**German Politician Resigns Over Mask Scandal**

Natalie Sherman  
Staff Writer

In Germany, corruption allegations are threatening the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as well as its sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU) ahead of elections in multiple German states. The CDU is the party of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has been in power for 15 years. However, this scandal is coming just months before she planned to step down in September. BBC News notes that with Merkel leaving office, strong CDU leadership is needed if the party is to pick up the torch from the chancellor. Two politicians are at the center of this corruption scandal: Member of Parliament (MP) Nikolaus Löbel and MP Georg Nüsslein. Both earned several hundred thousand euros from the sale of face masks during the early days of the pandemic when the world was dealing with a personal protective equipment shortage. According to The Guardian, MP Nikolai Löbel's company earned 250,000 euros by broker- ing a deal between face-mask suppliers and private companies in the cities of Mannheim and Heidelberg. Löbel is the representative from Mannheim, a city of 300,000 residents. He initially resigned only from his role on the foreign affairs committee but has since been forced to resign from his role in the CDU party as well as his position in the Bundestag, Germany’s parliament, following these allegations. He was pressured to do so by the current leader of the CDU, Armin Laschet. The other MP at the center of the scandal, Georg Nüsslein, is said to have received a commis- sion of 600,000 euros for facilitating a deal between facemask manufacturers and the Bavarian Health Ministry. Nüsslein belongs to the CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU. Rather than resigning immediately, like MP Löbel was pressured to, Nüsslein will stay in office through the end of his term. According to The Guardian, Nüsslein denies any wrongdoing.

While key elections in multiple states just on the horizon and a national election in September, this scandal could harm the CDU in regions where it was already performing poorly in elections, accord- ing to The Washington Post. Some analysts believe that the response to this scandal could be the differ- ence between whether the CDU wins the elections or not. The Washington Post furthers that this is a so-called “super election year,” in which major state elec- tions take place in addition to a national election. The scandal is impacting the entire party and may hurt the seats the CDU can win and the coalitions it will be able to form after the na- tional election. While discussing the corruption allegations, Politico reports Armin Laschet as saying, “Anyone who, as a representative of the people, is of the opinion that he cannot make money for himself in this crisis must leave parliament immediately. Any MP who earns himself through this crisis damages the highest good of democracy, trust.” Another prominent conservative, CDU lawmaker told Deutsche Welle that these scandals are “totally unacceptable” and “unforgivable violations of ethical standards.” The most striking con- demnation of Löbel and Nüsslein, however, comes from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a member of the Social Democrats (SPD). Reuters quotes Steinmeier as say- ing, “MPs of all people, are holding out their hand before the modest medical protection of face masks even reaches the people... That is shabby and shame- ful!” This scandal comes as the slow vaccine rollout across the EU is causing frustration and ire with- in Germany. This scandal reveals how some saw the pandemic as an opportunity to profit off of the current zeitgeist of anxiety and fear. Many Germans feel that politicians should do more to help Germany’s recovery and this scan- dal has shown that some politicians have much more interest in protecting their wallet than German citizens.
LIBYAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES UNITY GOVERNMENT

Charleigh Stone
Staff Writer

Libya's parliament has appointed a new inter-government in hopes of progressing unification in the conflict-ridden state. The government of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah will replace the rival East-West administrations that have been ruling Libya for years, a transition that PBS reports was approved by 152 lawmakers.

The announcement of a government to serve within the unity government has emerged after months of negotiation, with the United Nations brokered a political roadmap to hold parliamentary and presidential elections on December 24. PBS further that Dbeibah, a powerful businessman from the western city of Misrata, pledged to respect this date following his confirmation. He also told lawmakers that “the war should not be repeated. We should not kill each other again,” as the country progresses toward unification.

The death of de facto leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 destabilized Libya, causing the country to split into factions. Since 2014, two rival parliaments governed Libya, with rebel general Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA) occupying the East and the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) occupying the West. The UN has taken an active role in Libya post-conflict efforts at the request of the country’s authorities, establishing the United Nations Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL) in 2011. UN-SMIL's mandate has been extended and broadened by the Security Council every year since its inception, with the current mandate extending the mission until September 15.

Fayez al-Serraj, head of the GNA, congratulated the unity government that will replace his own administration. Deutche Welle reports that Dbeibah’s cabinet was approved after two days of intense deliberation in Serr, obtaining a vote of 132-2 in favor, with 36 members absent. Afterwards, Dbeibah told parliament that “through this vote, it became clear that the Libyans are one unit.”

The new cabinet includes 33 ministers and two deputy prime ministers who are said to be representative of Libya’s geographic areas and social segments. The executive branch also includes a three-member Presidential Council that will be chaired by Mohammed Younes Meri, a diplomat from Eastern Libya, Jalil El Mangouchi, a lawyer and human rights activist, and will serve as Libya’s first female foreign minister.

However, despite the advancement of peace plans, obstacles to unity remain. Reuters reports that Dbeibah’s appointment and the size of his cabinet have drawn corruption accusations both domestically and abroad. A UN inquiry found that he allegedly gained power after his supporters either offered bribes to attract votes during the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, a UN-selected assembly of 58 Libyan representatives from the country’s warring factions that gathered to elect an interim prime minister to serve until national elections were held. Dbeibah’s office denies the claims as fake news designed to disrupt the political process, urging the UN and the European Union to investigate its accusations. According to The Guardian, the bribes were as high as $200,000, with some officials determined that as much as $500,000 was offered. The Los Angeles Times reports that a UN panel of experts determined at least three participants at the political forum were offered bribes, though the prime minister himself was unnamed, and the participants were “categorically in their rejection of the bribes.”

Dbeibah has also faced backlash for not delivering on promises that 30 percent of ministerial posts would go to women. In the statement, the council determined three out of five women were appointed among 31 government posts.

In a joint statement issued by France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the approval of a unity government has been praised as a “crucial step” despite the “long road ahead.”

While the main task of the new administration is to prepare Libya for the Dec. 24 parliamentary and presidential elections, Al-Monitor reports that they will also have to provide essential public services, initiate reconciliation between warring factions, address critical national budget needs, and implement the October 2020 ceasefire agreement brokered by the top UN envoy for Libya, Stephanie Turco Williams. The process is further complicated by the presence of foreign powers taking sides in the conflict. Historically, Haftar and the LNA have been backed by Turkey and Qatar. As Libya’s new unity government approaches these tasks, however, there is still hope that the decade-old conflict is on the road to resolution.

Contact Charleigh at chs288@student.shu.edu

THAILAND CRACKS DOWN ON CONTINUED ANTIGOVERNMENT PROTESTS

Lauren-Marie Diawatana
Staff Writer

On March 8, Thailand’s Bangkok Criminal Court detained three pro-democracy activists on the charge of insulting the monarchy, according to Human Rights Watch. Al Jazeera states that 15 other protesters were indicted over attending anti-government rallies on charges of sedition and disobeying a ban on public demonstrations. The protest organizers have been demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, who led the 2014 coup, and the reformation of the Thai monarchy.

Al Jazeera states that demonstrators gathered in Bangkok demanding the release of some of the protest leaders on March 6. Protesters shouted for authorities to “release our friends” as they surrounded a criminal court. Groups burned photographs of the king, chanting for the government to “Abolish 112.” Protesters accuse the prime minister of manipulating the March 2021 election rules in his favor and feel that the current constitution gives the king too much power.

The three leaders, Panusaya “Rung” Sithijirawattanakul, Jatupat “Pai” Boonpattararaksa, and Parapong “Mike” Jadsorn, were charged with lese majeste, the insult of a monarch, for their speeches demanding monarchy reform at a rally on September 19, 2020.

They face criminal charges including defaming or threatening the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent. They face fines and jail terms of up to 15 years. According to Al Jazeera, the deputy commissioner of Bangkok Metropolitan Police Bureau emphasized that “defamatory comments are illegal” at a police conference, and anyone who participates or invites others to “is breaking the law.” In December 2020, a spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for Thailand to “bring this law into line” after Thai authorities charged 35 protesters, including a 16-year-old, under Article 112. The statement urges the Thai government to stop using criminal charges against its citizens for “exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.”

NPR reports that activists are “categorical in their rejection of the military, the revision of the military-centric constitution, and the end of intimidation and harassment from human rights violations, and the establishment of an independent judiciary.”

International students were warned against participating in protests or risk losing their visas, reports Reuters. The day before Bangkok’s Criminal Court order, the Asian Institute of Technology sent out an email, asking students to “be respectful of the laws and policies of the host country Thailand.” Despite the threats, foreign students have taken to the streets in protest of Thai government. While the constitution claims it was passing on a request from the country’s immigration bureau, the chief of the immigration office of the attorney’s province explained no request was made concerning foreign students.

Contact Lauren at laurenmariediawatana@student.shu.edu

Anti-government protesters show the “Three Finger Salute, a symbol of rebellion from the Hunger Games Series. Courtesy of Khaosod English (Wikimedia Commons)
BRAZILIAN SUPREME COURT OVERTURNS CONVICTION OF
FORMER PRESIDENT

Hamzah Khan  Staff Writer

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court of Brazil overturned the corruption conviction of former two-term President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), according to BBC News. The conviction was related to the massive anti-corruption investigation known as “Operation Car Wash” that exposed the largest corruption scandal in Latin America. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that Lula’s conviction was invalid because the court he was tried in lacked jurisdiction. He was convicted of money laundering in 2017 and subsequently barred from running for office in 2018 when he was considered the frontrunner in the presidential race. With no significant opposition, far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro won the election. Lula was President of Brazil from 2003 to 2010 as the leader of the left-wing Worker’s Party. According to The Guardian, Lula oversaw the largest economy in Latin America during his eight years in office. Under his administration, 28 million people were lifted out of poverty and Brazil underwent a significant period of economic growth. He remained incredibly popular in Brazil despite his conviction in 2017, which many people viewed as politically motivated. According to The Intercept, there were many disparities among the judges who voted in Lula’s original trial, creating doubt in people’s minds about its authenticity. The Supreme Court found that a judge in Lula’s case had illegally collaborated with the prosecutors to help ensure Lula’s conviction. This judge, Sergio Moro, later became the justice minister in President Bolsonaro’s administration. The court found that Moro expeditiously directed trials so that Lula’s defense could not put together coherent arguments, all but ensuring that Lula would be convicted and barred from running for office before the 2018 elections. The Supreme Court also found that Moro had committed an “abuse of power” and nullified all of the Car Wash charges made by his court against Lula including allowing him to run for president again. This ruling comes at a conspicuous time for President Bolsonaro who is facing a lot of criticism for his handling of the coronavirus. According to The Washington Post, the outbreak in Brazil is “worse than it’s ever been” with nearly 500,000 new cases and nearly 13,000 deaths reported during last week alone. Throughout the pandemic, Bolsonaro consistently downplayed the virus, calling it a “meanly flu” while masking and lockdowns. He contracted COVID-19 early in the pandemic and touted unproven cures, such as hydroxychloroquine, to the public. He consistently undermined his health officials and in the span of the pandemic, has gone through four health ministers, two of whom resigned because of his response. According to Time, he told Brazilians, early in March, to “stop whining” about the rising death tolls and spread vaccine misinformation, saying it could “turn people into crocodiles.” Lula exonerated Bolsonaro’s handling of the pandemic in a speech delivered shortly after the Court’s ruling came down, saying “This country is in a state of utter turmoil and confusion because there’s no government,” reports The Guardian. He also told CNN that “[Bolsonaro] prefers to wake up at four o’clock in the morning, tell his lies through his mobile phone... and we have been producing fake news as we’ve never seen in the history of Brazil, and he’s not dealing seriously.” Lula’s outspokenness has fueled speculation that he may run for president against Bolsonaro in 2022, and when asked, he replied “I will deny that invasion.” Although he is 75 years old, he claims he still has a lot of energy, and has led Bolsonaro by 12 points in a recent poll.

In his speech, Lula says about the importance of getting vaccinated and remaining vigilant in the face of the virus, according to The Guardian. He encouraged the use of masks and social distancing and spoke about the strength of the Brazilian people. Politicians from across the political spectrum praised his tone which struck a deep contrast to Bolsonaro’s flying attitude towards the virus. Time reports that Bolsonaro is now changing his tune on the virus and trying to acquire more vaccines from Russia, China, and Pfizer. It is clear to him that in the upcoming election, Lula remains his biggest threat.

India Threatens to Deport Rohingya Refugees to Myanmar

Kiara McGaughy  Staff Writer

Authorities in Jammu detained over 200 Rohingya refugees in early March, according to Human Rights Watch. Seeking to deport them to Myanmar, the state from which they are fleeing, India claims that the refugees are considered “illegal immigrants” and explains they are in the process of deporting the detainees back to their home country, despite the continued severe violence against Rohingya Muslims. India has already detained, deported and spread panic throughout Rohingya refugee communities across the state, according to The Independent. In a recent speech, the Indian government has stated that the deportation of the refugees is that they did not show adequate citizenship documents for India or Myanmar. Most Rohingya refugees are considered stateless, as citizenship for Rohingya peoples was revoked in Myanmar in 1985, and most refugees only applied for refugee status from the UN and did not apply for Indian citizenship. Many human rights groups and lawyers both in India and abroad have condemned the Indian government’s actions. They are calling the deportation of the Rohingya a violation of both international law and the guidelines of the UN’s International Principle of Refoulment, as the government is attempting to deport refugees back to a state in which they will be physically unsafe and at risk of being exposed to genocidal violence. Ravi Nair, a human rights lawyer in New Delhi, has filed a petition against the detention and deportation of the refugees, which is now pending in the Indian Supreme Court, Al Jazeera reports. According to CNN, the Indian government still stands firm in its claim that the deportation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar does not violate the UN’s guidelines. The government has also argued that India was not a signatory to the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, which protects and outlines the rights of refugees, and therefore should not be held to it. The mass detentions, refugee camp raids, and threats by the Indian government that more refugees will be detained and deported have sparked panic throughout Rohingya refugee communities across the state. France 24 reports about the proliferation of videos of Rohingya refugees attempting to flee from camps to avoid returning to Myanmar. In response, Indian authorities have encircled some of the camps and are preventing refugees from leaving, causing many refugees to flee to the forest. Some refugees fleeing from camps are now trying to seek help at UNCHR centers across the country. However, according to VOA News, the situation has only worsened as refugees seeking aid from the office UNCHR in New Delhi were detained by police outside the building.

Contact Hamzah at hamzah.khan@student.n幼.edu
Contact Kiara at kiara.mcgauhy@student.n幼.edu

India threatens to deport Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. According to The Guardian, the situation has only worsened as refugees seeking aid from the office UNCHR in New Delhi were detained by police outside the building.
Nearly 100 Killed in Equatorial Guinea Explosion

Timothy Georgetti
Staff Writer

Early in the day on March 7, a large explosion ripped through blocks of Bata, the city's largest in Equatorial Guinea. The death toll continues to rise, with official reports hovering around a death toll of nearly 100 and an injured count close to 1,000, according to Reuters. The president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, appeared in a press conference after the blast, pleading for international aid to help his small nation provide adequate medical care to those injured in the explosion and to rebuild his country's most important economic and trading hub.

The massive explosion originated on an Equatorial Guinean military base and has been officially blamed on negligence relating to the improper storage of munitions. Those who live in close proximity, who were stored in a depot on Bata’s Nkoanoma Military Base, were said to have exploded after a fire on neighboring land migrated onto the base. Those who live in close proximity to the blast site, including convicted President Obiang Nguema as saying the original fire was started by “neighbors at nearby farms,” Al Jazeera attributes the original fire to soldiers who were ordered to burn bush right outside the confines of the base. This disaster has renewed the voice of the opposition party calling for President Obiang Nguema’s removal from office. His administration, which has been in power since 1979 after he executed his uncle and former president in a bloody coup, has been accused of rampant corruption and embezzlement for decades. This recent tragedy has only strengthened the opposition’s calls for both him and his son, who serves a dual role as Equatorial Guinean Vice President and Defense Minister, to be removed from office.

The corruption claims against President Obiang Nguema are based on both his personal economic situation and that of the country. Equatorial Guinea is a small, oil-rich nation with a little over 1.5 million residents and one of the highest GDPs per capita in the world at $100,000, according to the Wall Street Journal. However, majority of the country’s residents actually live on less than $2 a day while President Obiang Nguema has amassed great wealth.

President Obiang Nguema and his family have attempted to move much of their wealth offshore. CNN reports that in 2019, a collection of $13 million in super cars was seized and sold as part of a money-laundering investigation into President Obiang Nguema’s son in Switzerland. In the same year, the president was forced to agree to a $30 million dollar settlement with the United States Government in a case that centered on his corruption. Given the high levels of corruption within the Nguema administration, as well as the country’s pandemic-related economic retraction, the millions of dollars in damage caused by the recent explosion will only make the country’s economic situation worse.

To help prevent complete economic disaster, President Nguema has turned to the international community for disaster aid and economic relief. So far only Equatorial Guinea’s previous colonial ruler, Spain, has reached out and pledged humanitarian resources. Without more substantial aid in addition to Spain’s contribution, it is likely that those injured in the explosion will continue to suffer. The Associated Press reports that most of the hospitals in and around the city of Bata, which were already strained due to COVID-19, became overwhelmed by the sudden increase in patients, with many victims still in need of care days later. Given the severity of the blast, in both human and economic terms, as well as the political pressure on the Nguema administration from opposition, the political future of Equatorial Guinea is still to be decided. Only time will tell if this tragedy will be the end of the Nguema presidency or if his response can engender renewed good will towards the administration among the people of Equatorial Guinea.

Contact Timothy at timothy.georgetti@student.shu.edu

Violence Erupts in Mexico on International Women’s Day

Ariel Go Jr.
Staff Writer

Thousands of women took to the streets in Mexico City—some carrying their children and others bars and hammers—to protest the rising violence against women in Mexico, on March 8 which marked the International Women’s Day. The march was stimulated by public outrage over the actions of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, commonly known as AMLO, who many see as out of touch. Lopez Obrador was heavily criticized for his continued support of the candidate for governor of Guerrero, Felix Salgado Macedonio, who had been accused of rape on two occasions. Guerrero prosecutors are currently investigating these accusations of rape against Salgado, but the candidate has denied them thusfar.

AMLO was sworn into office in 2018 after promising to lead a social transformation and purge the country of the deep-rooted corruption afflicting the Mexican economy. Many citizens, however, condemned President Lopez Obrador for ignoring the problem of gender-based violence. Lopez Obrador responded by defending his record on gender equality, mentioning that half of his cabinet is comprised of women. Despite his professed efforts to increase equality in the state, his policies have not succeeded in addressing the ongoing violence that kills more than ten women a day and subjects girls to fear for their lives. According to Reuters, data shows that at least 939 cases of femicide, or murders specifically targeting women, were reported in 2020 and that gender violence rates in Mexico have soared over the past five years, with murders of women rising almost 130 percent.

Unlike demonstrations of the previous year on International Women’s Day when Mexican women combined their efforts to form a vast and peaceful protest against gender-based violence, the march this year was smaller in size, which is attributed to the concerns over COVID-19 precautions. Despite the smaller scale of the protest, the authorities decided to erect steel barriers surrounding the National Palace in Mexico City on the Saturday before the day of the march. AMLO announced that the barrier was simply a means to avoid injuries and prevent any potential confrontation with the police. According to NBC News, the barriers did not sit well with the public, further inciting negative feelings from women in Mexico who saw the barrier as a symbol of the division that exists between the women’s movement and the president. In a show of resistance, protesters agreed to use the ten-foot tall barriers to their advantage, painting the walls with the names of women killed, many of whom victims of femicide. Activists also tore a section of the barrier apart and spray-painted different sidewalks and kiosks. Some groups opted for violence to force the government of Mexico to pay attention to and consider their demands, leading to clashes between demonstrators and Mexico City police. According to BBC News, one such instance occurred in the main square of the capital, the Zocalo, where police officers used tear gas, batons, and riot shields to push back protesters and cause them to disperse. In retaliation, some demonstrators set fire to the riot shields. There have also been reports of police arresting journalists and activists in the crowd. According to The New York Times, Mexico City’s security branch reports that at least 62 officers and 19 members of the public were injured, some of whom were hit by bullets. While alterations between women’s rights demonstrators and the police are becoming more common, many agree it is necessary for the government to understand that they are not doing enough to prosecute femicide and commemorate murdered women.

Support for the women’s movement has also been growing among Mexico’s celebrities and politicians. According to Bloomberg, over 500 politicians and supporters of Lopez Obrador’s party, the Morena, have denounced Salgado for the rape accusations against him and have signed on to a letter calling for his removal as a candidate for governor in Guerrero. Celebrities like Julieta Venegas and Gael Garcia have also urged the president to stop finding fault in the protest movement. The Guardian cites Arassi Ushu, spokeswoman of the Las Brujas del Mar and a feminist collective in Veracruz, who asserted that “[AMLO] has placed the feminist movement as public enemy No. 1.” She went on to say, “We are not asking for crazy things. We’re asking that women get to work, that women aren’t killed, and girls aren’t raped. It’s not insane, it’s human rights.”

Contact Ariel at ariel.go@shu.edu

March 2021
Page 4

International News

Neglect/dependence of dynamite caused an explosion, killing at least 100 and injuring over 1,000. Courtesy of Sadi Richards (Flickr)
**NEW ZEALAND ANNOUNCES INITIATIVE TO MAKE SANITARY PRODUCTS FREE IN SCHOOLS**

Lauren-Marie Diawatan  
Staff Writer

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced on February 18 that starting this June, all New Zealand schools will provide free sanitary products to tackle period poverty across the country, reports Reuters. “Period poverty is not acceptable,” accessibility to pads or tampons that can negatively impact education, health, and employment, according to The New York Times. The New Zealand Ministry of Education states that all state and state-integrated schools, from primary to secondary education, and kura – state schools based on Maori culture and values, according to the New Zealand Education for Parents – can now choose to receive free period items for their students. The first phase of distribution will include pads and tampons, but the Ministry of Education will consider expanding to provide menstrual cups and eco-friendly sanitary underwear. NPR News reports that the entire program will cost an estimated $18 million through 2024. The Ministry of Education report cites a Youth19 Survey explaining that 12 percent of year 9 to year 13 students find period products inaccessible because of their price. The report also references research from the University of Otago, which finds that 94,788 girls from New Zealand’s poorest households may have difficulty purchasing period products, causing them to miss school because of their menstrual cycle. Prime Minister Ardern states that “providing free period products at school is one way the government can directly address poverty” and improve the well-being of the country’s children, continues Reuters. She hopes to see “improved engagement” and “reduced financial hardship among families,” with less students missing school because of their period. The country-wide plan to rollout free period products in schools was announced following the widespread success of the Waikato trial phase, concludes the Ministry of Education report. The trial included fifteen schools and kura in the Waikato region, all receiving enough free period products to account for 3,200 people. The Ministry of Education worked alongside five suppliers to provide a variety of period and tampon products. These suppliers employed different engagement strategies, with some offering their products to be ordered in advance and others installing dispensers in bathrooms. The Waikato trial phase concluded with students reporting that “they felt heard and cared for,” and that they are appreciative of the choices provided for them. The initiative began with Dignity NZ, an organization that works to provide free sanitary items for New Zealand’s students and youth. The founder, Miranda Hitchens, stated that her organization approached schools, finding that period poverty was “incredibly prevalent” and that many school nurses and teachers were personally paying for products for their students, continuing

**POPE FRANCIS MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO IRAQ**

Mark Stachowski  
Staff Writer

In early March, Pope Francis embarked on a four-day trip to Iraq, where he met with political and religious rulers to encourage better Christian-Muslim relations. According to the official Vatican itinerary, titled Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Iraq, the Pope arrived in Baghdad on March 5, where he was met by the Prime Minister and later that day visited the Iraqi President. He concluded his trip in Eilat, where he led mass in front of a large crowd. He preached words of encouragement to Christians living in Iraq, pointing to a better future in which they can restore the communities that were ravaged by ISIS militants years ago when they seized control of the region. Many Iraqi citizens viewed the Pope’s visit as extremely meaningful. In an interview with NPR, Iraqi man Saasane Hasan described the Pope as a beacon of light. He said that he never would have imagined that Pope Francis would visit his country, and he expressed admiration at the Pope’s bravery to come to the country despite safety concerns that turn many others away. On March 7, the Pope prayed in Mosul on top of church ruins destroyed by ISIS. ISIS took control of the region in 2014, and Christians were among those who were displaced and persecuted in numbers, according to BBC News. The Pope prayed for the victims of ISIS and the war with ISIS. CBS News states that the Pope condemned ISIS terrorism while simultaneously calling for forgiveness. BBC News continues that there have been complaints by Christian Iraqis of discrimination and harassment. The number of Christians in Iraq has rapidly decreased from 1.4 million two decades ago to 250,000 now. Throughout the Pope’s visit, he called for violence and extremism to be eradicated and for Iraq’s Christians to be afforded full rights and liberties. Appealing for religious coexistence, Pope Francis also met with the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, reports The Washington Post. Occurring against the background of the pandemic, the Pope’s arrival in Iraq caused many to worry that crowds would cause a new wave of cases. NPR describes masses that the Pope held with little social distancing, despite plans made by the Vatican and local organizers to make sure there were always masks and proper social distancing. NPR reports that the Pope and his travel entourage did get vaccinated before arriving in Iraq. This was the Pope’s first time leaving the Vatican in 15 months due to COVID-19 restrictions. The Pope said he felt like he was, “in prison,” due to not being able to leave the Vatican for so long. NPR quotes United States President Joe Biden on his thoughts of the Pope’s visit, saying “To see Pope Francis visit ancient religious sites, including the biblical birthplace of Abraham, spend time with grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani — and offer prayers in Mosul — is a symbol of hope for the entire world.” Supporters of the Pope’s visit see it as inspirational, stressing the importance of peace among religious nations and expressing encouragement at the Pope’s actions in an attempt to encourage such peace. Critics, however, see the Pope’s attempt to heal Christian-Muslim relations as an artificial publicity stunt. The Pope visiting a country which has had so much history with Christians and Muslims, especially during a pandemic, is a momentous event. According to The New York Times, Iraqi officials saw the visit as an affirmation of the country’s importance in the region. Perhaps a call for peace in what the world needs today.

Contact Mark at mark.stachowski@student.shu.edu

Contact Lauren at laurenmarie.diawatan@student.shu.edu
Robert Zoellick Speaks on Foreign Policy and U.S. Diplomacy

Robert Zoellick

Zoellick is the former President of the World Bank and Deputy Secretary of State. He discussed the challenges of global governance and the need for a new approach to international relations.

The fourth tradition focuses on the importance of alliances and international cooperation. Zoellick argued that alliances are crucial for maintaining stability and preventing conflicts. He emphasized the need for strong ties with key allies and partners. Zoellick also discussed the role of the U.S. in promoting international norms and values.

Zoellick concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of effective leadership and strong relationships in international affairs. He underscored the need for a renewed commitment to multilateralism and cooperative engagement with other countries.

The event ended with a Q&A session, where Zoellick addressed questions from the audience on a wide range of topics, including the future of the international order, the challenges of global governance, and the role of the U.S. in promoting international cooperation and stability.
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been using humanitarian action, policy, and diplomacy to combat the impacts of contemporary warfare, according to Gilles Carbonnier, the vice president of the ICRC at a School of Diplomacy event on March 18.

One of the distinguishing qualities of the ICRC is that, although it is a private organization under Swiss law, it is bound by international humanitarian law (IHL), which applies in situations of armed conflict, Carbonnier said. This is important to note since the founding of the IHL paralleled that of the ICRC. Carbonnier described this moment as “the birth of the laws of armed conflict that seek to preserve humanity in the worst of the conflict.”

“What we do at the ICRC is essentially to manage the conflict between two populations, to go all the way from assisting states to adopting national laws and regulations to ensuring that it is embedded in training manuals and training programs of armed forces and also police forces when it comes to law enforcement,” Carbonnier added.

Carbonnier also addressed the common question of whether IHL works. Without attempting to sound overly optimistic, he acknowledged that while there are sometimes egregious violations of IHL, it does very often work in practice. “International humanitarian law often saves lives,” Carbonnier said. “Every day we see military commanders making decisions not to hit places in order to spare civilians.”

Another specific distinction of the ICRC is that while many other humanitarian organizations focus on specific sectors or target groups, the ICRC focuses on a multifaceted response to help people. “We also warned against the privatization and criminalization of humanitarian aid,” Carbonnier clarified.

According to him, the ICRC does not simply provide assistance, but also works to protect people in armed conflict.

An important feature of the ICRC, Carbonnier noted, is that it acts as a neutral intermediary in war. For example, the organization arranges as a neutral intermediary dignified distribution of human remains to families.

In October 2020, the ICRC arranged the turnover of over 10000 deads to the operation in Yemen using confidence building measures after two years of diplomatic talks building on the 2018 Stockholm Agreement.

According to Carbonnier, three main challenges of contemporary warfare today are the protracted nature of conflict, the fragmented nature of parties to the conflict, and the fact that war is happening in urban centers and swallowing up people.

The ICRC has an office in Yemen and other places like Syria and Libya to arrange the turnover of the deads.

“International humanitarian law is very useful to ensure that there is no longer open violence when political violence, economic insecurity, it [humanitarian law] stresses, ‘was to do it at the point of violence between people, since the risk threshold of others is often beyond them.’”

Wood added that “big organizations like Oxfam and Care International move quite slowly because they have a heavy internal bureaucracy and a lot of risk management procedures. Therefore, as a smaller organization, we are more mobile and able to work. Our approach to mediation,” he explained, “was to do it at the point of violence between people, since the risk threshold of others is often beyond them.”

Wood concluded that “it is critical to ensure that the norms embedded in the Geneva Conventions resonate with diverse cultural and religious traditions.”

One example of how the ICRC has merged the universality of IHL with specific cultural environments is by working with Muslim scholars to highlight fundamental principles of IHL and norms under Islamic law. While humanitarian action and diplomacy are methods of combating the challenges of contemporary war, these methods are not applicable to all conflict areas.

“There is no humanitarian solution to the large humanitarian crisis we have seen over the years evolving in Syria and Yemen,” Carbonnier concluded. “It is only through a political settlement or solution that such a complex humanitarian crisis can be addressed.”

Professor Wood discusses new undergraduate course and mediation work in Libya

Professor Wood recently interviewed Professor David Wood to discuss his new undergraduate class and ongoing conflict mediation work. With over 15 years of experience as a peacebuilding expert, Professor Wood currently serves as a professor of practice at the School of Diplomacy. His work includes resolving violent international conflict and mediating peace processes, which he has done both at the non-governmental and international level for a wide variety of agencies.

In 2011, Wood created an international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural organization, The Peaceful Change Initiative (PCI). His organization focuses on mediating conflict that arose from the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa starting in the same year.

Wood’s research focuses on interactive approaches to mediation and dialogue in periods of open violence when political environments and dialogue become toxic. His organization is closely involved with conflict management and developing new ways for promoting stabilization in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Wood has been at the School of Diplomacy since 2018 and leading the development of several projects through the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in the MENA region. He is also teaching a graduate level course and an undergraduate course on conflict studies.

During the interview, Wood discussed the complexities involved with using his undergraduate students and explained how the field of conflict studies is academically diverse. The course requires students to understand various conflict areas, as well as the motivations for either the rise of violence in a conflict and the reasons for why a conflict moves from violence to a positive relationship.

“Along with a research focus,” he explained, “we’re also looking for personal skill sets. We have to consider the attributes of an individual who’s engaging with those in conflict.”

As such, we are both interested in a balance between the academic rigor at the university and the skill sets needed on the ground. He added that he hopes students obtain a good sense of what it is that drives conflict and what are the ways in which we can manage it.

Additionally, Wood spoke about what it was like to establish PCI and build its reputation for political support. “It started in Libya after the open face of fighting ended. There was just very little left in Libya after 40 years of organization of the [oppressive] regime.”

He furthered, “Within that period of time, there was very limited exposure to the international community and international organizations didn’t have a footprint on the ground. As such, when we arrived in Libya, there wasn’t any large organization presenting us room to operate.”

Wood added that “big organizations like Oxfam and Care International move quite slowly because they have a heavy internal bureaucracy and a lot of risk management procedures. Therefore, as a smaller organization, we are more mobile and able to work. Our approach to mediation,” he explained, “was to do it at the point of violence between people, since the risk threshold of others is often beyond them.”

Wood recognized that the biggest challenges with protracted conflict are the massive humanitarian need, political violence, and fractured state infrastructure. He also finds that these three things are interlinked. Wood explains that “the intensification of violence because of gangs creating high levels of humanitarian aid and affecting state infrastructure. The weakened infrastructure also become a cause for humanitarian needs. As such, we actually need to deal with all these three factors within the country in order to move towards a solution.”

Wood refers to these three components of the conflict cycle as “The Nexus.”

Professor Wood concluded that “It’s all about making changes to conflict so as we are all parts of a bigger puzzle.”
China’s COVID-19 vaccine is used primarily in developing countries. Courtesy of Marco Verch (Flickr)

China

Mia DiPaola
Staff Writer

Over a year after the world first felt the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, countless vaccines have been produced at a record speed. Vaccine diplomacy, the practice of using shots to enhance a country’s regional ties and global status, provide nations like India an opportunity to flex their diplomatic muscles by using resources and development to their advantage. If vaccine diplomacy is a competition, then China is winning.

The vaccines developed by China are an attractive alternative to many Western labs. The BBC reports that unlike its Western alternatives from Moderna and Pfizer, both Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines can be stored in a regular refrigerator and do not require extremely cold temperatures. Additionally, instead of using new and unproven mRNA vaccines, the Chinese shots are inactive vaccines, meaning that dead COVID-19 particles are injected into the body. However, there are some concerns preventing countries from jumping on the China train. Foreign Affairs reports that, unlike many Western vaccine alternatives, questions remain about the safety and effectiveness of the three Chinese vaccines currently available.

While China claims it is not using vaccine diplomacy, it has delivered “vaccine aid” to 53 countries and donated vaccine to 27 others, though in small amounts, says the Associated Press. Countries ordering vaccines from China are classified as low- and middle-income. Mr. Guo Weimin, a spokesman for the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, called claims that China is using its vaccines to “expand [their] geopolitical influence” is “narrow-minded,” reports Reuters. Chinese President Xi Jinping echoed this sentiment, promising to make his nation’s vaccines a “global public good.”

South China Morning Post reports that one facet of China’s vaccine diplomacy includes a plan to vaccinate all nationals abroad and the implementation of a digital health passport. In addition to donating vaccines to other countries, China plans to set up vaccination stations and offer Chinese vaccines in other countries.

Analysts say these efforts are “aimed at improving China’s image across the world.” The West, China, and Russia are fighting a battle for influence in Central Europe and the Balkans. It seems that in the meantime, China gained a leg up on the competition as Serbia and Hungary now demand largely on China’s vaccines. According to an Associated Press report, Serbia was the first European country to use vaccinations from China, which purchased 1.5 million doses of the Sinopharm vaccine. Hungary followed in Serbia’s footsteps, approving the Sinopharm vaccine after delays in shots from the European Union. China’s aid fars the anti-EU flavor, approval after very bravely standing in these countries’ populist leaders, who are outspoken against the EU.

According to the Washington Post, many developing and low-income countries are turning to China after being shut out of Western markets. Ms. Jennifer Huang Bous, a China expert and epidemiologist, claims that “COVID can be a real game-changer for China.”

China is not using vaccine diplomacy to win over clients who have dubbed such moves “narrow-minded,” reports the New York Times. According to the New York Times, the Gulf International Forum, executive director of the Indian National Congress, said Dania Thafer, the former Indian Minister of External Affairs reports that, unlike China, India is using its vaccine diplomacy to showcase its global vaccine demands.

India

Chimdi Chukwukere
Staff Writer

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing countries faced difficulty gaining access to vaccines due to vaccine nationalism and hoarding by rich countries. To fill the gap, India has emerged as a “vaccine superpower” and source of hope to poorer countries, which are unable to access vaccines due to their high cost and unavailability. India is offering governments in developing nations both the locally-manufactured British AstraZeneca vaccine and its own home-grown vaccine, Covaxin.

Just days after India rolled out its domestic inoculation program – which has so far inoculated more than 30 million people – Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India will supply countries with vaccines through a foreign policy initiative called Vaccine Maitri. Republic World reports that New Delhi sent 58,644 million made-in-India vaccines to more than 70 countries since January 2021, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Iran, Cambodia, Bahrain, Canada, Oman, Afghanistan, Barbados, and the Dominican Republic. According to the Associated Press, India has given away 100 million doses to countries including Thailand and Malaysia. It is projected that India will be able to vaccinate 1 billion people by the end of 2021.

As the United States and the European Union focuses on the inoculation of its citizens and fellow countries facing similar global demands, India has stepped up and is filling the void as a great power. Their vaccine diplomacy continues to help mend relations with neighboring states like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and solidified relationships with Cambodia, Seychelles, and Nepal – all states within its sphere of influence.

Contact Chimdi at chimdi.chukwukere@student. ibn.edu

Contact Mia at mia.dipaola@student. ibn.edu
Juliet Nangini
Staff Writer

The world’s most pressing challenge is the rush to inoculate everyone against COVID-19 and achieve herd immunity. Some countries choose to exchange vaccines with foreign nations to reward compliant behavior, while others seek to help countries that do not have access to vaccines, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Multiple factors are contributing to Israel’s success in vaccinating its large supply of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and its national healthcare system, which requires all residents to pay taxes in exchange for medical services. However, there is a catch to Israel’s quick vaccine response—consent and privacy. Israel made a deal with Pfizer and BioNTech to exchange vaccine supplies in exchange for medical data for research. The countries participating in the project also collect patient data, which allows for quick intervention to monitor those who are infected. To some, such as Israel Democracy Institute’s senior fellow Tella Shwart Alshul, it’s “frightening,” and reports the Washington Post.

Despite the praise Israel receives for its vaccination efforts, there is growing controversy regarding the lack of Palestinian access to vaccines in Israel. Israel is criticized for shipping vaccines overseas as part of its vaccine diplomacy efforts, even as Palestinian remains unvaccinated. Israel sent shipments of extra vaccines to allies supporting a one-state solution and states that have or intend to move their embassies to Jerusalem, such as Guatemala and Honduras. According to Reuters, Israel shipped vaccines to Argentina, France, and several thousand to the Czech Republic to engage in vaccine diplomacy. Even though the Czech Republic supports a two-state solution, the country is one of Israel’s biggest supporters. Additionally, last month, Israel signed a deal with Russia to exchange vaccines for the Syrian regime in exchange for an Israeli captive, despite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s claim that “not one Israeli vaccine” was sent to Syria, reports the Associated Press.

Israel sent 5,000 vaccines to Palestinians in the West Bank. NBC News cites Caitlin Proctor, an associate of the Migration Policy Centre, who explains that the vaccines are only a “drop in the ocean” for Gaza’s two million residents. Israel also agreed to vaccinate the 100,000 Palestinians who work in Israel.

Other countries have stepped up to assist Palestinians with vaccinations. While Israel is shipping vaccines overseas, China and India, both of whom are exporters of the vaccine, are planning to send doses to the West Bank and Gaza. The European Union also pledged to provide 20 million euros to supply vaccines for Palestinians, says the Jerusalem Post. Russia donated 10,000 doses of their Sputnik V vaccine, while the United Arab Emirates donated 40,000 doses of the Russian vaccine on March 11, according to Reuters.

The debate regarding Israel’s responsibility to vaccinate Palestinians depends on which perspective is being examined—for the Oslo Accords or the Geneva Accords. NBC News says that the Oslo Accords, signed in the early 1990s, are a set of agreements between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization which gives the Palestinian Authority limited responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza. Under this agreement, Israel would not need to provide vaccines, as healthcare responsibilities would rely on the Palestinians. However, Al Jazeera adds that Israel is required to enforce “disease and pandemic prevention laws” to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics under the Fourth Geneva Convention in its role as an occupying power. Additional tension arose recently when Palestinians accused Israel of “political interference” for hindering a shipment of Russia’s vaccine donated intended for Gaza at a military checkpoint, reports The Washington Post.

Despite the issues and questions that arise about vaccine diplomacy and who holds the crown in the new “arms race,” the virus makes no distinction between countries and transcends all global boundaries.

“To me, health should be beyond politics,” Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kalla tells The Washington Post. “We and the Israelis, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Egyptians, we are all in the same region. We should reach herd immunity together.”

Contact Juliet at juliet.nangini@student.biu.ac.il

Luisa Chainferber
Senior Correspondent

The global effort against COVID-19 is in some countries being called a race to vaccinate their populations and use vaccine diplomacy to improve relations with foreign nations. Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine now has emergency authorization in more than 30 countries and a peer-reviewed efficacy rate of 91.6 percent in Phase 3 trials, reports the New York Times Vaccine Tracker. Researchers are currently working on a single-dose version of Sputnik V, which would be called “Sputnik Light.”

On its official website, the vaccine’s producer the Russian Direct Investment Fund, Sputnik V was the first registered COVID-19 vaccine in the world. The vaccine is now being produced in several countries, such as India, South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Brazil. While the website explains that the price per dose can vary due to logistics and production costs, it sets the maximum price per dose at $10, and markets Sputnik V as the “vaccine for all mankind.”

Despite its branding, Russia’s vaccine is facing skepticism globally, and reports the Washington Post. Russia is fighting claims by the U.S. State Department that Moscow intelligence agencies sought to politicize Sputnik’s Western competitors by publishing false information online about Western vaccines.

Like other countries, Russia is seeking to gain geopolitical momentum from its COVID-19 vaccine. For example, while Western pharmaceutical companies are charging African states more than double the per-dose price they charge for wealthier countries, Moscow offered the African Union 300 million doses of its vaccine as well as a financial package, reports the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

This offer can be interpreted as a geopolitical move, as both China and Russia started to seek ways to meet African countries’ vaccination needs following the lack of Western interest in the region, reports Reuters. The Russian Direct Investment Fund, which is responsible for the international marketing of Russia’s vaccine, said that “Africa is one of the key markets for Sputnik V.” The offers made to African countries could become some of the largest vaccine contracts to date, even though the offer occurred while Russia itself was still struggling to start its national vaccination campaign, reports Reuters on an earlier news piece.

Besides African nations, Russia is also reaching Latin American states through vaccine diplomacy. According to CNN, Russia already delivered vaccines to Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Paraguay. As countries continue to face vaccine shortages and look elsewhere, Sputnik V became an attractive option for Latin America countries, which quickly purchased vaccines from Russia. The vaccine is approved in the EU as well as in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. According to the European Medicines Agency, Russia’s Sputnik-V vaccine is being exported to South America, Africa, and Asia.

Russia gained more acceptance despite initial criticisms regarding Moscow’s quick approval of the vaccine. Thomas Mertens, head of Germany’s standing commission on vaccinations, said that Sputnik V is “a good vaccine that might be approved in the EU at some point,” reports the Guardian.

Additionally, according to the Associated Press, Russia signaled a deal with Italy on March 10 to begin the production of Sputnik V for the first time in the European Union. While the European Medicines Agency expressed concerns regarding the safety of Moscow’s vaccine and compared it to “Russian roulette,” countries in the EU such as Slovakia and Hungary are already seeking to obtain the vaccine. Despite the concerns for the political implications of the Russian vaccine, many experts emphasize the importance of different vaccines, including Sputnik V, to ensure a faster vaccination campaign globally.

Contact Luisa at luisa.chainferber@student.biu.ac.il

The website explains that foreign nations to reward compliant behavior, while others seek to help countries that do not have access to vaccines, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The global effort against COVID-19 is in some countries being called a race to vaccinate their populations and use vaccine diplomacy to improve relations with foreign nations. Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine now has emergency authorization in more than 30 countries and a peer-reviewed efficacy rate of 91.6 percent in Phase 3 trials, reports the New York Times Vaccine Tracker. Researchers are currently working on a single-dose version of Sputnik V, which would be called “Sputnik Light.”

On its official website, the vaccine’s producer the Russian Direct Investment Fund, Sputnik V was the first registered COVID-19 vaccine in the world. The vaccine is now being produced in several countries, such as India, South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Brazil. While the website explains that the price per dose can vary due to logistics and production costs, it sets the maximum price per dose at $10, and markets Sputnik V as the “vaccine for all mankind.”

Despite its branding, Russia’s vaccine is facing skepticism globally, and reports the Washington Post. Russia is fighting claims by the U.S. State Department that Moscow intelligence agencies sought to politicize Sputnik’s Western competitors by publishing false information online about Western vaccines.

Like other countries, Russia is seeking to gain geopolitical momentum from its COVID-19 vaccine. For example, while Western pharmaceutical companies are charging African states more than double the per-dose price they charge for wealthier countries, Moscow offered the African Union 300 million doses of its vaccine as well as a financial package, reports the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

This offer can be interpreted as a geopolitical move, as both China and Russia started to seek ways to meet African countries’ vaccination needs following the lack of Western interest in the region, reports Reuters. The Russian Direct Investment Fund, which is responsible for the international marketing of Russia’s vaccine, said that “Africa is one of the key markets for Sputnik V.” The offers made to African countries could become some of the largest vaccine contracts to date, even though the offer occurred while Russia itself was still struggling to start its national vaccination campaign, reports Reuters on an earlier news piece.

Besides African nations, Russia is also reaching Latin American states through vaccine diplomacy. According to CNN, Russia already delivered vaccines to Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Paraguay. As countries continue to face vaccine shortages and look elsewhere, Sputnik V became an attractive option for Latin America countries, which quickly purchased vaccines from Russia. The vaccine is approved in the EU as well as in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. According to the European Medicines Agency, Russia’s Sputnik-V vaccine is being exported to South America, Africa, and Asia. 

Russia gained more acceptance despite initial criticisms regarding Moscow’s quick approval of the vaccine. Thomas Mertens, head of Germany’s standing commission on vaccinations, said that Sputnik V is “a good vaccine that might be approved in the EU at some point,” reports the Guardian.

Additionally, according to the Associated Press, Russia signaled a deal with Italy on March 10 to begin the production of Sputnik V for the first time in the European Union. While the European Medicines Agency expressed concerns regarding the safety of Moscow’s vaccine and compared it to “Russian roulette,” countries in the EU such as Slovakia and Hungary are already seeking to obtain the vaccine. Despite the concerns for the political implications of the Russian vaccine, many experts emphasize the importance of different vaccines, including Sputnik V, to ensure a faster vaccination campaign globally.
Switzerland's population of 127 million residents" would permit recreational use, distribution, transformation, and sales.⁶ These systems, in effect, would primarily benefit the influential people at the top of the system who are connected to government agencies and transnational drug companies. This proposed avenue further misleads industry access to favor those connected to transnational companies, including the U.S. government, with oversight and control of the largest cannabis market in the world. If the bill were to have the proposed impact, it must allow the for- mer said of the paradox created by the ban of the same result as wearing a niqab - most of the face is covered, save the eyes. "It's a big contradiction," he said.

The result, therefore, is an even larger controversy surrounding the ban. European governments created a double standard where an individual can be fined for wearing a face covering, but also for not. And this contradiction is inherently intertwined with the previous intentions behind these laws. No matter how hard political officials attempt to hide the motivations behind their laws, the consequences of these laws always tell the true story. In this case, it tells a story filled with discrimination, bias, stereotypes, and double standards.

Contact Shweta at shweta.parathasarathy@student.shu.edu

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA IN MEXICO CREATES A POWER TRIANGLE INVOLVING TRANSNATIONAL DRUG COMPANIES

Patrick Condon
Staff Writer

Mexico is positioned to become the world's largest legal marijuana market in the world. On March 11, 2020, the lower house of Mexico's Congress passed a bill legalizing recreational marijuana. This bill would "let users grow as many as 28g and carry up to 127 million residents" would permit recreational use, distribution, transformation, and sales.⁶ These systems, in effect, would primarily benefit the influential people at the top of the system who are connected to government agencies and transnational drug companies. This proposed avenue further misleads industry access to favor those connected to transnational companies, including the U.S. government, with oversight and control of the largest cannabis market in the world. If the bill were to have the proposed impact, it must allow the for- mer said of the paradox created by the ban of the same result as wearing a niqab - most of the face is covered, save the eyes. "It's a big contradiction," he said.

The result, therefore, is an even larger controversy surrounding the ban. European governments created a double standard where an individual can be fined for wearing a face covering, but also for not. And this contradiction is inherently intertwined with the previous intentions behind these laws. No matter how hard political officials attempt to hide the motivations behind their laws, the consequences of these laws always tell the true story. In this case, it tells a story filled with discrimination, bias, stereotypes, and double standards.

Contact Shweta at shweta.parathasarathy@student.shu.edu

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA IN MEXICO CREATES A POWER TRIANGLE INVOLVING TRANSNATIONAL DRUG COMPANIES

Patrick Condon
Staff Writer

Mexico is positioned to become the world's largest legal marijuana market in the world. On March 11, 2020, the lower house of Mexico's Congress passed a bill legalizing recreational marijuana. This bill would "let users grow as many as 28g and carry up to 127 million residents" would permit recreational use, distribution, transformation, and sales.⁶ These systems, in effect, would primarily benefit the influential people at the top of the system who are connected to government agencies and transnational drug companies. This proposed avenue further misleads industry access to favor those connected to transnational companies, including the U.S. government, with oversight and control of the largest cannabis market in the world. If the bill were to have the proposed impact, it must allow the for- mer said of the paradox created by the ban of the same result as wearing a niqab - most of the face is covered, save the eyes. "It's a big contradiction," he said.

The result, therefore, is an even larger controversy surrounding the ban. European governments created a double standard where an individual can be fined for wearing a face covering, but also for not. And this contradiction is inherently intertwined with the previous intentions behind these laws. No matter how hard political officials attempt to hide the motivations behind their laws, the consequences of these laws always tell the true story. In this case, it tells a story filled with discrimination, bias, stereotypes, and double standards.

Contact Shweta at shweta.parathasarathy@student.shu.edu

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA IN MEXICO CREATES A POWER TRIANGLE INVOLVING TRANSNATIONAL DRUG COMPANIES

Patrick Condon
Staff Writer

Mexico is positioned to become the world's largest legal marijuana market in the world. On March 11, 2020, the lower house of Mexico's Congress passed a bill legalizing recreational marijuana. This bill would "let users grow as many as 28g and carry up to 127 million residents" would permit recreational use, distribution, transformation, and sales.⁶ These systems, in effect, would primarily benefit the influential people at the top of the system who are connected to government agencies and transnational drug companies. This proposed avenue further misleads industry access to favor those connected to transnational companies, including the U.S. government, with oversight and control of the largest cannabis market in the world. If the bill were to have the proposed impact, it must allow the for-
Derek Chauvin’s Trial Is Beginning:
WHAT HAS AMERICA LEARNED, AND HOW DO WE CONTINUE FORWARD?

Lylian Pagan
Staff Writer

As the first half of President Joe Biden’s 100 days passes by, many are now beginning to analyze the trajectory of his term. The most recent airstrikes in Syria on Feb. 25, 2021 against Iranian-backed militias, have seemingly set the tone for his Middle Eastern policy. Many Americans and foreign policy analysts now wonder where the Biden Administration will go moving forward.

Targeted at multiple facilities in Eastern Syria, the Biden Administration announced that the U.S. would take retaliatory strike against the militias, Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kait’ib al-Muhandis, who were responsible for a reported Feb. 15 rocket attack against an American air base in Erbil, Iraq.

Biden’s administration has decided to begin renegotiating the nuclear deal with Iran, which many believe could help de-escalate the overall situation in the Middle East. The Biden Administration has been working to build a coalition of nations to begin the process. The goal is to try to return to the renewed, 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which was struck under the Obama Administration.

Many believe that Biden’s decision is a positive move and that the U.S. should be more willing to engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts.

Yet, many also note that the U.S. needs to be more grounded in its diplomatic efforts, as well as more focused on building strong partnerships with other nations.

In conclusion, Biden’s administration has made some positive moves in the Middle East, but much remains to be done to build a lasting peace in the region.

The Biden Administration Must Make Amends for Trump’s Middle East Policy

Sebastian Kopec
Staff Writer

Firstly, as time has passed by, many are now beginning to analyze the trajectory of his term. The most recent airstrikes in Syria on Feb. 25, 2021 against Iranian-backed militias, have seemingly set the tone for his Middle Eastern policy. Many Americans and foreign policy analysts now wonder where the Biden Administration will go moving forward.

Targeted at multiple facilities in Eastern Syria, the Biden Administration announced that the U.S. would take retaliatory strike against the militias, Kata’ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kait’ib al-Muhandis, who were responsible for a reported Feb. 15 rocket attack against an American air base in Erbil, Iraq.

Biden’s administration has decided to begin renegotiating the nuclear deal with Iran, which many believe could help de-escalate the overall situation in the Middle East. The Biden Administration has been working to build a coalition of nations to begin the process. The goal is to try to return to the renewed, 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which was struck under the Obama Administration.

Many believe that Biden’s decision is a positive move and that the U.S. should be more willing to engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts.

Yet, many also note that the U.S. needs to be more grounded in its diplomatic efforts, as well as more focused on building strong partnerships with other nations.

In conclusion, Biden’s administration has made some positive moves in the Middle East, but much remains to be done to build a lasting peace in the region.
Hong Kong Detains 47 Activists in Continued Crackdown on Democracy

Zachary Schullian
Staff Writer

On February 28, 47 pro-democracy protestors were arrested in Hong Kong on charges of conspiracy to commit subversion, The Associated Press reports. The news comes as yet another chapter in China's quest to exert legal control over the former British colony.

Prominent activists on social media, many of whom are in their 20s, have been primary targets for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) due to their influence over a wide audience. Last month, 55 other activists were arrested.

The Washington Post explains that Hong Kong's government enacted a law obligating loyalty to the CCP for anyone who seeks to run for political office in Hong Kong. The law, passed last June, criminalizes acts under broad terms such as “secession,” “subversion,” “terrorism,” and “collusion with foreign forces.” This national security law was passed in Beijing without Hong Kong's consultation, signifying Mainland China's ever-increasing dominance over the island city.

A Beijing-controlled election committee will not only have the power to decide who is allowed to hold positions of power, but also directly appoint “a large proportion” of the Legislative Council, BBC News reports. This makes it virtually impossible for any pro-democracy candidate to be elected to the Hong Kong legislature. The Wall Street Journal recorded Xia Baolong, Chief of Beijing office on Hong Kong affairs, as stating, “Those who violate Hong Kong’s national security law aren’t patriots.”

Over the past year, China has been systematically overhauling democratic institutions and freedom of speech in the city. While Hong Kong’s independence officially lasts until 2047, security laws and crackdowns by mainland China demonstrate Hong Kong’s weakening sovereignty.

According to Al Jazeera, the arrest of 47 protestors displays the widest use of the China-imposed national security law to date, and those convicted of charges are often denied bail and face life in prison. Such large crackdowns demonstrate that no matter the age or social standing, pro-democracy activists remain in danger of increasingly powerful Chinese authority.

Many of those arrested for subversion were targeted for participating in an unofficial primary election last June. Many sought to elect a majority of pro-democratic candidates to Hong Kong’s legislature, but many of those candidates were eventually disqualified from running for office. The elections were ultimately postponed under pressure from Beijing, citing the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for the delay.

China and Hong Kong called the attempt to fill the legislature with pro-democratic representatives an act meant to “overthrow” and “paralyze” the Hong Kong government, with subsequent arrests following on those deemed guilty on charges of “subversion.”

Reuters reports that Hong Kong has dropped from the rankings of the Heritage Foundation’s Economic Freedom Index, on which it held the number one spot for twenty-five years. The think tank cited Beijing’s control over economic policies as the reason for the decline in the rankings. The Hong Kong Financial Minister responded by calling the decision “unwarranted” and “unjustified,” stating the policies are consistent under the “one country, two systems” rule installed in 1997. He also called the assessment “politically biased.”

Contact Zachary at zachary.schullian@student.shu.edu

Hong Kong protestors fight tirelessly for political autonomy. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The Diplomatic Envoy

JARRETT DANG
Editor-in-Chief

HARSHANA GHOOHOO
Managing Editor

MEGAN GAWRON
International News Editor

JUDITH KOREN
Opinion Editor

ANDREA HEBEL
Associate Editor

DANIELA MAQUERA SARDON
Digital Editor

JOAQUIN MATAMIS
Layout Editor

CHRISTIANA MONES
Communications Liaison

LUISA CHAINFERBER
Senior Correspondent

DR. COURTNEY SMITH
Faculty Adviser

This publication is made possible through the generosity of the Constance J. Milstein, Esq., Endowed Fund.

The views expressed in The Diplomatic Envoy are those of the writers and are not intended to represent the views of the School of Diplomacy, Seton Hall University, or the CJM Fund.

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

CONTRIBUTORS
Ariel Go Jr.
Charleigh Stone
Chimdi Chukwukere
Drew Starbuck
Hamzah Khan
Jasmine DeLeon
Jazlyn Dominguez
Juliet Nangini
Kiara McGaughey
Lauren-Marie Diwatatan
Luisa Chainferber
Lylian Pagan
Mark Stachowski
Mia DiPaola
Nandini Jani
Natalie Sherman
Patrick Condon
Sebastian Kopek
Sergei Valenzuela
Shweta Parthasarathy
Timothy Georgetti
Zach Schullian

COMPANY NAME
March 2021
Page 12