Shweta Parthasarathy  
Staff Writer

President Hashim Thaci of Kosovo stepped down on November 5 in England, according to Al Jazeera. In a statement from the court, Thaci said, “The indictment is completely without basis, and I plead not guilty to all the charges in the indictment.” His lawyer, David Hooper, decried the treatment Thaci was receiving, saying it was “disgraceful” that he was held in handcuffs outside the court, and announced that he intended to seek Thaci’s conditional release.

Meanwhile, Reuters reports that citizens in Kosovo are opposing the court’s decision to charge Thaci with war crimes. They, in fact, view him and other members of the KLA as heroes. A Kosovar economist living in London said, “I think a big injustice is being committed here by putting on trial our liberators.”

There are, however, those who are grateful for Thaci’s indictment, according to Reuters. In Belgium, lawmaker Milos Drecun, the chairman of the Serbian parliamentary committee for Kosovo, said the indictment proved that “establishing the truth about war crimes of the KLA and punishing those responsible is an irreversible process.” Additionally, Amnesty International said the indictment against Thaci gave hope to thousands of victims of the war “who have waited for more than two decades to find out the truth about the horrific crimes.”

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President Hashim Thaci resigns.  Courtesy of Wikipedia.

Controversy over the Use of Cluster Bomb Weapons in Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

Taylor Knecht-Woystek  
Staff Writer

Members of the international community are raising concerns over the recent discovery of the use of cluster bomb weapons in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. On October 28, a strike over the Nagorno-Karabakh region was alleged by Azerbaijan, which accused Armenia of using cluster bombs in a civilian area. Wednesday’s attack killed 21 civilians and injured 70, the BBC estimates. This would be the deadliest reported civilian casualties in the conflict, according to Al Jazeera.

The use of cluster bombs has come under scrutiny from international law scholars and human rights groups due to their significant impact on civilians. The conflict, arising from a longer dispute over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, has resumed since a ceasefire brokered by the U.S. and Russia. The region is recognized as part of Azerbaijan despite it being inhabited by a large Armenian population. The previous conflict in 1988 led to 30,000 deaths, according to BBC News. The recent attacks resumed in late September with skirmishes. Both sides have gained significant territory and have faced pushback from outside forces. Turkey openly supported Azerbaijan, according to the Associated Press, while Russia and the United States have tried to serve as peacekeepers.

The use of cluster bombs escalated an already deadly conflict. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that Armenian forces used internationally-banned cluster munitions in Baku City. This came after the previous use of cluster munitions by Azerbaijan on four separate occasions, HRW reports. Cluster bombs are banned due to their long range and reach, caused by their ability to explode with dozens of smaller bombs ejecting. The specific bombs used are suspected to be Russian-made missiles, according to HRW.

The main contention against the use of cluster bombs comes not from the immediate explosion, but from the fact that the hundreds of bombs that get spread often misfire or sit dormant. This leaves a long-term threat to the region as these bombs often are active. In 2016, Amnesty International reported that 16 people were killed by unexploded cluster bombs in Yemen. The deaths came after a ceasefire had already been arranged and bombing had ceased for at least two months. The Arms Control Association finds that, “Almost all reported cluster munition casualties have been civilians, in large part because of the unwillingness of military leaders to provide information.”

International agreements, such as the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, ban the use of cluster bombs. According to HRW, Armenia and Azerbaijan are not party to the agreement, but are party to the Geneva Convention and its customary law. The massive burden imposed disproportionately on civilians violates many aspects of international law. Possible UN investigations may follow; as Reuters reports the UN Commission for Human Rights demanding that “Such attacks must stop and those responsible for carrying them out, or ordering them, must be held to account.” This was emphasized with the official report from The Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights stressing the need to investigate and find out the truth about these horrific crimes.
The United States withdraws from the Paris Climate Agreement

Lauren-Marie Diawatan Staff Writer

The United States officially left the Paris Climate Agreement on November 4, according to The Associated Press. The pact was established five years ago to address the dangerous threat of climate change. The New York Times reports that President Trump first announced his plan to withdraw from the agreement in 2017. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo then filed for the withdrawal on November 4, 2019. Though President Trump referred to the Paris Agreement as “job-killing,” the agreement is a non-binding arrangement that does not require the U.S. to take harmful actions. A joint statement by Chile, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom from the United Nations Climate Agency expressed “regret” for the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The statement wrote that these countries “remain committed to working with all U.S. stakeholders and partners” to complete the implementation of the Paris Agreement and promote greater climate action.

ABC News reports that President Trump has gone back on multiple environmental protections since 2017. The United States is not currently on track to reach the goal established at the 2015 Paris Summit to reduce their carbon emissions to 28 percent by 2025. The U.S. President claimed in a White House briefing that adhering to the Paris Agreement would cost 2.7 million jobs by the projected year while other states such as China and India to increase their emissions. President Trump condemned the agreement, calling it “very unfair, at the highest level, to the United States.”

The Paris Agreement was signed by 195 countries and formally adopted by 189, according to the New York Times. BBC News explains that the agreement serves to “keep global temperatures well below 2°C (3.6°F) and limit them further to 1.5°C” and to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The agreement also reviews each country’s nationally determined contributions and calls for richer countries to provide “climate finance” to aid poorer countries. According to The New York Times, Brazil reversed its earlier commitment to do so. Greater climate commitments have been announced by European and Asian countries. The French government established the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, a goal later adopted by South Korea and Japan. China also promised to reach carbon neutrality by 2060.

Many American states and businesses have also agreed to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions, with 12 states having already planned to get 100 percent of their electricity from renewable energy sources. American emissions rose during the first two years of the Trump administration, with a short-term dip resulting from the 2020 pandemic. An analysis report by the World Resources Institute think-tank explains that investment in renewable energy generates more jobs than the fossil fuel industry.

The Associated Press reports that the next round of UN climate talks will take place next year in Glasgow, Scotland. On the day of his presidential victory and the United States’ withdrawal, President-elect Joseph Biden announced on Twitter that the U.S. will rejoin the Paris Agreement within days. The New York Times writes that while other countries in the agreement will allow the Biden administration time to transition, they want to see reductions in domestic emissions take effect sooner.


**VIENNA TERRORIST ATTACK CLAIMS FIVE LIVES, ISIS CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY**

On November 3, shots were fired around the area of Seitenstettengasse Temple, one of Vienna’s main synagogues. Fejzula Kujtim, the gunman, had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), who have since claimed responsibility for the attack.

Local police believe that the attack was targeted, although 14 individuals believed to have been involved in the attack and having ties to Kujtim were taken into custody. Austrian officials have deployed armed police and have asked citizens across the capital to stay in their homes.

The attack took place in six locations centered around Seitenstettengasse Temple, with the first initial attack happening at 8 pm. Fejzula Kujtim, who apparently started firing shots near the synagogue and then proceeded to shoot into the nearby block, was arrested after taking refuge in a car. Bystanders described him as shooting bursts randomly while walking down the street.

Austrian officials have strongly condemned the attack, Kujtim posted a threat on social media, according to BBC.

It is unclear whether the attack was specifically targeted against the Jewish community in the area or aimed at the synagogue, the head of Vienna’s Jewish community, Oskar Deutsch, explained. He further expressed his relief that the synagogue was closed during the attack. In addition, officials took precautions and closed all Jewish schools, synagogues, Jewish Community of Austria institutions, and Kosher supermarkets and restaurants the next day, according to The BBC.

The Islamic State took responsibility for the attack in a statement where they showed praise for Kujtim’s actions, the Times of Israel reports.

Kosovo has been arrested before for attempting to join ISIS but was released on bail in 2019. Kujtim was an al-citizen, who had been sent back to Austria following his arrest for trying to flee to Syria. The valid reason, such as emitting to Kujtim, posted a photo to his Instagram where he was seen holding weapons and pledging allegiance to the Islamic State’s caliph, according to The Australian.

The Austrian government admitted that they did not handle the attack as well as they should have. They recognized that they failed to properly document a warning from Slovak authorities about a man of Austrian citizenship attempting to buy weapons in Slovakia.

The government stated that there was an error in the Mountain plan and that they should have heeded the warning, The BBC reports.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said in an address that the attacks were perpetrated by an extremist group because they did not reflect the majority of Austria’s Muslim population or Australia’s immigrant pop.

He further asserted, “We all know in our country this is not a fight between Muslims or of Muslims and Austrians or of Austrians and people from other countries,” according to CNN.

Many of the victims of the attack were Muslim. Additionally, many Austrian civilians and other ISIS-claimed officials shared the sentiment that Kurz had expressed, describing that many Muslim families lost loved ones in the attack.

In article The by The BBC states. Austrian officials also praised two Austrian-Muslim men who acted as a police officer and have commented during the attack, Al Jazeera reports.

Chancellor Kurz also called for the entire European Union to take stronger education and information campaigns fight against radical Islam in the future, according to BBC News. He asserted that Austria will be working closely with Slovakia and Croatia has been victim of multiple terror attacks recently, to deter the ideology of political Islam from taking root across the country.

Austrian police have strongly condemned the use of cluster weapons by both sides. Human Rights Watch has urged both sides to join the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions with a partial delay. While many international organizations have strongly condemned the bombings, few if any countries have followed suit.

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**COVID-19: Lockdown in England and Europe as Coronavirus Cases Surge**

Ariel Go Jr. Staff Writer

The acceleration of a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in Europe has forced multiple countries to enforce stringent social-distancing rules to prevent a return to full-blown lockdowns. In the final week of October, however, countries across Europe— including the UK, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal— all recorded their highest daily number of cases since the pandemic began.

According to The Guardian, Europeandoc uncounted a total of 1.5 million new cases of COVID-19 in that same week, putting it at the epicenter of the pandemic once again. This has caused much of Europe to go back under lockdown, although many countries are dealing with the surge in different ways. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom and France, are shutting down almost everything they can, while Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal, are opting for partial lockdowns.

To avoid a “medical and moral disaster,” UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced a second national lockdown. The decision was made hours after the country surpassed the grim total of one million coronavirus cases. BBC News reports that England implemented the lockdowns, such as Germany and Austria, have been forced to step up and take measures to curb contagion. Politicians are signing-off on financial aid packages to aid owners of affected businesses for any losses that may occur. According to BBC News, COVID-19 has taken an emotional toll across Europe, known as pandemic fatigue, which makes efforts less motivated to follow health guidelines that bring about an eventual end to the spread of COVID-19.

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**FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT DECREASES BY HALF IN 2020 AMID PANDEMIC**

Luisa Chainferber Staff Writer

The United Nations (UN) announced that foreign direct investment (FDI) flows fell by about 49 percent in the first half of this year, reports the Economic Times. It is predicted that by the end of the year, there will be a total fall of 40 percent relative to 2019 levels. It is also the first time that FDI flows turned negative for European countries.

In fact, according to the UN, the decrease of FDI to $399 billion was even worse than the decline estimated. James Zhan, director of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), attributed this decline to lockdowns which delayed current projects and had investors worried about a deeper economic downturn moving forward. This means that investment decisions are becoming increasingly conservative with some future investment plans likely to be delayed or cancelled.

On an industry level, the World Economic Forum forecasted that industries such as tourism, airlines, manufacturing, and the energy sector will be the ones hardest hit by the decline in FDI flows. The World Economic Forum also stated that while developing countries have become more dependent on FDI flows in recent years, the UN predicts that the fall in FDI for these countries will exceed the global average decline in FDI flows. This means that the decline in FDI is highly interconnected with supply chain disruptions that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic.

Another reason that explains the decline in FDI is that the industries usually responsible for roughly 80 percent of transactions were among the ones hit hardest by the economic downturn, explains Reuters. Accordingly, even during the next half of the year, FDI is still expected to fall by an additional five to ten percent. Currently, the United States, Brazil, Australia, and Italy are among the countries that experienced the largest declines in FDI flows.

While a lot of countries suffered from lower FDI levels, it is important to note that the impact of this fall in FDI flows so far has been uneven. For example, as the UN explains, FDI remained stable in China in 2020 at approximately $76 billion, despite decreasing in several developed economies. Zhan attributed China’s success partly due to the new strategies it adopted to attract FDI this year. Despite these declines, FDI continues to be a source of external funding for developing countries, reports the UN. In fact, the UNCTAD predicts that the decline in flows is expected to continue until the global health crisis ends, although national policies could help alleviate the economic impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to this decline in FDI flows, the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Committee on Trade and Development held a meeting on November 2 to discuss strategies on how small economies can attract more FDI, reports the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). During this meeting, countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Saint Lucia expressed concern with protectionist moves in response to the pandemic. These countries, which belong to the WTO’s Small Vulnerable Economies (SVE) Group, also suggested that enhancing investment infrastructure will be very important to nation states if they begin attracting more FDI flows. The UNCTAD stressed the importance of addressing FDI flows in countries belonging to the SVE Group as they represent 1.5 percent of the global share of FDI inflows, the IISD explains.

They further stressed the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals and referenced the WTO’s ongoing negotiations to create a “multilateral agreement on investment facilitation for development.” 105 WTO member states are participating in these negotiations, the IISDs further.

Members also stressed the Aid for Trade initiative, which can help mobilize resources to increase FDI flows into developing and least developed countries.

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**SESSAME WORKSHOP PARTNERS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE TO EDUCATE REFUGEE CHILDREN**

Sara Vasquez Staff Writer

The Guardian reports four shipwrecks have occurred in the Mediterranean Sea causing 110 people to die on a rescue boat. A huge fire in September also stated that while developing countries have become more dependent on FDI flows in recent years, the UN predicts that the fall in FDI for these countries will exceed the global average decline in FDI flows.

For five decades, Sesame Workshop (Sesame Workshop) with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) partners to help “kids smarter, stronger, and kinder.” The IRC’s mission is to help “kids with children and teach them how to navigate sadness, fear, and anger.” The organization believes that education is to target the refugee children, and that half of these countries will experience much instability for refugees to wash up on the Mediterranean Sea.

The IRC teamed up with Sesame Workshop to develop a program to educate and address trauma and chronic stress in the children of these countries. Over the next five years, they are developing in person services and educational content in Arabic to nearly eight million kids.

The IRC’s approach to education is to target the children from a young age. The organization believes that by sending assistance to these refugee children, they can help in mitigating the harmful effects of living as a refugee and give hope to this generation. The Sesame Workshop is a company that was created in 1969 with the aim to educate children through television. Their mission is to help “kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder.”

For five decades, Sesame Workshop has been holding difficult conversations with children and teaching them how to navigate the dialogues with care. Sesame Workshop continues to create valuable educational content for children and believes that expanding its reach to a population of displaced children can have a large impact on their development. The IRC and Sesame Workshop are working together to begin tackling the largest humanitarian issue of this generation, an initiative made possible through a grant of $100 million from the MacArthur Foundation. The planning began in 2017 with the vision of helping alleviate the global problems that are caused by trauma and toxic stress for refugee children in the Middle East. Their work consists of Sesame workshop creating new show called ‘Ahlan Simsim’ (Welcome Sesame) for the Middle East with local muppets. Scot Cameron, who runs the production of the new show, stated that this sesame series is unlike any other because it does not focus on letters and numbers, but instead on emotions such as sadness, fear, and anger.

The idea is to not only identify action, but also to provide concrete actions so that children know what to do when they experience them.

The role of the IRC is to dramatically expand in person services to one million kids and their families. Early childhood centers in various refugee camps were created by the IRC to allow children for a place to play and learn through the new videos and books created by Sesame Workshop.

Before COVID-19, the IRC ran home visit program to visit 3,000 refugee families each week with the goal of helping the child and encouraging one on interaction with parents. Additionally, the IRC provides resources and programming to the informal tented settlements outside of the refugee camps.

Currently, home visits are suspended because of COVID-19 but the IRC continues to send games and supplies to the children and their families. Additionally, the IRC provides resources to deliver parenting resources through WhatsApp, a free messaging application for smart devices, and most recently remotely to continue helping those displaced.

They are also equipping caregivers with valuable COVID-19 guidelines and safety measures to encourage a safe environment, even within the camps.

Sesame Workshop reports that multi-year studies to measure the impact of this project are currently in place, so that if successful it can become a model to use all over the world. Since its conception, this program has already spread to help Rohingya refugee children in Myanmar, who now also receive valuable education despite their circumstances. Although the global pandemic has presented an unforeseen challenge, the IRC and Sesame Workshop along with other supporting organizations are working to find new ways to provide hope and imagine the future for refugee children.

Tanzanian Presidential Elections End in Controversy Due to Fraud Accusations

Timothy Georgetti
Staff Writer

Tanzania’s National Electoral Commission declared John Magufuli the winner of the 2020 presidential election held on October 28. Al Jazeera reports that the leaders of multiple opposition parties have claimed that the election was fraudulent following the declaration that Magufuli won with almost 85 percent of the votes. Opposition leaders, Tanzanian citizens, and international organizations alike claim that Magufuli, the incumbent leader, used his presidential powers to illegally influence the election in his own favor.

According to UN News, Magufuli intimidated voters through the threat and use of violence by the police force. At least ten people were killed and more than 50 injured on the semi-autonomous island of Zanzibar in pre-election confrontations with law-enforcement officers. Police retaliated to voter turnout and political suppression continued after the Tanzanian polls closed, with the police arresting more than 15 opposition leaders and Magufuli critics. Other reports of fraud include claims of ballot tampering and stuffing, all of which have been denied by the National Electoral Commission.

The Guardian explains that these election fraud efforts were amplified by a social media and mass-messaging blackout imposed by the Magufuli government on Election Day. The government not only urged national telecommunications providers to impose these service blackouts, but also installed its own hardware, allowing it to censor internet content and throttle speeds. These efforts were aimed at preventing Tanzanian voters from sending or receiving photos or videos on election day, affecting a broad range of internet services from WhatsApp to Twitter.

These pervasive tampering efforts both helped Magufuli secure a second presidential term and allowed his political party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), to win an overwhelming majority in the Tanzanian parliament. As counted by The Brookings Institute, the CCM won 194 parliament seats, leaving only two seats to be filled by opposition parties. This preponderance of parliamentary power will allow the CCM to easily obtain the two-thirds majority vote needed to amend Tanzania’s constitution.

While Magufuli has never sought to only seek two presidential terms, his government has sought to win re-election for a third term on November 28. To do so, Magufuli sought re-election in 2010, a prominent rebel leader’s exiled in the de facto capital of the country’s military to disobey President Ouattara. Al Jazeera emphasizes that recent events have given hope to a settlement of the crisis as Ouattara and Henri Konan Bedie, an 86-year-old former president and the opposition’s main political leader, arrived at an up-market hotel in Abidjan several hours after the much-awaited meeting was announced by the government.

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Ivy Coast Incumbent Wins in Contested Election

Tanzania's National Electoral Commission declared John Magufuli for at least two terms in an election that his opponents are decrying as a sham. Ouattara won the election by a landslide, capturing 94 percent of the votes as the opposing candidates urged their supporters to abstain from voting in the election, according to BBC News. Violence has erupted over the election, an occurrence reminiscent of the country's civil war in 2010. There have been calls from international observers, including the United Nations, European Union, France, and Ivory Coast’s neighbors, for leaders to keep the peace within the country.

Many polling stations were closed, in part due to the protest stronghold on Saturday and election materials were burned, BBC News reports. This has prompted protests from supporters of the opposition party in different areas across the country. It is unclear how the military could act to such actions but it has added to the instability and tensions that many fear could destabilize the nation again.

Magufuli’s re-election has resulted in over 40 deaths and the United Nations refugee agency said more than 3,200 people have fled into nations bordering Ivory Coast, such as Liberia, Ghana, and Togo, fearing the breakout of violence, according to Al Jazeera.

Not to be deterred by protests that the opposition organized, security forces loyal to the president forcibly dispersed opposition protesters with tear gas while the protesters erected barricades on streets, the Associated Press reports.

In the eastern city of Dalofo, protesters arranged roadblocks and constructed barriers to block security forces. In the de facto capital of the Ivory Coast, Abidjan, tear gas was used to disperse protesters who congregated close to the area where President Ouattara cast his ballot, according to BBC News.

Following the election, tensions continued to grow as security forces loyal to the president surrounded the homes of opposition leaders. The latter have rejected Ouattara’s re-election and have pledged to set up their own transitional government, according to Al Jazeera.

In response, security forces arrested opposition leader Pascal Affi Nguessan on charges of rebellion, reports BBC News. His arrest has not been confirmed by Ivory Coast authorities; it remains unknown as to what lies in store for Nguessan. Several other opposition leaders are facing charges of terrorism and sedition due to their rejection of President Ouattara’s re-election, BBC News further notes. The reason for the dispute lies in the term limits of the presidency as set in Ivory Coast’s constitution.

Despite Ivory Coast having a limit of two presidential terms, Ouattara announced the changes present in the new constitution passed in 2016 allow him to run for presidency a third time, reports Al Jazeera. The president has been in power for almost a decade. Ouattara did not initially plan to run again this year, but he changed his mind according to his party’s presidential candidate died in June, according to the Associated Press.

The president, who is 78 years old, professed his love for his country as part of his decision to run again. Ouattara remains popular with international donors but has also said that he does not see himself seeking re-election in 2025, reports the Associated Press.

In the face of possible military reprisal in surrounding the homes of opposition leaders, prominent dissidents, Guillaume Soro, called for the country’s military to disobey President Ouattara after he was allowed to win his controversial third term on November 4, reports the Associated Press. Soro’s plea to the military has brought him closer to the other opposition leaders and has put him in the crosshairs of his former mentor, President Ouattara. According to the Associated Press, Soro stated, “I ask you to disobey the illegal orders and join the National Council of Transition. To disobey the defense and security forces, I ask you to look in the mirror, in soul and conscience, and act to stop the killings.”

Soro may have possible influence within the security forces as he was a prominent rebel leader prior to Ouattara’s election victory in 2010, according to Al Jazeera. Soro led the rebels that guided Ouattara to power against former President Laurent Gbagbo, but his personal relationship with the president has since declined. The history of the last conflict has caused international and domestic concern, as the civil war between 2010 and 2011 caused the death of 3,000 people in the world’s top cocoa producing nation, reports Al Jazeera.

Al Jazeera emphasizes that recent events have given hope to a settlement of the crisis as Ouattara and Henri Konan Bedie, an 86-year-old former president and the opposition’s main political leader, arrived at an up-market hotel in Abidjan several hours after the much-awaited meeting was announced by the government.
Focus on Elections in the

**FRANCE**

President Emmanuel Macron.

Mark Stachowski  
Staff Writer

The coronavirus pandemic heavily influenced elections around the globe, resulting in the postponement of some elections and limited in-person voting for others due to social distancing and other health guidelines. It has even influenced voters to vote one way or another. This year, several countries held presidential, municipal, and other types of elections. France held municipal elections this year, where citizens voted for the mayors of their towns and cities. COVID-19 greatly impacted the voting process, causing delays, confusion, and more in an election that was anything but traditional.

The first round of municipal elections was held on March 15, just two days before President Emmanuel Macron ordered a nationwide lockdown. The pandemic had not fully hit France by election day, but health safety protocols were already put into effect. The Economist reports that polling stations were set up so polling officials and voters remained at least one meter apart from each other. Officials counted the votes wearing masks and gloves. The Economist, in another report, says that despite steps, young people were the least worried about the pandemic's effect on voting, as they believe in public authority more and trust their handling of precautions and guidelines.

The Guardian reports that more than 40 percent of mayoralities were decided in the first round. The second round was postponed until June by President Macron. In those cities and towns where a second round was held, it was found that only 40 percent of voters turned out, as opposed to more than 50 percent in 2014. POLITICO finds that the first round of voting saw 45 percent turnout, as compared to nearly 64 percent in 2014. POLITICO also outlined in detail the results of the elections. France's Green Party scored big, taking some of France's biggest cities such as Lyon and Marseille. Macron's former interior minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, was the Green Party's second-place candidate.

On April 16, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced the date of the election for May 2020. However, due to the lockdowns imposed from the new rise of infections, the Election Commission was prepared to hold the election with proper sanitation and social distancing, but Ardèche eventually moved the date, claiming, “Ultimately, the 17th of October... provides sufficient time for parties to plan around the range of circumstances we will be campaigning under,” reports Reuters.

The prime minister's landslide victory against the National Party led by Judith Collins resulted in a win of 49 percent of the vote and a majority in the Parliament, says NBC. In addition to her efforts with the coronavirus, Ardèche also addressed the response to the Christchurch terrorist attack of March 2019. Not long after the attack, the government passed stricter gun laws on semi-automatic weapons.

The government's successful efforts against the virus also included an announcement in Wellington, the country's capital, recently held a rugby match against Australia with over 30,000 fans, says New York Times. The country also no longer mandates lockdowns, masks, or social distancing. With New Zealand emerging strongly as the pandemic still rages around the world, it is no surprise that Ardèche's management of the pandemic was a big influence that led to her reelection.

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**NEW ZEALAND**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

Courtesy of Wikipedia.

Juliet Nangini  
Staff Writer

Around the world, the coronavirus pandemic has shined a light on leaders for their substantial efforts against the coronavirus. Many individuals have pointed to the astounding efforts of New Zealand to control COVID-19. Along with the international community, the country’s handling of the coronavirus was also praised by its citizens. This played an important role in the re-election of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who orchestrated early virus restrictions. Her immediate plan was to not just control the spread of the virus, but eliminate it entirely.

Ardern’s administration achieved success over the pandemic through coordination with science, says Forbes. Thus far, the country has reported only 25 deaths due to its early lockdown efforts, according to the Washington Post. The prime minister proactively set virus regulations before the country, the abstinence rate increased from 36 percent in 2014 to 56 percent. Bloomberg analyzed a survey conducted by the polling research company Institut Français d’Opinion Public (IFOP) taken about a week before the first round of voting. The Institute asked voters for their thoughts about COVID-19 and how the virus impacts how they voted and what they voted for. Among those surveyed, 28 percent of respondents said they were likely to reconsider going out to vote because of the pandemic, which was then still in its early stages. According to the survey, young voters were found to be most worried about contracting the virus. Emanuel Macron, a representative of the IFOP, named social media and the internet as the reason behind the increased caution, citing that young people are more susceptible to see reports and rumors and believe them. The survey also found that the elderly were the least worried about the pandemic's effects on voting, as they believe in public authority more and trust their handling of precautions and guidelines.

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The government’s mandate into at least 2021, The New York Times reports. This was met with backlash from leaders in the ethnic Tigray region, who called it a “power grab” by Abiy’s government and stated that they were not adequately consulted.

In July, in a famous Oromo singer and activist Hachalu Hundessa was shot and killed by an unknown suspect while driving in the capital city, Addis Ababa. Abiy ordered foreign forces of assassinating the singer in an attempt to destabilize the nation, alluding to a Kippa and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project. BBC News describes the shooting as one of many violent protests by Oromo citizens, which were followed up by a controversial internet shutdown and the targeting of multiple high-ranking Oromo officials. These actions by Abiy’s administration drew complaints from journalists and some officials since a big part of Abiy’s campaign was releasing political opponents and journalists who suffered under previous administrations. To make matters more difficult for the Prime Minister, the Tigray region held local elections in September which he called “unconstitutional” and “illegal.” As Abiy’s government consolidates more power, some Tigrayans reportedly held talks regarding possible secession.

It is also interesting to note that under Article 39 of the Ethiopian constitution, a region may “govern themselves as they see fit.” This clause technical- ly makes it legal for a region to secede, although the section notes that the founding democratic principles should, in theory, incentivize the citizens of a region to contribute more to the national identity rather than breaking it. Throughout October, tensions continued to rise between the central government and the Tigray region. On the week of November 2, Al Jazeera reports Abiy launched a campaign against Tigrayan forces in the north of the region after accusing them of attacking a military base. Federal forces have also captured four towns and executed more than 10 air raids. Tigrayans say Abiy’s government has unfairly targeted them as part of a crackdown on past rights abuses and corruption. The conflicts in the Oromia and Tigray regions trace back decades following the overthrow of the communist People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia by the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) in 1991. After the TPLF rose to power, which represented only 6 percent of the ethnic population, Tigrayans were far too national- ly overrepresented for the liking of many other groups. As a member of the Oromo ethnic group, Abiy’s rise to power in 2018 marked a decline in influence for the TPLF, the most powerful of the various Ethiopian ethnic groups at over 34 percent of the population. During the peak of TPLF power, many human rights organizations depicted Ethiopia as a police state. Under the pretext of “fighting terrorism,” the regime ex- aled, prosecuted, and con- victed several opposition leaders, community leader- ers, journalists, bloggers, and political figures for criticism of any type. However, following Abiy’s rise to power in 2018, many hoped that Abiy’s administration’s pol- icies would give priority to the Oromo population after decades of oppression. As a result of the long history of a lopsided balance of power, both groups felt disappointed when Abiy’s government did not match their expec- tations. To maintain ade- quate national and social stability, Abiy now walks a thin tightrope among starkly opposing interests. Many of his economic re- forms require a more cen- tralized government and a consolidation of power which he is execu- tive in an attempt to keep this type of political cli- mate, TIME adds.

Collin Duran Staff Writer

In March 2019, to- ward the beginning of the coronavirus pandem- ic, South Korea—one of the first countries outside of China to face the COVID-19 pandem- ic. The country adopted a lockdown to flatten the infection curve, ultimately enabling the country to host their parliamentary elections on April 15 as scheduled. The results were staggering. Not only did South Korea see its highest vot- er turnout in almost thirty years, but it also managed to reduce zero new infections related to the election through the following fourteen day incubation period reported in the Atlantic.

The country’s ability to hold safe national elections should not come as a surprise. South Korea has an early leader in corona- virus response protocol and, according to NPR, even received praise from the head of the WHO, Tedros Ghebreyesus, who called on the global community to “apply the lessons learned in [South] Korea, and elsewhere,” in the struggle against COVID-19. Reuters says South Korea was able to handle the outbreak so effec- tively through their im- pressive national testing and contact tracing campaign. Similar to the nation’s response to the pandemic, South Korea’s successful election success story cannot be attributed to a singular policy or mea- sure. The government implemented a compre- hensive plan with a multi- tude of safety protocols at polling locations while engaging in a media blitz to reach out to underrepresented voting procedures. A re- port from HealthyElectio- n.org outlines various tactics adopted to ensure a safe and successful election process, includ- ing early voting, constant voting booth sanitation, special polling stations for the elderly, and poll worker health requirements. These mea- sures translated into 40 percent of all voters in the election participating in the early voting process.

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The polarization of COVID-19 in Brazil proves detrimental.
Hamzah Khan
Staff Writer

Muslim leaders around the world have decried France’s response to multiple terrorist attacks last month. In the aftermath of the brutal beheading of schoolteacher Samu- el Paty showing offen- sive drawings of the Prophet Muhammad on October 16 and the Nice attacks on October 29, the French government unleashed a strict crack- down on many Muslim organizations within the country. To reiterate their devotion to free speech, many government build- ings in France displayed the offensive cartoons that sparked the attacks in the first place, reports The Independent. President Emmanuel Macron has strongly supported these actions and has stated multiple times the need to reform Islam and end “Islamic separatism,” reports Euronews.

President Recep Tayy- ip Erdogan has said Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan, For- eign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran, and countless other officials across the Middle East world pounced at the opportunity to portray themselves as “defenders of the faith” by condemn- ing Macron and France. Erdogan even went so far as to question Macron’s mental state. One would think that these are the words of passionate lead- ers coming to the defense of their fellow Muslims in France, but their words ring extremely hollow when compared to their non-existent condemna- tion of the cultural geno- cide of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang Province of China.

In Bangladesh, 40,000 people marched in the streets of the capital of Dhaka while burning pic- tures of President Ma- ron according to The New York Times, yet how many Bangladeshi leaders urged supporters to march against China? None. Iran’s Foreign Min- ister demanded Presi- dent Macron’s actions and the display of offensive caricatures of the Proph- et Muhammad. What has been said about China, on the other hand? That’s right: nothing. Qatar and Kuwait have implement- ed a boycott of French products from their gro- cery stores and their for- eign ministries were quick to condemn France and President Macron’s com- ments. So then where is their boycott of Chinese goods and infrastructure projects? Instead, Egypt’s alliances with China are stronger than ever, according to the European Council on Foreign Relations. As long as these countries benefit from trade with China and its “Belt and Road Initiative,” they are willing to turn a blind eye to genocide.

The fault is not with the civilians of these na- tions, as of course, they are only marching in de- fense of their beloved Prophet. Their cowardly leaders, however, have exploited this opportuni- ty to advance their own political agendas. Presi- dent Erdogan is eager to distract from the fact that Turkey’s economy is in dire shape as the lira plunged to histor- ical lows, according to The Guardian. Pakistan is also facing economic strains while Iran and Middle Eastern countries are dealing with the devastat- ing effects of COVID-19. In July 2019, these so- called “champions of Is- lami” blocked a UN res- olution that would allow independent observers to document the events taking place in Xinjiang. Interestingly enough, France supported this resolution, while almost every Muslim majority na- tion opposed it, according to Al Jazeera.

In fact, The Indepen- dent reports that almost all these nations signed a letter defending China’s “contribution to the in- ternational human rights cause.” All this while al- most 1 million Uighur Muslims are detained in concentration camps, Uighur women are forci- bly sterilized, and Uighur children are separated from their families and forced to renounce their culture, reports CNN and the Associated Press. Although France’s policies are extremely problematic, coun- tries who side with perpetrators of geno- cide in what is essen- tially a modern-day Nazi Germany have no leg to stand on. These Muslim countries who sup- port China’s atrocities, however, are no stain on Iran and China, reports it is not surprising that their leaders are more “offend- ed” by cartoons than an actual genocide. In the wake of domes- tic uncertainty, Muslim leaders have jumped at the opportunity to “de- fend Islam” and project their “righteous indigna- tion” to the rest of the world. Yet sadly, Muslim leaders have surrendered to China’s will, while Chi- na continues to violate human rights with impu- nity. The silence by Mus- lim leaders is deafening and their empty words mean nothing to the mil- lions of Muslims in China who may never be heard from again.

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A Reproductive Rights Movement in Poland Under Protest

ABORTION BAN IN POLAND UNDER PROTEST: NEVER DOUBT A WOMAN’S POWER

Areeza Shamssaei-Gil
Staff Writer

Massive protests took place in late October in Warsaw, Poland. The root of the anger stems from the country’s righting Law and Justice party’s decision to outlaw the majority of abortions. The legislation bans abor- tions in cases where the fetus is diagnosed with serious and irreversible birth defect and makes them unconstitutional. The Guardian explains that this decision sparked outrage in Warsaw, as this ban outlaws 96 percent of legal abortions that take place every year.

Over 400,000 wom- en and allies took to the streets in response to this legislation and took part in a “women’s strike”. The demonstrations have gained much attention on the internet as the coun- try faces a battle for a woman’s right to choose. Reuters reports that two demonstrators stripped naked in front of the Presidential Palace with swear words written on their bodies. The symbol- ic representation of the act was a physical demon- stration of the fight for women’s rights and the ongoing battle to protect healthcare and reproduc- tive rights for women. The demonstrations rep- resent the ongoing con- tentious debate between progressives and conser- vatives in the Catholic country, as well.

In response to the massive protests, Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki sent a mes- sage to the government to discuss modifying the ban to be less restrictive with a set of specific terms to share the streets during the midst of a global pandemic. The Associated Press re- ports Morawiecki stated, “I ask you to sit down to- gether for talks. May our disputes not be held in the streets and may they not be the cause of more infections”. The Prime Minister rep- resents a hopeful start for the protesters who refuse to cease their demands for change until the bar- batic law is overturned.

The Associated Press also explains that the right-wing party current- ly in power has a history of conservative opinions regarding other issues such as LGBT rights and animal rights. The majority of Polish citi- zens want Prime Minister Morawiecki to step away from the administration’s conservative views. The ruling on abortion is the last straw for the already untrusted Prime Min- ister who now suffers a great deal with his public standing. It is clear that Poland does not support the current conservative direction, and the govern- ment will face continuous backlash from the people.

In response to the mas- sive protests, Polish Presi- dient Andrzej Duda of- fered an alternative to the law instead, banning only abortions on fetuses with down syndrome. This small change represents the power that protests have and how the people can demand change from their government while also seeing results. How- ever, CBS News explains this alteration to the law is still too restrictive and the people remain op- posed. Since the govern- ment is not budging on the issue, the protests will continue until less re- strictive actions are taken against abortion.

As the world observes Poland’s restrictive policy, one at its highest court, explains that the United States is watching very closely. The two coun- tries are rich in ties of commerce and share the risk of ongoing debates concerning the restriction on abortions. U.S. law follows Roe v. Wade, the 1973 Supreme Court decision which legaliz- es abortions during the first trimester. However, state restrictions make it difficult for women to use their right. These re- strictions are constantly argued in courts in order to prevent their imple- mentation but are not al- ways successful. Although the U.S. has Roe v. Wade to protect abortions at the federal level, what is occurring in Poland’s conservative government could be an inspiration for the U.S. With the new confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett taking a seat at the U.S. Supreme Court, her unclear opin- ion on abortion might lead to new discussions to overturn the highly con- troversial decision of Roe v. Wade and put women’s reproductive rights at risk.

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The Associated Press also explains that the right-wing party currently in power has a history of conservative opinions regarding other issues such as LGBT rights and animal rights. The majority of Polish citizens want Prime Minister Morawiecki to step away from the administration’s conservative views. The ruling on abortion is the last straw for the already untrusted Prime Minister who now suffers a great deal with his public standing. It is clear that Poland does not support the current conservative direction, and the government will face continuous backlash from the people.

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**Opinion**

**SHOULD THE OPINIONS OF FOREIGN LEADERS MATTER IN U.S. ELECTIONS?**

Patrick Condon  
**Staff Writer**

The recent November election in the United States shed light on the near future of the U.S.’s international involve- ment. In many ways, the future of many trade agreements depended on this election, with certain doom guaranteed from a Trump victory. However, even as Biden came out on top, there was not necessarily a wave of hope and certainty for many foreign leaders, states NPR. With the U.S. becoming increasingly involved with military operations abroad and a member of international agreements, it is made obvious that this election reaches far beyond the borders of the United States. However, because the U.S. is entrenched internationally and, in many countries, domestically, does that validate the input of foreign leaders into the 2020 election? Due to the convoluted and interconnected nature of the international community, there is no easy answer to whether a foreign leader’s views should be taken into account in U.S. elections. However, U.S. Presidents’ views are often considered in foreign elections. In the 2018 Brazilian election, for example, Trump’s views from economic growth to climate change arguably qualified President Jair Bolsonaro’s victory. ABC News notes Bolsonaro needs Trump to win in 2020 to legitimize the Brazilian presidency. While the degree to which Trump’s direct influence is not as strong, it signifies the almost “supreme” view of the American President’s views. In the future, the Biden presidency too will signal many international policy views to be accounted for in foreign elections in the next four years. The most significant of these foreign leaders’ views, if they will be considered, would most likely come from the U.S.’s European allies. Even now, as a second COVID-19 wave sweeps across the continent, Europeans worry about short-term economic and health effects as well as the long-term agreements made with the U.S. After the Trump Administration departed from international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and the Iran Nuclear Agreement (JCPOA), a mandate to rejoin those agreements formed for the Biden presidency. According to CNN, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron led the push for a Biden presidency, arguing that “Europe should maintain good relations with the U.S., but prepare for disengagement.” As European leaders hope for a Biden presidency to strike valuable trade agreements, a list of other foreign leaders come into play on the topic of human rights. Time states that with a Biden presidency, Mexico, South Korea, South Africa, Australia, and many other countries will find more cooperation on human rights issues, which were previously unacknowledged by the Trump administration. However, with a Trump presidency, China, Russia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and many other nations who have committed grave human rights abuses since 2016, would have benefitted from continued silence for another four years. Possibly the largest divide between Trump and Biden in key international issues is their approach to addressing the history of human rights abuses under many foreign administrations endorsed by President Trump. In this way, the human rights abuses under the Xi, Putin, Bolsonaro, and Sal- man governments might have been overlooked even further with these leaders’ opinions muddying the waters between just and unjust foreign operations. As Biden pledged to scale back many of Trump’s aggressive policies towards foreign adversaries, he also denounced human rights abuses in places Trump seemingly turned a blind eye. If the U.S. election factored in foreign opinion on a President’s condemnation of human rights abuses, leaders of many countries who commit human rights abuses would be silenced. However, if the U.S. election factored in the opinions of foreign leaders of a President’s favorable opinion on trade agreements, many European leaders’ voices would be lifted. With the seemingly contradictory statements made, it appears that for- eign opinion would only muddy the already complicated waters of the U.S. election cycle. Therefore, it may be best for can- didates to disregard the claims of foreign leaders. Perhaps though, because the U.S. may only prog- ress in the international community by participation in a diverse field of international agreements, the views of foreign leaders should be acknowled- ged, at least for the bet- terment of the American people.

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**Will Australia-China Trade Tiff Turn into a Trade War?**

Sara Khalid  
**Staff Writer**

Australia’s relationship with China, its largest trading partner, is increas- ingly strained as a result of a row over new Chi- nese trade restrictions. Relations between the two nations have been tense for years due to a series of policy disputes. When Australia supported an international inquiry into China’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic, their ties officially began to sour. The countries have faced more disputes than agreements over the years, like in 2018 when Australia became the first country to publicly ban China’s Huawei from its 5G network.

Australia and China signed a free trade agree- ment that went into ef- fect on December 20, 2015; shortly thereafter, Australia quickly became wary of China. Austra- lian government officials reasoned that exporters in every industry make

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The White House awaits a new President. Courtesy of WikimediaCommons.

Australia and China are related by strained assessments around the risks of trading with Chi- na and understand the greater the risk, the great- er the potential reward, as reports CNBC. However, the financial stakes are high since China’s goods and services account for 27.4 percent of the world’s trade.

Currently, their rocky relationship leaves the Australian economy in the balance. It could be potentially severely damaged if trade ties were severed since the export market is worth nearly $104 billion. In February of 2019, China’s north- ern port banned imports of Australian coal until 2019, and in 2020, China halted imports from four of Australia’s largest meat processors. China is the largest buyer of Australian coal, so when they ordered coal mills to halt purchases of Australian supplies or face a tariff of 40 percent, Aus- tralia’s economy suffered, states Reuters.

These trade disputes spiraled to the brink of a trade war between the two, with the cotton indus- try in the middle of it. Roughly 65 percent of Australia’s crop goes to China. According to VOA news, after China imposed tariffs as high as 40 percent, most Aus- tralian mills were heavily impacted by the loss. Additionally, officials report that communication with the Chinese government is difficult, and as such, analysts recommend Aus- tralia demonstrate precise and delicate diplomacy to preserve the unstable trading relationship be- tween them.

Australia’s vocal crit- icism of China and its handling of COVID-19 caused China to retaliate against the nation even further. Beijing went on to impose extremely high tariffs on many other ar- eas of agriculture such as barley and wine, reports Fortune. This tactic of fi- nancial punishment leaves little room for the two na- tions to make peace.

Richard McGregor, a senior fellow at the Lowy Institute, China seemingly- ly seeks to penalize Aus- tralia and make them an example to the rest of the world, reports They want to send a message to oth- er countries that political disagreements are cost- ly. However, China has remained adamant that they do not target Austra- lia and are committed to trading rules, despite the suspension of Australian cotton purchases and oth- er agricultural products. These aggressive tactics on China’s part certain- ly do not help Australia’s current federal election, first one in almost 30 years.

The Financial Review states that Joe Biden’s U.S. election win could help Australia reset relations with China and eliminate the chances of a trade war that would jeopardize bil- lions of dollars’ worth of export goods. In the past, China has been reluctant to open communication with Australia. However, since China has repeated- ly accused the Australian government under Prime Minister Scott Morri- son of doing President Trump’s bidding, a new U.S. leader could smooth over tensions and pave the way for an improved relationship. Yet, some experts do not believe U.S. involvement in the relationship between Aus- tralia and China is enough to salvage the hostile and ongoing trade dispute.

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Australia-China relations are being strained. Courtesy of Australia Institute of International Affairs.  

Australians are less concerned with human rights.  

Australians are less concerned with human rights.
Interview with Reverend Robert Chase on His Work in Fostering Interfaith Dialogue

Jasmine DeLeon
Staff Writer

Recently the Diplomatic Envoy had the opportunity to interview Reverend Robert Chase, a fellow at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations Center for UN and Global Governance Studies. The interview focused on his work in fostering interfaith dialogues and his views on the role of religion in the United States 2020 presidential election.

Reverend Chase is a career professional in the clergy. He has spent most of his life working in social justice as an ordained minister for the United Church of Christ, and continues to do so. He is the founding director of Intersections International, a global initiative of the Collegiate Church of New York with the mandate to “bring people together across lines of difference.” As a member of the U.S.-Pakistan Interreligious Consortium (UPIC), an initiative of Intersections International, Reverend Chase spent years building relationships between the people of Pakistan and the United States. When he first started visiting Pakistan, Reverend Chase observed how religion was a cause of suspicion among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. “We had to convince them that we were not there to convert them and that we were there to hear their stories and find points of commonality.” Building that trust proved to be difficult work. After a decade of dialogues and building relationships, UPIC was finally invited to Pakistan in 2018.

The first step in building this relationship, Reverend Chase explained, was listening to people and letting them know that you want to hear their stories, which lays the groundwork for building trust. One experience Reverend Chase recalled was when UPIC engaged with a group of mostly young Pakistani women. “The Pakistani women who were in our country are believed to be oppressed. These women were very engaged, inquisitive, and curious, which was very delightful to see, and they shattered the stereotypes that we had.”

The second step is being authentic in who you are. During one of his first trips to Pakistan, Reverend Chase was invited to speak to an assembly of elders at the University of Management and Technology. During their conversation, somebody said, “I’m glad that Christians and Muslims are meeting.” Reverend Chase stated, “If someone says that they truly believe their views and their way is the only way, it is very hard to attack them on any rational basis. It is important for people concerned about global peace to cut through that, to figure out how we can work together in light of that.” Having engaged with people of different faiths, Reverend Chase explained that for many people, their faith influences many of their decisions. However, he stressed the importance of exercising caution when it comes to religion. “People of faith need to be careful and attentive not to use their religion to justify any private political agenda. It is very easy to do that, and we need to be careful that it does not become a form of idolatry. True religion should be careful that it does not harm people, their faith in their religion, which makes it even more important not to let one’s political views be shaped solely by religion. “In addition to having one hand on the Bible, we need to have one hand on today’s newspaper and be really attentive to not use religion to advance a private agenda.”

Before the election results came out, Reverend Chase stated in his weekly blog that whatever the outcome is, “we must commit ourselves to intentionally expanding our efforts to listen to one another and to understand each other. [This is an important effort to] work forward to end the pandemic, improve the economy, address systemic racism, fight climate change, and build up our credibility on the world stage.”

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For more information on sources, go to http://blogs.shu.edu/thediplomaticenvoy/

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The Diplomatic Envoy

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Diplomacy News

Interview with Reverend Robert Chase on his work in fostering interfaith dialogue

Jasmine DeLeon
Staff Writer

Recently the Diplomatic Envoy had the opportunity to interview Reverend Robert Chase, a fellow at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations Center for UN and Global Governance Studies. The interview focused on his work in fostering interfaith dialogues and his views on the role of religion in the United States 2020 presidential election.

Reverend Chase is a career professional in the clergy. He has spent most of his life working in social justice as an ordained minister for the United Church of Christ, and continues to do so. He is the founding director of Intersections International, a global initiative of the Collegiate Church of New York with the mandate to “bring people together across lines of difference.” As a member of the U.S.-Pakistan Interreligious Consortium (UPIC), an initiative of Intersections International, Reverend Chase spent years building relationships between the people of Pakistan and the United States. When he first started visiting Pakistan, Reverend Chase observed how religion was a cause of suspicion among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. “We had to convince them that we were not there to convert them and that we were there to hear their stories and find points of commonality.” Building that trust proved to be difficult work. After a decade of dialogues and building relationships, UPIC was finally invited to Pakistan in 2018.

The first step in building this relationship, Reverend Chase explained, was listening to people and letting them know that you want to hear their stories, which lays the groundwork for building trust. One experience Reverend Chase recalled was when UPIC engaged with a group of mostly young Pakistani women. “The Pakistani women who are in our country are believed to be oppressed. These women were very engaged, inquisitive, and curious, which was very delightful to see, and they shattered the stereotypes that we had.”

The second step is being authentic in who you are. During one of his first trips to Pakistan, Reverend Chase was invited to speak to an assembly of elders at the University of Management and Technology. During their conversation, somebody said, “I’m glad that Christians and Muslims are meeting.” Reverend Chase explained that for many people, their faith influences many of their decisions. However, he stressed the importance of exercising caution when it comes to religion. “People of faith need to be careful and attentive not to use their religion to justify any private political agenda. It is very easy to do that, and we need to be careful that it does not become a form of idolatry. True religion should be careful that it does not harm people, their faith in their religion, which makes it even more important not to let one’s political views be shaped solely by religion. “In addition to having one hand on the Bible, we need to have one hand on today’s newspaper and be really attentive to not use religion to advance a private agenda.”

Before the election results came out, Reverend Chase stated in his weekly blog that whatever the outcome is, “we must commit ourselves to intentionally expanding our efforts to listen to one another and to understand each other. [This is an important effort to] work forward to end the pandemic, improve the economy, address systemic racism, fight climate change, and build up our credibility on the world stage.”

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Chaffari is the co-founder and vice president of Fighters for Peace, an NGO based in Lebanon and comprised of ex-civil war fighters.

Mr. Chaffari began by outlining the stark difference between his former and current perceptions on Muslims. “The Muslim was someone so different from us that it was thought they were just avoided. The difference was a social and political one.” Mr. Chaffari explained that at the time, this view was based off the fact that Muslims were considered inferior, lazy, and poor. It was only until later did he realize this was a result of Christian propaganda.

It was not until a coup in 1985 by fellow Christians following a tripartite agreement in Lebanon that Mr. Chaffari’s view towards Muslims started to change. After meeting with dialogue groups, Mr. Chaffari began his path of reconciliation with the Muslim community. This involved issuing a public apology. Since then he has been dedicated to fostering peace with Fighters for Peace. He focuses on building bridges between divided communities in cities such as Tripoli and Beirut.

When reflecting on peacebuilding, Mr. Chaffari described that politicians in Lebanon are invested in the present broken system. Politicians are not willing to work towards peace as it means admitting faults and taking responsibility for their role in the conflict. He posed the question of how we can help politicians and leaders to accept and admit their mistakes if they think that strength is their asset, and taking responsibility would weaken them. Delving further into this relationship, Mr. Chaffari stated that the central government in Lebanon is weaker than any other component. No central pillar exists in Lebanon to protect its people and declare who is at fault. Politicians and sectarian leaders dominate law enforcement and legal positions in a justice system that Mr. Chaffari described as being broken. Mr. Chaffari alluded to the recent explosion in the Beirut port as a prime example of this, explaining that even fifty days after the explosion, officials have not found the real perpetrator.

The discussion transitioned to the question of marginalization and how the government will help certain minorities. “It is a country of minorities, and every minority is fearing that it might melt and disappear among the others,” Mr. Chaffari stated. In his view, everyone is ready for a new Lebanon, but fear is stopping the change from occurring. Every group is afraid of the other.

When asked about his thoughts on Lebanon’s hope for a secular government in the near future, Mr. Chaffari noted, “we are asking the leaders of the sectarian clans to do it themselves, to annihilate themselves, and this cannot work.” To come to a secure government, mutual trust and friendship must develop. This idea raises the type of informal leadership and communicating that to wider society, one of the challenges of peacebuilding.

Fighters for Peace is a grassroots NGO. It works with politicians, political parties, and clergy members to spread the message that violence is never the answer and that change is possible even if it seems unattainable. The price to be paid for peace is ego, pride, and thinking of not only yourself and your interests, but of everyone’s. Mr. Chaffari put it best saying, “peace is not parceled in, but built within.”

In his closing, Mr. Chaffari maintained that personal transformations help transform others. “If you want to change situations let us work on changing hearts.”

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Professor from John Hopkins University delivers lecture on decolonizing International Relations Theory

Alessandra Antonacci Staff Writer

On Friday, November 13, the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University invited Dr. Robbie Shilliam to discuss decolonizing International Relations (IR) theory. Dr. Shilliam is a professor in the Department of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University. Currently, he is researching the political and intellectual complicities of colonialism and race in the global order. He is also the co-founder of the Colonial, Post-colonial, and Decolonial working group (CPD) at the British International Studies Association as well as a longstanding member of the Global Development section of the International Studies Association.

Dr. Shilliam’s discussion on decolonizing IR theory revolved around the story of a world set five years from now and still burdened by COVID-19. With the story of a girl named Michelle Delaney’s life, Dr. Shilliam recounted limits put on the African American community through redlining, denial of financial and civic services, and the potential creation of a COVID-19 tracker app. The app, called Symptomatic, “turns medical diagnosis into racialized risk management.” Technology of Symptomatic, along with an “apartheid app” called Transactional, which is aimed at prolonging one’s life even if that means the consequent shortening of the lives of others, are driven by the pursuit of racialized genocide.

In a world where the threat of COVID-19 is divided by zip code, one COVID being the lowest risk, often found in white neighborhoods, and five COVID being the highest risk, often found in black neighborhoods, redlining has found itself taking on a whole new form. “If you were one white, one wealthy, you made and re-made your own heredity, you could circle, zigzag, indulge with your own freedom,” he stated as a contrast to the straight line of Michelle’s path.

After this, he introduced, into the story, the character of Tedros, as well as two other devices called Human Development Index (HDI) and Overview, both used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). HDI was designed to counter the reduction of development to economic growth by bringing education and living standards into the equation, as well as paying attention to various inequalities on a national level. Overview was a different indicator used by G18 elites in various countries determining which states they should bilaterally invest in depending on COVID-19 infection rates. As Dr. Shilliam described it, this is an international version of Symptomatic and Transactional. “The premise is that the development of the economy, the better it can deal with COVID’s spot would allow: This was a truly chilling dystopian story told by Dr. Shilliam, which was set only five years into the future but still relevant to the current global issue of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the question and answer portion of the event, a student asked Dr. Shilliam how likely is the dystopia he described in his story. Dr. Shilliam responded that this story was not actually about five years into the future, but instead it was about identifying and reproducing some of the tendencies in the present.”

This would then prompt students to think about how we can change these tendencies, he further stated.

Another student asked Dr. Shilliam how he believes we should end the narrative of Africa as a “poor, helpless, powerless” place under colonization while still respecting the trauma that colonization has caused. The latter responded with a story about a time when he was in a Brazilian favela. He said, “So many people in Brazil see favelas as the problem, where it is actually the ways that people have to live in favelas, the way in which they have to work towards peace as it means admitting faults and taking responsibility,” Mr. Chaftari said. It seems unattainable. The price to be paid for peace is ego, pride, and thinking of not only yourself and your interests, but of everyone’s. Mr. Chaftari put it best saying, “peace is not parceled in, but built within.”

In his closing, Mr. Chaftari maintained that personal transformations help transform others. “If you want to change situations let us work on changing hearts.”

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Professor Robbie Shilliam Courtesy of John Hopkins University