion and ideology as a legitimizing force, and the exploitation of existential threats.

Rentierism: Oil

Authoritarianism is a simpler proposition, and therefore, easier to maintain in resource-rich countries. According to the Baker Institute for Public Policy's Project on Middle East Political Science from Rice University, development, or lack thereof, of democracy in the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula, has been studied extensively through the lens of the rentier state theory which posits that countries with large reserves of a natural resource, oil

²⁷⁸ "Explore the Map." Freedom House, Freedom House, freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2020&country=ISR.

in the case of the Gulf, fall to inevitable political patterns—almost as if destined to authoritarianism.²⁷⁹ A rentier state is defined as a country wherein a significant portion of the national operating budget or revenue is taken from payment by external entities to utilize that country's local resources. Egyptian economist and former Prime Minister Hazem Beblawi put forth four characteristics of a rentier state, namely: (1) rent must compose a dominant share of the country's economy, (2) the bulk of the rent must originate from outside the subject country, (3) only a small proportion of the national labor force has a hand in producing the rent, (4) the government receives the rent revenue, or a majority or it.²⁸⁰ It should be noted that there are different types of rentier states in the Middle East, such as Egypt, which rents strategically-valuable land to the United States for military installations; Lebanon, which receives money (in the form of foreign aid) from the international community in exchange for housing refugees within its borders; and the oil rentiers such as Qatar—the latter being the focus of this section as the rentierism of the Gulf states goes hand-in-hand with the concept of the “resource curse”.

Supporting this idea of oil rentierism, there is a noticeable trend of absolute monarchies enjoying relatively stable rule in the petroleum-exporting Gulf nations, specifically: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, which are *de jure* absolute monarchies, and the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, etc. which *de facto* places singular, ultimate authority in their monarch. The repressing effect of rentierism that upholds the regimes of the oil states can be broken down into three main components: population subsidies, finance for the state security apparatus, and modernization.

In oil states, the lives of citizens are heavily subsidized by the government's oil revenue; in essence the government buys off the citizenry's desire for democratic institutions through the non-collection of taxes and an allowance. Saudi Arabia illustrates this point perfectly. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the government imposes no personal income tax on the population.²⁸¹ Without the taxes, there is no urgent desire by the populace for representation in the legislative bodies. In states such as Saudi Arabia, the rulers have no need to maintain the pretense of democracy in any way and they can rule through decree without compromising the stability of their rule.

Quite the contrary, in fact, to the collection of taxes, the Saudi monarchy actually grants subsidies to its citizens. In rentier states, often, only a very small portion of the people receive direct benefits from the rent of resources—usually, these are people in the government or the “elite” bourgeoisie who would likely prefer the continuation of the social order and are unlikely to rock the metaphorical boat. In order to foster complacency in the low- and middle-income sections of society, those with most to gain and most likely to revolt, the Saudi government

²⁷⁹ “The Politics of Rentier States in the Gulf.” Baker Institute for Public Policy, 25 Sept. 2015, www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/df77a3f0/krane-subsidies-pomeps.pdf.

²⁸⁰ Beblawi, Hazem. “The Rentier State in the Arab World.” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1987, pp. 383–398. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41857943. Accessed 3 May 2020.

²⁸¹ “11 Countries That Don't Have Income Tax.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 19 May 2016, www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/money/countries-that-dont-have-income-tax-in-pictures/saudi-arabia/.

hands out money under the “Citizen’s Account Program”.²⁸² More than half of the population of Saudi Arabia, about 13 million people, are registered to receive the money. Kuwait launched a similar program after the Arab Spring rocked its regional neighbors, offering the equivalent of \$3500 to all citizens, as well as essential commodities including: sugar, cooking oil, and milk.²⁸³ In Qatar, pensions were announced along the same lines in order to quell unrest. In all three countries, there have been no changes to the ruling dynasty since before the Arab Spring.

Another effect of the economic windfall produced by the rentier system the oil monarchies subscribe to is the capacity to spend billions of dollars on military and internal security expenditures. According to Freedom House, Saudi Arabia is among the least free countries in the world, scoring a dismal 7/100 in the 2019 figures.²⁸⁴ And, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2019, Saudi Arabia ranked fifth on military spending, at \$61.9 billion.²⁸⁵ In fact, in a ranking of military expenditures as a percentage of GDP, four Gulf monarchies are in the top fifteen: Saudi Arabia tops the list, spending 8.8% of its GDP on security forces; Oman comes in at second with 8.2% of GDP in the military, including its extensive internal security apparatus; Kuwait at fourth with 5.1%, and Bahrain at twelfth with 3.6%.

(Side note: Algeria, while neither a Gulf state nor a monarchy, is likewise an oil rentier and was rated by Freedom House in 2019 as “not free” with a score of 34/100; it also figures in the list at third. Lebanon and Jordan are also among the top fifteen in expenditures, Lebanon being fifth and Jordan as seventh. Though Jordan and Lebanon are not oil rentiers, they are rentier states nonetheless; Lebanon derives a significant portion of its yearly revenue from foreign aid as exchange for housing refugees; Jordan rents land to the United States for military bases. Unlike the Gulf monarchies, these states do not have the resources to build massive coercive security apparatuses, and as such, both countries are “partly free”. This supports the notion that it is specifically oil rentierism and not simply rentierism that creates authoritarianism so endemic to the Gulf.)^{286 287 288}

²⁸² Nereim, Vivian, and Glen Carey. “Saudi Arabia Will Give Cash to Poorer Citizens Hit by Austerity.” Bloomberg.com, Bloomberg, 12 Dec. 2017, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-12/saudi-arabia-set-to-begin-cash-transfers-for-poorer-citizens.

²⁸³ Leipziger, Lasse. “Does Oil Sustain Authoritarianism in the Middle East?” Sciences Po, Sciences Po Kuwait Program, 2015.

²⁸⁴ “Saudi Arabia.” Freedom House, Freedom House, freedomhouse.org/country/saudi-arabia/freedom-world/2020.

²⁸⁵ “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.” SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

²⁸⁶ “Explore the Map.” Freedom House, Freedom House, freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2020&country=ISR.

²⁸⁷ Beblawi, Hazem. “The Rentier State in the Arab World.”

²⁸⁸ “SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.” SIPRI, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

The power of rentier money in the military control of citizens can be best seen in the Gulf monarchies' response to the Arab Spring, particularly the 2011 Saudi-led intervention in Bahrain. Bahrain, then facing mass demonstrations, called for foreign intervention and Saudi Arabia, fearing the importation of revolutionary fervor, quickly dispatched its troops to its fellow monarchy, dispelling dissent—aggressively. This incident follows a similar 1994 Saudi intervention in Bahrain following leftist calls for more freedoms.²⁸⁹ This follows the pattern the Gulf kingdoms implemented during the Arab Spring, a rapid deployment of well-armed security forces at the first sign of protest.

This use of rentier money contrasts sharply when compared to Egypt where the military eventually withdrew support for Hosni Mubarak at the height of the Arab Spring. Outside of Iran, Egypt has the largest military in the MENA, but unlike the Gulf militaries, it defected. This can be explained through rentier money, as while Egypt is also a petroleum-producing country, it does not produce the same amount of oil as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies, 490,000 barrels per day to Saudi Arabia's 12,000,000 according to US Energy Information Administration.²⁹⁰ This means Egypt cannot rely on oil as much as Saudi Arabia and, therefore, does not have the revenue to maintain a comparable security force to what Saudi Arabia has. While Egypt's army is larger, conscripting from a larger national population, its equipment is outdated; Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, consistently purchases cutting-edge American arms—this, in turn, quells dissatisfaction within the military itself, making Saudi Arabia's security forces unlikely to turn against the House of Saud.

In all, oil rentierism in the Persian Gulf region has allowed the perpetuation of absolute monarchies unmoored from responsibility or accountability to its citizens. Flush with cash, these regimes have basically bought security for themselves and control over their populace through what amounts to financial bribery and intimidation—carrot and stick.

Religious Doctrine and Political Ideology: Legitimacy

Authoritarian states tend to justify their rule through claims to cultural legitimacy. Legitimacy is a difficult subject to define and it is especially difficult to impose Western notions of legitimacy to the MENA, which, through centuries, developed a cultural landscape markedly different from the West. However, it should be fair to say that though there can be no singular definition for it, legitimacy for a state can be qualified by how its citizenry reacts to its Weberian monopoly on the use of physical force. If enough people in a population agree that a regime has

²⁸⁹ "Bahrain's Crisis: Saudi Forces Intervene." Bahrain's Crisis: Saudi Forces Intervene - The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/bahrains-crisis-saudi-forces-intervene.

²⁹⁰ "U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis." International - U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), US Energy Information Administration, www.eia.gov/international/data/world/petroleum-and-other-liquids/annual-petroleum-and-other-liquids-production?pd=5&p=00

no such legitimate exercise, the regime ceases to exist. The most common way rulers claim this legitimacy is through calls to religion or a socially unifying ideology.

The use of religion to preserve a ruling regime has been and continues to be most evident in Saudi Arabia, whose al-Saud dynasty's alliance with the ultraconservative, some would say puritanical Wahhabist sect, an Islamic movement dating from the 18th century, has endured since the first Saudi state established in 1744, predating its current oil rentierism.²⁹¹ This religious-political relationship has been symbiotic. In exchange for protection, promotion, and a special place in influencing social policy, the Wahhabist clerics have anointed the House of Saud as uniquely pious, righteous, and divinely guided to rule.²⁹²

In addition to these, Saudi Arabia is located in the ancient heart of the Islamic religion, in the homeland of the Prophet Muhammad. In fact, among the titles of the King of Saudi Arabia is “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques”, referring to the two holiest sites in Islam, the Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca (a point of mandatory pilgrimage, or Hajj, for all able-bodied Muslims) and the Al-Masjid an-Nabawī, mosques that are both located within the Saudi kingdom. Controlling these sites confers the Saudi regime tremendous power, not just on its own citizens, but to many Muslims the world over.²⁹³

It may be so that none such secularization occurred in the MENA as it did in Enlightenment Europe and, therefore, religion carries more weight for governance. Islam has been an influence for the last several hundred years on notions of justice, of social behavior, and crucially, on legitimate government structure. The history of divinely-guided monarchy traces history to the very origins of the religion, with the caliphates of the Prophet Muhammad's successors to the caliphate of the Ottomans—religion has infused politics as the determiner of legitimacy. Having this legitimacy may imbue a ruling regime with extraordinary powers and, to some, autocracy may seem like the “natural” form of government.

Outside of Saudi Arabia, other countries also lay claim to religion as a legitimizing force. Among these states, Jordan and Morocco present very interesting cases. According to the 1962 Moroccan Constitution, the King of Morocco is *ex officio* Amir al-Mu'minin, “Commander of the Faithful”, a quasi-caliphal title in use for centuries, but vaguely defined. A consequence of the Moroccan monarchy's religious posturing, it remains to this day a taboo to question the authority of the king. The title has elevated the king to a position above society, and to some hardline conservatives, above reproach. This has created a taboo of sorts in discussing unsavory aspects of the royal history, which has served to insulate the current rulers from criticism that abounded upon Morocco's independence from colonial powers that previous leaders had been

²⁹¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Wahhābī.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 14 Dec. 2018, www.britannica.com/topic/Wahhabi.

²⁹² Fiona McCallum (2012) “Religious Institutions and Authoritarian States: church–state relations in the Middle East”, *Third World Quarterly*, 33:1, 109-124, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2012.627238

²⁹³ Wood, Paul. “Middle East | Life and Legacy of King Fahd.” BBC News, BBC, 1 Aug. 2005, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4734505.stm.

collaborationist. This taboo has even extended to stifle discussions of the violent history of repression in Morocco during the reign of the previous monarch, the so-called “Years of Lead”, referring to the bullets the security services shot at protestors.²⁹⁴ The vagueness of the powers provided by the title “Commander of the Faithful” continue to shield the king and his decrees. Even now, during a time of increasing authoritarianism and centralization of government power, the idea of the king as a symbol of the nation and a religious authority prevents open comparisons of the current political climate to the Years of Lead.²⁹⁵

Another cultural strategy of sustaining a regime’s authority over a population is through the formation of a unifying ideology. For some, using the nation’s history as a starting point to construct nationalistic unity has had questionable results; in pre-1979 Imperial Iran, the millennia of the Persian Empire were touted as the common heritage of all under the rule of the Shah. The idea of historical identity and the ruler being an inheritor of that legacy as steward of the nation was experimented with as a vehicle for legitimacy. Ultimately, it did not work for the Shah. For most of the countries in the MENA, products of colonial divisions with no clear spiritual predecessor states, it was easier to break with an embarrassing past and construct a new national persona and guiding ideals. This was the case in Egypt following the overthrow of the British-influenced puppet-king by the military, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser. Through his vision, the notion of Arab Nationalism took shape.²⁹⁶ People are more permissive and forgiving when they are distracted and telling them of a united Arab nation, of one shared language and culture and history, is intoxicating. People look up at the stars and do not notice the chains on their wrists. In the interests of this shining vision of a better tomorrow, people accept some abuses as necessary. Collateral damage, the price to pay to realize. While oppressing the Egyptian people was likely not the goal of Nasser, Arab Nationalism facilitated his consolidation of power and that consolidation was necessary to carry out his vision.

The larger idea of pan-Arabism would bring into power and stabilize the rule of many dictators in the MENA: Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and Hafez al-Assad in Syria among others.²⁹⁷

For some countries with no history to speak of, it befits rulers to attach themselves to such a unifying ideology. Jordan, for example, which, before the British diplomat Mark Sykes and the Frenchman François Georges-Picot penned lines on a map of the Ottoman Empire in the early days of the 20th century, did not exist in any form. There is the story of King Hussein of

²⁹⁴ Amine, K. (2016). “After the ‘Years of Lead’ in Morocco: Performing the Memory”. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 32(2), 121-141. doi:10.1017/S0266464X16000038

²⁹⁵ Shelline, Annelle. “Royal Religious Authority: Morocco’s ‘Commander of the Faithful’”. Bakerinstitute.org, Rice University Baker Institute for Public Policy, Mar. 2019, www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/02d67a3e/cme-pub-luce-sheline-030719_hvUZDee.pdf.

²⁹⁶ Dawisha, Adeed. “Requiem for Arab Nationalism.” *Middle East Forum*, Middle East Forum, 2003, www.meforum.org/518/requiem-for-arab-nationalism.

²⁹⁷ Rubin, Barry. “Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force.” *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 26, no. 3/4, 1991, pp. 535–551. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/260659. Accessed 4 May 2020.

Jordan, who, in fear of losing his throne in front of a firing squad (as had happened to his cousin, the King of Iraq), openly embraced Nasser and subscribed to cause of Arab Nationalism, which raised his popularity to such a degree that he could forcefully crack down on the very threats he had protected himself against by aligning with Nasser.²⁹⁸

Existential Threats: The Bogeyman

The idea of a bogeyman to scare the population as a way of presenting the ruling regime as a savior goes hand-in-hand with the concept of scapegoating, or shifting the blame for ills in society away from the government, either internal or external. In the MENA of the last century, this has often boiled down to raising anti-Western, anti-Israeli sentiment, or some other vague, perceived foreign threat.

As the British was a dominant colonial power in the region for a century, much of the early anger was directed towards it as strongmen struggled for popularity and acceptance.²⁹⁹ Gamal Abdel Nasser famously began his early years as ruler with the Suez Crisis, which, while militarily a defeat, Nasser salvaged as a political win, earning him prestige in the Arab world and free rein in Egyptian politics.

With the United States beginning to eclipse the dying British Empire as the dominant force in the region, it too became a target of anti-Western sentiment in the service of dictatorship. For example, throughout his rule, Muammar Qaddafi invoked the United States as the reason for the misery of the Libyan people, waving away corruption and kleptocratic explanations for the stagnation of the economy and blaming, instead, American sanctions. Any potentially threatening speech towards his rule could be branded treasonous or pro-American, justifying many extrajudicial killings, torture, and imprisonment.³⁰⁰

Likewise, outrage towards Israel remains very palpable, violently palpable, in the Middle East—in fact, in 1951, King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated during Friday prayers in Jerusalem after rumors came out that he was considering signing peace with Israel. In the years since, through wars and skirmishes and despite peace treaties that have prevented further full-blown military conflicts, things have yet to get tangibly better in Arab-Israeli relations. Perhaps most familiar to Western audiences are the chants of “Death to Israel” commonly featured on reports about Iran. The ruling theocracy of Iran has positioned Israel as a diabolical entity

²⁹⁸ Dawisha, Adeed. “Requiem for Arab Nationalism.”

²⁹⁹ “BBC ON THIS DAY | 2 | 1956: King of Jordan Sacks British General.” BBC News, BBC, 2 Mar. 1956, [news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/2/newsid_2514000/2514379.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/bbc-on-this-day/hi/dates/stories/march/2/newsid_2514000/2514379.stm).

³⁰⁰ Joshua I. Cummins and Vaughn Shannon, “Hearts and Minds: US Foreign Policy and Anti-Americanism in the Middle East an Analysis of Public Perceptions from 2002-2011” (Master’s thesis, 16)

unworthy of existence—a mortal enemy—and, in doing so, has redirected the anger of people away from a repressive regime that has broken the promises of the 1979 Revolution.³⁰¹

Also, historically, it has been the occasional habit of autocrats to dismiss protests as minor irritants unrepresentative of the wider public discourse. Protests could be waved away as paid foreign agents and insincere agitators sent by powers unhappy with the “people-first” approach of whichever dictator. However, today, in the age of foreign meddling and “fake news”, this problem has grown more acute and regimes have become more adept at social manipulation.³⁰²

Conclusion

The Middle East and North Africa continues to be a complex region sadly characterized today by authoritarian governments of various legitimacy and stability. While some nations are constantly experiencing a rotating door of regimes, others have been planted firmly in place for decades. A unifying factor for these rulers, however, are certain strategies they utilize to remain in their gilded palaces for as long as possible. Through oil money, calls to legitimacy, fear-mongering, anger-stoking, and general deception, these authoritarian states continue to cling onto power. At this point in history, it seems many of these states are here to stay—at least for now—especially as the majority of the MENA countries have recently backslid out of democracy, according to Freedom House. But there are certain bright spots for the optimistic. Tunisia, after demonstrating consistent electoral capability, is now a fully-fledged democracy. There are liberalization efforts underway in Jordan and stabilization efforts in Lebanon. And, lastly, Saudi Arabia may be in the early stages of weaning itself off oil rentierism, which could, in turn, transform its economy and set it free from the “resource curse”. In time, it too may see democratization as a younger, more cosmopolitan populace seeks rights not afforded previous generations. What can be confidently said is: no regime lasts forever.

³⁰¹ Amirpur, Katajun. “Iran's Policy towards Jewish Iranians and the State of Israel. Is the Present Iranian State Islamofascist?” *Die Welt Des Islams*, vol. 52, no. 3/4, 2012, pp. 370–399., www.jstor.org/stable/41722004. Accessed 4 May 2020.

³⁰² Lynch, Marc. “Analysis | How Arab Authoritarian Regimes Learned to Defeat Popular Protests.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 25 Aug. 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/25/how-arab-authoritarian-regimes-learned-to-defeat-popular-protests/.

The United States' College Affordability Crisis: Identifying and Analyzing Systemic Inequalities in College Obtainability

Mario Volpe

The United States is currently facing a college affordability crisis. College costs in the United States are at an all-time high, leaving millions of students with minimal paths forward for postsecondary education or careers. These high college costs disproportionately affect low-income families and minority students at higher rates, highlighting the systemic inequalities seen both in our educational system and economy. Lawmakers are at a crossroad now, they must decide if they want to tackle the college affordability crisis head-on or continue the cycle of pushing the issue off, allowing college costs to skyrocket and students to suffer.

Background and Context

Between the 2008-09 and the 2018-19 school years, prices for undergraduate tuition, fees, and room and board at public institutions rose 28%. Those same costs at private nonprofit institutions rose 19%, after adjustment for inflation.³⁰³ In the 2019-20 school year, tuition, fees, and room and board for four year, in-state public colleges, averaged \$21,950. For a four-year private college, this average was \$49,870.³⁰⁴ These cost increases forced many college students to take out loans or even deter some from completing or attending college altogether. Hardly any legislation has sought to combat these increasing costs. While some effort was made under the Obama administration, such as increasing the maximum Pell Grant to \$6,000 per year, it is often not enough for low-income families.³⁰⁵

While college costs have increased universally, low-income and minority students have been affected disproportionately compared to other racial groups. Students hailing from low-income families (household incomes under \$100,000) are unable to afford 95% of schools. Additionally, two and four-year public institutions were on average \$7,000 - \$9,000 too expensive for these students' affordability thresholds. Even after taking federal loans into

³⁰³ "Tuition Costs of Colleges and Universities." National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) U.S. Department of Education, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=76>.

³⁰⁴ "Trends in College Pricing 2019 ." CollegeBoard, <https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/trends-college-pricing-2019-full-report.pdf>.

³⁰⁵ "Investing in Pell Grants to Make College Affordable." National Archives and Records Administration, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/higher-education/investing-in-pell-grants-to-make-college-affordable>.

account, 70% of colleges remained unaffordable for these students.³⁰⁶ As college costs increase, higher rates of students are not able to complete their degrees, which exacerbates the challenge of repaying loans as long-term earnings are lower for those without college degrees.

At the beginning of 2020, student loan debt stood at \$1.56 trillion with over 45 million borrowers with outstanding debt. The average student loan debt at public colleges is \$25,550, which is 25% higher today than it was in 2008. At private non-profit colleges, the average student loan debt at public colleges is \$32,300, which is 15% higher today than it was in 2008. The average loan debt stands at \$32,731, with a default rate of 10.8%. Millions of students leave college with massive amounts of debt, many of whom cannot find employment in the current market, setting them back as they try to start their adult lives. The average monthly student loan repayment is currently \$393, which is unsustainable for someone without employment. Even for those who can afford this rate, student debt is a lingering expense for millions well into their adulthood. There are 18.4 million borrowers between the ages of 35-61 who collectively have a student loan debt of \$863.9 billion.³⁰⁷ Another critical issue with student loans is that repayment plans do not account for the borrowers' income. Many have advocated for an income-based repayment plan, which would reduce the burden for students who do not find high-paying jobs, or for those who are unemployed coming out of college.

Additionally, COVID-19 has unleashed new financial challenges on students with loans, as a massive spike in unemployment has diverted household incomes to covering home essentials, rather than paying for school. College enrollment across all institutions dipped significantly over the course of the pandemic, with 2021 spring semester undergraduate enrollment decreasing 3.5% compared to 2020.³⁰⁸

As the national student loan debt continues to increase each year, there has been growing debate about the role of the Executive Branch in easing the burden on borrowers. Prominent Democrats, like Senator Chuck Schumer and Elizabeth Warren, have publicly urged the president to universally cancel up to \$50,000 for all borrowers. However, questions of whether or not the president has this authority have been brought up in Congress. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has stressed this stating that the president could postpone or delay payment on loans. President Biden has since expressed doubt that he has the authority to forgive the debt stating that that power belongs to Congress.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Bidwell, Allie. NASFAA “Report: Low-Income Students Cannot Afford 95 Percent of Colleges.”, 2017. https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/11623/Report_Low-Income_Students_Cannot_Afford_95_Percent_of_Colleges.

³⁰⁷ Friedman, Zack. “Student Loan Debt Statistics in 2020: A Record \$1.6 Trillion.” *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, June 29, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2020/02/03/student-loan-debt-statistics/?sh=4702efbb281f>.

³⁰⁸ Nadworny, Elissa. “Spring Numbers Show 'Dramatic' Drop in College Enrollment.” *NPR*, June 10, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/10/1005177324/spring-numbers-show-dramatic-drop-in-college-enrollment>.

³⁰⁹ Friedman, Zack. “Pelosi: No, Biden Can't Cancel Student Loans.” *Forbes*, July 29, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2021/07/28/pelosi-says-biden-cant-cancel-student-loans-and-confirms-only-congress-has-that-power/?sh=36a95e6547c0>.

College Affordability in Connecticut

Connecticut recorded the highest average student loan debt per student at \$38,669 for the class of 2018.³¹⁰ State universities have experimented with ways to make higher education more affordable over the past few years. The state offers the Pledge to Advance Connecticut (PACT) program, which covers the gap between federal and state grants students receive, along with community college tuition and mandatory fees.³¹¹ Essentially, PACT makes community college tuition-free for Connecticut residents, similar to plans that have been proposed federally. Once enrolled in the program, recipients must remain full-time students and in good academic standing at any of the 12 Connecticut community colleges.

Connecticut public universities have also flirted with programs that would make tuition free for low-income students. Starting with the class of 2024, The University of Connecticut introduced the Connecticut Commitment Program, a program offering full tuition for matriculating in-state students with household incomes below \$50,000.³¹² Financial pressure inflicted by the pandemic however, caused the university to “pause” the program after only one school year and reverse the course on affordability. There has been very little to no communication with students from the UConn Board of Trustees about the state of the Connecticut Commitment, seemingly indicating that there are no plans or interest in reinstating the program. Additionally, tuition for the current 2021-22 academic year has been increased by 4.3% since last year. The board of trustees passed this tuition hike as part of the 21-22 budget and rejected proposals to ease the financial burden of students by cutting this tuition increase in half.³¹³

Viewpoints on college affordability

Some legislators, such as Senator Bernie Sanders or Representative Pramila Jayapal, believe that making all public institutions tuition-free is an essential action in making the education system equitable and accessible to all Americans. 46% of students among the lowest class of Americans entered higher education upon leaving high school, compared to the 78%

³¹⁰ Friedman, Zack. “Student Loan Debt Statistics in 2020: A Record \$1.6 Trillion.” *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, June 29, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2020/02/03/student-loan-debt-statistics/?sh=4702efbb281f>.

³¹¹ Pact: Pledge to advance CT , 2021. <https://www.ct.edu/pact#:~:text=PACT%20funding%20covers%20the%20gap,%2Dcome%20first%2Dserve%20basis.>

³¹² “Connecticut Commitment.” Office of Student Financial Aid Services. University of Connecticut, 2019. <https://financialaid.uconn.edu/ctcommitment/>.

³¹³ Blanco, Amanda. “UConn Trustees to Vote on \$625 Tuition Increase for Students. More Financial Aid Is Available This Year.” *Hartford Courant*, June 29, 2021. <https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-news-connecticut-uconn-board-to-vote-tuition-increase-20210629-ygxfeldi5rddcdikod3o7wvcfom-story.html>.

from the highest income bracket.³¹⁴ By passing legislation that drastically reduces or eliminates the cost of college for these students, students will have more freedom in the process of choosing and attending college. The estimated cost to make all public colleges and universities tuition-free would be at least \$79 billion a year. While this may seem like a lot, the federal government in 2016 spent \$91 billion on policies that subsidized college attendance.³¹⁵ The elimination of tuition costs would drastically decrease the need for many of these programs and the billions of dollars currently being spent could be diverted to universal free tuition.

The more moderate approach to making college more affordable is to make only community colleges tuition-free. This would allow prospective students who are unable to afford a four-year college to have at least one guaranteed opportunity. Advocates for this approach tout how it provides a viable option for students and would cost far less for the federal government compared to plans that would eliminate all public college tuition. Community college students are amongst the most affected by college loans defaulting, with 15% of all borrowers defaulting on their loans which is handily above the 10.8% national average.

Federal legislation addressing college affordability

Senator Sanders' and Representative Jayapal's College for All Act (S.1228) would eliminate tuition and fees at four-year public colleges and universities for families making up to \$125,000 – about 80 percent of the population – and make community college tuition and fee-free for all students.³¹⁶ To cover non-tuition or fee-based costs, the College for All Act would double the maximum federal Pell Grant to \$12,990. The bill would also allot \$10 billion in annual federal funding for student support programs at HBCU and other minority-serving institutions. To finance this bill, 75% of the funds would come from the federal government with the remaining 25% coming from the states.

President Biden's American Families Plan contains several provisions to improve college affordability. The plan emphasizes that college enrollment has declined due to rising costs. To combat this, the AFP would fund free two-year community college, allowing low-income students to have one guaranteed affordable option of higher education. The AFP would also increase the maximum federal Pell Grant by about \$1,400, a 20% increase, to bring the maximum Pell Grant close to \$8,000. Additionally, President Biden's plan creates a \$62 billion

³¹⁴ Reber, Sarah, Chenoah Sinclair, and Hannah Van Drie. "Public Colleges Are the Workhorses of Middle-Class Mobility." Brookings. Brookings, July 24, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/07/22/public-colleges-are-the-workhorses-of-middle-class-mobility/>.

³¹⁵ Deming, David. "Tuition-Free College Could Cost Less than You Think." The New York Times, July 19, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/19/business/tuition-free-college.html>.

³¹⁶ Sanders, Bernie. "S.1288 - College for All Act of 2021." Congress.gov, April 21, 2021. S.1288 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1288?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22College+for+All+Act%22%2C%22College%22%2C%22for%22%2C%22All%22%2C%22Act%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=2>

grant program that will incentivize states to invest in completion and retention activities at colleges and universities that serve high numbers of low-income students, particularly community colleges.³¹⁷

The House of Representatives introduced House Resolution.100 calling on President Biden to cancel up to \$50,000 in federal student loans for millions of Americans through executive action. The resolution was sponsored by Rep. Ayanna Pressley and has received 62 co-sponsors to date. It cites the nation's student loan crisis, the over 9 million loan borrowers in default, the racial disparities in loan size, and the effects of the pandemic as reasons to cancel student debt. Supporters argue that giving borrowers relief would also help the economy by removing the drag that student loan debt currently presents on household incomes.³¹⁸

Conclusion

College affordability is a great challenge for students in our generation. The cost of attending college has been steadily increasing for years and in a job market where having a college degree is nearly essential, Americans are struggling to meet these costs. As college prices increase, the inequalities in our educational and economic systems become evident as they disappointingly affect the opportunities of lower socioeconomic classes and minority communities. Millions of students are forced to make the decision of either taking on substantial amounts of student debt or forgoing college altogether. This issue also hits close to home, as the State of Connecticut and subsequently our University have taken actions to somewhat address rising prices of higher education within the state. The college unaffordability and student loan crisis has drawn the attention of the federal government, with legislators like Representative Jayapal, Senator Sanders, and President Biden, and producing legislation that seeks to make college more obtainable.

³¹⁷ "Fact Sheet: The American Families Plan." The White House. The United States Government, April 28, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/28/fact-sheet-the-american-families-plan/>.

³¹⁸ Pressley, Ayanna. "H.Res.100 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): ." Congress.gov, February 4, 2021. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/100>.