



The Diplomatic Envoy

HONG KONG MAINTAINS ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY AS COVID-19 CASES SURGE

Leah Chan
Staff Writer

Amidst the easing of pandemic restrictions around the globe, Hong Kong is facing a devastating surge in COVID-19 cases, reports The Guardian.

Hong Kong, following in the footsteps of mainland China, has maintained a zero-tolerance COVID-19 restriction policy over the course of the pandemic. This approach proved to be largely effective up until the recent emergence of the Omicron variant. Statistics provided by Reuters exhibit the exponential rise in cases across the region, documenting an average of 19,844 new infections daily, with the highest daily average thus far reported on March 3.

The rampant spread of the Omicron variant

throughout the territory can be largely attributed to its urban layout. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with 7.4 million individuals residing in the metropolis. This makes executing quarantine restrictions difficult, Al Jazeera explains, as the majority of Hong Kong residents live in densely populated apartment complexes.

The rapid surge has left many hospitals and other public health facilities overwhelmed and understaffed. According to The Guardian, construction workers from mainland China are being recruited to build isolation units in the hopes of alleviating some of the pressure medical facilities are facing. Subsequently, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam announced that dispensable infrastructure will be temporarily converted into isolation

housing. In a similar vein, health care workers from the mainland are also mobilizing to aid Hong Kong, continues Al Jazeera.

Another factor that has expedited the proliferation of COVID-19 cases is the refusal of many Chinese citizens, predominantly the elderly, to get the vaccine. This has proved to be one of the most contentious issues worldwide throughout the pandemic, with a myriad of self-acclaimed “anti-vaxxers” enthraling the media worldwide. Skeptics around the globe have called into question the efficacy and overall safety of newly developed COVID-19 vaccines.

The New York Times reports that many of the deaths due to the virus in Hong Kong that were recorded in the month of February were individuals who were over 70 and unvaccinated. In interviews

with several unvaccinated elderly citizens, it was revealed that much of their reluctance is facilitated by a general distrust of the government as well as vaccine misinformation. To improve inoculation rates among the population, Hong Kong’s government policy was changed to require proof of vaccination for admittance to many public places, such as grocery stores and shopping malls.

The rise of COVID-19 cases in tandem with the low vaccination rate of the elderly poses a particular threat to nursing homes throughout the region. Similarly to the plight of hospitals, retirement homes are encountering a devastating lack of resources, inhibiting the proper care and isolation of their residents. Many of the preventative measures taken by these care

centers, including the complete prohibition of visitors, have failed to protect senior citizens from the Omicron variant, continues The New York Times.

Public health and care facilities are not the only institutions threatened by the spike in cases; Hong Kong’s stringent policy has also had a detrimental impact on the economy. The Associated Press asserts that the adopted zero-tolerance approach, which involves the imposition of heavy border restrictions, has eliminated one of the area’s vital sources of economic growth; tourism. Another article from The New York Times explains the importance of international trade to Hong Kong’s economy, likewise diminished by Chinese virus regulations. Private businesses have suffered the consequences of these tight restrictions, many of



Low vaccination rates in older populations pose a problem for nursing homes. Courtesy of Airam Dato-on (Unsplash)

which have been entirely decimated by the government’s response to the pandemic.

As of now, it is unclear how Hong Kong will proceed, considering the adverse effects of their combative strategies which are reaped by Chinese citizens. As the pandemic persists, it becomes more and more unclear whether a zero-tolerance policy is a pragmatic solution.

Contact Leah at
leah.chan
@student.sbu.edu

NUMEROUS BILLS ACROSS US PROPOSE LIMITING LGBT RIGHTS FOR MINORS

Catherine Anderson
Staff Writer

On March 8, Florida’s legislature passed a bill banning discussion of sexual orientation and gender expression in elementary school classrooms. According to The Associated Press, Governor Ron DeSantis is expected to sign the bill into law. If he does so, the legislation will go into effect on July 1, per ABC News. While the bill is officially titled “The Parental Rights in Education” bill, LGBT activists are calling it the “Don’t Say Gay” Bill, as, according to ABC News, they fear “it could act as a complete ban on the lessons on LGBTQ oppression, history and discussions about LGBTQ identities.” This bill is

far from the only legislature of its kind, as numerous bills targeting the rights of LGBTQ+ minors have been proposed nationwide in recent months. In fact, according to NBC News, in January and February alone, over 170 Anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been filed, with at least 69 of those targeting schools.

The bill in Florida is just one example of the laws specifically targeting transgender and nonbinary youth that have been recently introduced. According to NPR, in 2021 alone, over 40 bills targeting transgender and nonbinary youth were proposed in Texas. Additionally, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton released an opinion likening gender-affirming surgery for transgender youth to

child abuse. NPR continues that Governor Gregg Abbot also released a letter urging “professionals, including teachers and doctors, to report parents who give their children gender-affirming care.”

The effects of these bills go beyond the limitation of conversations in schools or the regulation of sports teams; they take a severe toll on the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth. NBC News tells the story of 16-year-old Spencer Lyst from Tennessee, who stated that he lives with nearly constant anxiety about whether he will be attacked for his identity. He went as far as to say that he faces difficulty going to the bathroom at school, “for fear of what or who ‘might be in there.’” Lyst’s struggle is not unique.



Protesters rally in a march for LGBTQ+ rights. Courtesy of Christian Lue (Unsplash).

The Trevor Project, an organization dedicated to preventing suicide among LGBTQ+ youth, saw more than 10,800 crisis calls and texts in the eight months following the enactment of a law in Texas that barred transgender youth from playing on the sports teams that aligned with their gender expression, NPR reports. Over a third of these messages came from transgender and nonbinary youth. It

is important to note that while advocates for such laws claim it evens the playing field for athletes, according to Axios, many states without these laws have not seen examples of transgender athletes having an unfair advantage in women’s sports.

Even prior to the most recent laws, the Trevor Project reported that there was a 150 percent increase in crisis contacts from LGBT youth in

Texas between 2020 and 2021, according to NPR. While there is no single cause for this phenomenon, NPR writes that analysis has found that LGBT youth are dealing with increased stress, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts due to the laws being introduced in their states. In fact, according to Axios, the Trevor Project found that 52 percent of transgender and nonbinary youth have considered suicide.

This data goes to show that while the bill in Florida may be officially called “Parental Rights in Education” bill and frames itself as a means to protect parents and their students, it may be doing more harm than good.

Contact Catherine at
catherine.anderson
@student.sbu.edu

INSIDE	INT’L NEWS	INT’L NEWS	DIPLO NEWS	OPINION	JOIN THE TEAM!
FOCUS ON THE INVASION OF UKRAINE On pages 8-9.	SEVEN RUSSIAN BANKS BANNED FROM SWIFT On page 3.	AUSTRALIA FULLY REOPENS BORDERS AFTER TWO YEARS OF COVID-19 CLOSURE On page 3.	ALUMNI INTERVIEW: EMMA TOBIN On page 7.	WITH THE WORLD WATCHING COULD TAIWAN BE AT RISK? On page 10.	

SOMALIA ELECTIONS DELAYED AGAIN, DRAWING WESTERN WARNINGS

Jarrett Dang
Editor-in-Chief

Somalia's federal parliamentary elections have been postponed with no planned makeup date, drawing the ire of Western backers that have condemned the delay.

March 15 was the deadline for each of Somalia's five states to separately hold elections for the country's lower house of parliament. By the end of the day, however, the central government failed to announce the completion of the vote nation-

wide. While voting was completed in the states of South West and Gal-mudug, the states of Jubaland, Hirshabelle, and Puntland cumulatively still had 40 vacant seats to fill as of the date of the deadline, according to Africanews.

The election has been repeatedly pushed back since an initial date that reaches back to late 2021. The passing of the previous deadline, set for February 25, sparked international condemnation, including by the United States, a key security part-

ner and aid guarantor for Somalia. The U.S. State Department imposed limited visa restriction sanctions against some Somali officials and individuals, says Al Jazeera.

"The delay in the conclusion of Somalia's elections is driving political instability, threatening security gains, and undermining economic development," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement, continues Al Jazeera

The International Monetary Fund, a global lender operating in the

country, warned in February of the potential economic repercussions of further delaying elections. According to an additional Al Jazeera report, the body warned that a delay past May could put the country on track to have its IMF reform program terminated if there is no government to endorse its continuation. The program, which started in 2018, includes a plan to reduce Somalia's international debt from \$5.2 billion to \$557 million. The country, one of the lowest income states in the world, could face severe economic fallout as a result of the program's cancellation.

The federal government's failure also deepens the political crisis felt across the Horn of Africa nation, which has struggled in recent years with worsening drought, political instability, and terrorist attacks by the al-Shabaab Islamic militant group that aligns itself with al-Qaeda, accord-

ing to the UN. Disputes between the central government and regional authorities have been a primary reason behind the election delays, which also stem from a complex election system involving regional clan delegates instead of universal voting.

The presence of al-Shabaab has also complicated the situation in the country. The government has been fighting a 15-year-long war against the group, and attacks have continued throughout the election cycle, according to Africanews. The U.S. military, which has been helping Somalia fight against the insurgency, requested that President Biden authorize the deployment of hundreds of special forces soldiers back to Somalia after they were ordered out by former President Donald Trump, reports the Wall Street Journal.

The delays raise questions about the efficacy of upcoming presidential elections planned for

2022. Somali President "Farmajo" has been in office since 2017 and was scheduled to leave office by February 2021, however disagreements with local leaders meant a presidential vote could not be held until after the parliamentary elections. Farmajo's continued failure to leave office could set off further instability in the country. Voice of America reports that in April 2021, the president sought to extend his term by two years but quickly faced an armed standoff in the capital from opposition members. Farmajo backed down and embarked on the current course of holding indirect elections, but further delays could jeopardize the fragile political balance in Somalia.

Contact Jarrett at jarrett.dang@student.sbu.edu



Somali election delays pose a threat to political stability. Courtesy of Nnaemeka Ugochukwu (Unsplash).

THE WORLD REACTS TO RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

Austin Delsontro
Staff Writer

Across the globe, the world is shunning Russia in a multitude of ways to protest President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. As The New York Times examines, from culture to commerce and sports to travel, many doors have been closed on Russia and its people, in a capacity not seen since the days of the Cold War. Such a worldwide rejection of Russia has been intended to show solidarity with the beleaguered Ukrainians, while also attempting to force President Putin to pull back Russian forces. Boycotts, protests, and sanctions of Russia have multiplied across the United States, Europe, and other powers following the start of the invasion. The Washington Post reports that thousands of people from around the world, from London to Paris to even Moscow, took to the streets to deliver a clear message to the Russian president: We

stand with Ukraine.

The Associated Press reports that as Russian troops began to close in on the Ukrainian capital, more Russian citizens began speaking out against the invasion, even as their own government's statements grew increasingly harsher. Protests have taken place in Moscow and St. Petersburg, among other Russian cities, with citizens taking to the streets despite mass detentions. A Russian petition to stop the invasion, launched shortly after it started, garnered over 780,000 signatures in less than five days, making it one of the most supported online petitions in Russia in recent years.

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, Facebook and YouTube have blocked Russian state-media from running ads on their platforms, while Twitter has suspended all advertising from Russia, as pressure mounts for tech platforms to respond to the crisis, NPR reports. Additionally, Google announced that they would

also be pausing the ability of Russian state-funded media to accumulate revenue through YouTube and Google's ad services as well.

Multiple media companies have also halted business dealings in Russia in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NPR adds. Warner Brothers had been scheduled to release their newest superhero movie, The Batman, to theaters in Russia on March 3, but Warner Media announced that they would be pausing the release of any new films in Russia considering the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Similarly, Sony Pictures Entertainment and Paramount Pictures both announced they would be delaying their newest film releases in Russia. The Walt Disney Company, in addition to no longer releasing their newest films in Russian theaters, is also working to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees.

Along with media protests, CNN examines how the sports world is

coming to grips with the invasion. The Polish and Swedish national teams announced that neither will face the Russian club in crucial 2022 World Cup qualification playoff matches in March in protest. Poland had been scheduled to face Russia on Thursday, March 24.

Response from the world's leaders has been swift and severe. In a White House Statement in response to the Russian invasion, U.S. President Joe Biden condemned Russia for an "unprovoked and unjustified attack" on Ukraine while promising that his country and its allies "will hold Russia accountable." Specifically, President Biden denounced President Putin for beginning a war that will bring human suffering and a catastrophic loss of life, alleging Russia alone to be responsible.

In a joint statement from the Group of Seven (G7), an intergovernmental assembly of major world powers, western leaders have strongly condemned the invasion,

as Al Jazeera discusses. The collective leaders have promised to bring forward severe and coordinated economic and financial sanctions against Russia, believing the crisis to be a threat to international order, with potential ramifications well beyond Europe.

Similarly, CNN details that EU President Ursula von der Leyen called Russia's actions barbaric and has proposed massive and strategic sanctions against Russia to EU member states, designed to take a heavy toll on Russian interests and their ability to finance war. In a similar sentiment, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, implored Putin to give peace a chance.

While Russia's invasion of Ukraine attracted sweeping condemnation from the US, the UK, European powers, and other western countries, there have been several countries which have backed Moscow over its actions, reports The Independent. Several Russian allies, in-

cluding Belarus, China, North Korea, Syria, and Venezuela, have directly or indirectly pledged their support towards Russia and its invasion of Ukraine.

For now, the entire world will continue to watch with bated breath as the largest state-on-state war in Europe since World War II unfolds, where any decisive or conclusive result will surely have devastating repercussions for years to come.

Contact Austin at austin.delsontro@student.sbu.edu

SEVEN RUSSIAN BANKS BANNED FROM SWIFT

Christopher Foran
Staff Writer

The crisis in Ukraine has led to multiple European and U.S.-led economic sanctions against the Russian Federation, resulting in profound damage to the Russian economy, reports Al Jazeera. According to ABC News, Russia is facing the sharp devaluation of the ruble, increasing inflation, heightened interest rates, and a frozen stock market. To further disrupt the Russian economy, The Wall Street Journal reports that Western countries have removed several Russian banking entities from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT. SWIFT is a Belgian financial cooperative that plays a vital role in the secure communications required for international financial transactions. The consequences of this action may be far-reaching and drastically impair Russia's ability to conduct international trade, further

complicating its economic future.

Al Jazeera describes SWIFT as "a network used by banks to send secure messages about transfers of money and other transactions" and further labels SWIFT as the "backbone of the international financial transfer system." It is used by over 11,000 financial institutions worldwide to ensure that communications involving attempted transfers of money between banks are completed in a safe, efficient, and reliable fashion. Alan Rappeport of The New York Times reports that "blocking Russia from SWIFT would curb its ability to conduct international financial transactions by forcing importers, exporters, and banks to find new ways to transmit payment instructions."

Some European nations, including Germany, Austria, and Italy, initially voiced opposition to the removal of Russia from SWIFT. In the case of Germany, which purchases 55

percent of its gas imports from Russia, Politico reports that government officials had previously raised concerns that SWIFT sanctions would impair Germany's ability to pay for crucial energy deliveries from Russia. The states in early opposition appear to have relented to an initial round of SWIFT bans. However, the reported bans are not a comprehensive quarantine of the Russian financial institutions from SWIFT.

On March 3, Reuters published the list of the 7 banks that will be removed from SWIFT participation. These seven banks are drawn from a pool of an estimated 300 financial entities in Russia currently using SWIFT. Absent from current SWIFT sanctions is Russia's largest bank, Sberbank, and Gazprombank, a significant channel for energy-related payments. These prominent omissions maintain an avenue for EU nations to continue buying Russian oil and gas and preclude complete isolation of the Russian econ-

omy from global trade for the time being.

The concept of expelling Russian banks from SWIFT is not novel. Russia has been preparing for such an action by the EU since the UK first proposed SWIFT-based sanctions in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea. The proposed SWIFT expulsion did not proceed at that time, as BBC News reports that Russian officials declared that such a measure could be taken as a declaration of war.

An analysis published by Dr. Maria Shagina of the Carnegie Moscow Center explains that the steps Russia has taken to mitigate the effects that the loss of SWIFT access would have on its economy. For domestic transactions, Russia could employ the National Payment Card System, operated by Russia's central bank, in place of the Visa and MasterCard payment systems, both of which CNBC reports recently blocked Russian financial institutions from their net-

works. Established in 2014 in response to sanctions, the system only accounted for 24 percent of domestic card transactions in 2021. Additionally, the National Payment Card System is accepted by few countries internationally, making the system ineffective for most international transactions.

Shagina goes on to describe the System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS), which is also run by Russia's central bank and was created to serve as an alternative to SWIFT. However, as of 2020, the system accounted for only 20 percent of financial transfer messaging, with a goal of 30 percent by 2023. Shagina further details internal issues with SPFS, including limited working hours compared to SWIFT, limited message size, and difficulties persuading foreign banking entities to join SPFS.

There are doubts within US financial institutions about the true efficacy of SWIFT-based sanctions. Jamie Dimon of JPMor-

gan Chase voiced concerns to Bloomberg that expelling Russian banks from SWIFT could have "unintended consequences" that could hurt the global economy. Dimon additionally notes that sanctioned Russian banks may easily find "workarounds" to continue to carry out business internationally. According to Bloomberg, JPMorgan was among multiple U.S. financial firms which advised the U.S. Government against suspending SWIFT access to Russian banks.

While the lasting effects of the SWIFT ban on Russia and the global economy will take time to fully manifest, these measures signal an escalation in sanctions against Russia. The statements expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author in his private capacity and do not in any way represent the views of the United States Navy or any other United States Government entity.

Contact Christopher at christopher.foran@student.sbu.edu

Contact Christopher at christopher.foran@student.sbu.edu

Contact Christopher at christopher.foran@student.sbu.edu

Contact Christopher at christopher.foran@student.sbu.edu

Contact Christopher at christopher.foran@student.sbu.edu

AUSTRALIA FULLY REOPENS BORDERS AFTER TWO YEARS OF COVID-19 CLOSURE

Andrea Hebel
International News
Editor

Australia has officially reopened its borders to all travelers for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Much of the country lifted restrictions on February 21, sparking an influx of flights into the country as individuals reunited and tourism resumed, Reuters reports. CNN adds that the last state to reopen, Western Australia, accepted its first flights on March 3, fully reopening the country's borders and ending quarantine requirements for vaccinated individuals.

Australia, which became known over the course of the pandemic for having some of the most restrictive entry requirements in the world, spent the first 18 months of the pandemic almost completely locked down, reports. Restrictions start-

ed easing in November 2021 as the state started allowing the entrance of foreign students, family members of citizens, and some international workers. Despite surging cases due to the Omicron variant in early January, The New York Times reports that a 94 percent vaccination rate amongst citizens over 16 limited the effect of the variant and allowed the country to transition to a "living with the virus" mindset.

The reopening of Australia's tourism industry has been highly anticipated. Tourism is one of Australia's largest industries, worth nearly \$43 billion, Reuters adds. Despite fears that tourism would be slow to return following the reopening due to international caution and persisting testing requirements, The New York Times reports that flight bookings to Australia were up 200 percent within a week of the announced reopening, and

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters that nearly 1.2 million people around the world have obtained Australian visas, The Washington Post adds. Tourism levels in 2022 are not expected to reach their previous peak seen in 2019, but Australian industries are welcoming incoming tourists with open arms.

Despite international caution, many Australians are optimistic about what reopening means for the country. "It's about coming back so the virus is under our control, whereas we felt that the virus was controlling us," Catherine Bennett, an epidemiologist at Deakin University in Melbourne, told The New York Times, emphasizing that the reopening represented a turning point in pandemic attitudes. "This is saying: We're ready for this."

Australia's reopening represents changing international attitudes towards COVID-19 restrictions,

both domestic and international. CNBC reports that Australia joins several other countries that had previously heavily restricted travel in reopening this month, including New Zealand, the Philippines, and Bali. Other countries, such as the UK, are loosening their internal restrictions, with Britain officially ending all government-mandated restrictions and self-isolation requirements, reports ABC News.

Throughout the pandemic, Australia's strict internal restrictions earned the country the nickname "Fortress Australia." Though some experts agree that the restrictions were successful in limiting case spread throughout the state, The Washington Post reports that many Australians viewed domestic movement restrictions as excessive, particularly those in Western Australia, which required a two-week quarantine upon

return for anyone who left the state. Though the state experienced almost no cases over the course of the lockdowns, many Australians felt that the benefits did not outweigh the pain of separation from family and regional isolation. Despite its near-zero case rate, border restrictions in Western Australia did not ease until nearly two months after states such as Victoria and New South Wales, despite a 90 percent vaccination rate and just ten deaths recorded over the course of the pandemic.

To many Australians, the border reopening represents a new chapter in Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with hopes rising that the worst is over. In Sydney, travelers were greeted with large sign reading "Welcome Back World!" placed near runways at the state's airport, and Reuters reports that Tourism Minister Dan Tehan personally handed out small

jars of Vegemite and stuffed koalas to airport visitors. Australia's message to international travelers is clear — come back.

Contact Andrea at andrea.hebel@student.sbu.edu

Contact Andrea at andrea.hebel@student.sbu.edu

Contact Andrea at andrea.hebel@student.sbu.edu

HEARINGS ON ROHINGYA GENOCIDE RESUME IN HIGHEST UN COURTS

Waina Ali
Staff Writer

February 21 marked the beginning of preliminary arguments at the International Court of Justice regarding the genocide of Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, according to The Associated Press. Myanmar is currently being represented by military leaders, most of whom came into power after overthrowing the country's previous leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

According to Al Jazeera, many believe the military leaders of Myanmar, who are responsible for much of the brutality against Rohingya Muslims, should not be representing the country at the ICJ. "This is a shameful double whammy," said Chris Gunness, Director of the Myanmar Accountability Project.

"Myanmar is being represented at the ICJ by people sanctioned for gross human rights abuses and violating the rule of the law."

Instead, there is a widespread belief that the National Unity Government (NUG) should be Myanmar's representatives. This government in exile consists of people who worked in the former government and other adversaries to the current military regime. The NUG, however, has rescinded its objections regarding Myanmar's ICJ representation and is focused on allowing the case to proceed.

In August of 2017, Myanmar military personnel initiated a "clearance campaign" in the Rakhine state. Backed by UN findings, Reuters reports that the campaign resulted in acts of genocide such as gang rapes, large-scale

murder, and arson. More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims evacuated from the Rakhine state to Bangladesh. The Myanmar military claims that their motive was a response to a hostile Rohingya insurgency.

In 2019, the case was officially brought to the attention of the ICJ by The Gambia, an African nation. According to Al Jazeera, the nation is partnered with the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, an international organization consisting of Muslim-majority countries whose stated purpose is to advocate for Muslims on a global scale. The foundation of Gambia's case is that the Myanmar government breached the 1948 Genocide Convention by inciting genocide against a specific group. They argued this in court via satellite images, maps, and

other aids.

As Al Jazeera notes, Aung San Suu Kyi defended the military's actions to the ICJ. She said that the circumstances were "complex" and that they were a response to a "militant" Rohingya insurgency. She also tes-



Rohingya Muslims seek justice through the International Court of Justice. Courtesy of Julie Ricard (Unsplash).

tified that the state thoroughly investigated any signs of wrongdoing, especially with civilian offenders. However, a month afterward, the ICJ demanded that Myanmar needed to protect the Ro-

hingya Muslims.

In February 2021, Suu Kyi was overthrown by the military, whom she defended two years prior. She now faces a multitude of charges within Myanmar. The junta is demanding that the case in the ICJ be overturned, on the

coup was violent and incited unrest within the country. In the year since the junta's rise to power, there have been many instances of massacres and airstrikes across the country in an attempt to squash any resistance. Leading officials have also noted that the situation for Rohingya Muslims has deteriorated since 2017. Daily acts of intimidation and harsh restrictions on basic needs are commonplace for the remaining community. Specifically, the lack of access to food has left a majority of Rohingya Muslims close to starvation. Since the coup, public attitudes toward the Rohingya have slowly been shifting as the brutality of the military becomes more widespread, says The Guardian.

Contact Waina at waina.ali@student.sbu.edu

COLOMBIA DECRIMINALIZES ABORTION, HIGHLIGHTING A DEPARTURE FROM STIGMA

Andrea Gonzalez
Staff Writer

On February 21, 2022, Colombia's Constitutional Court ruled 5-4 to decriminalize abortions, making the procedure legal up to 24 weeks of gestation, reports The Guardian. The historic ruling will change the lives of women and young girls who often resorted to clandestine abortions and were penalized under the healthcare system, says Al Jazeera. Many pro-choice individuals and feminists in Colombia welcomed the decision as a reaffirmation of women's bodily autonomy, hoping the ruling will inspire other countries to push for legislation protecting women's rights.

In September of 2020, more than 90 groups, led by Causa Justa for Abortion, filed a lawsuit calling for the decriminalization of abortion in Colombia, says the Washington Post. Since 2006, Colombia has partially allowed abortions in cases of rape, fatal fetal

deformities, and to save the pregnant woman's life, according to . However, much of the highly conservative and Catholic country remained opposed to abortion, with stigma preventing thousands of young girls and women from accessing safe procedures.

The Center for Reproductive Rights adds that rights activists and lawyers say the case aimed to eliminate "abortion as a crime from the penal code and end the risk of criminal prosecution and imprisonment in Colombia." In addition, the lawsuit calls on the state to "provide abortion care nationwide to respect the autonomy and freedom of women over the decisions that impact their bodies." The front declared the ruling a victory over stigma and neglect in the healthcare system.

"Catholic and Christian women and doctors believe that humanity should come before dogmas," says Dr. Mariana Ardila, a lawyer and leader of Cau-

sa Justa. She argued that abortions are a primary form of healthcare, requiring a safe environment to avoid pregnant women turning to harmful means. Furthermore, Catalina Martinez Coral, a Colombian lawyer and member of Causa Justa, told The Center for Reproductive Rights that the ruling "is a necessary advancement for women's rights and an essential step toward the provision of abortion in safe conditions throughout Colombia."

Nevertheless, those who oppose expanding abortion rights see the ruling as problematic. Dr. Natalia Bernal Cano, an opposing lawyer, told Al Jazeera that the decision "authorizes procedures that may hinder the lives of children." Bernal called abortion an "inhumane practice that may have long term effects in future pregnancies and cause disabilities in future children." However, she agrees with Colombia's previous ruling that women should not be impris-

oned for having abortions in reference to the split court.

A significant argument against the ruling, argued by both, Catholic Church and the president, is the belief that people will use abortions as contraceptives, increasing abortion rates. However, Causa Justa and other healthcare providers presented evidence that the law will not increase abortion rates but make abortions safer for women who choose to pursue them. Additionally, Causa Justa argued that increasing sex education and access to contraceptives across Colombia, which are especially scarce in rural and underserved urban communities where women and young girls are often victims of abuse and poor economic circumstances, would decrease abortion rates.

Causa Justa further argued that the decentralization of healthcare for women and young girls throughout Colombia would eliminate the economic and social inequality responsible for the

grounds that The Gambia is acting as a proxy for the OIC and the ICJ's jurisdiction is only between states, making it an inadmissible case.

According to The Guardian, the military

stigma that keeps women from accessing abortions, even in the circumstances protected by the 2006 ruling. They expressed hope that the 2022 decision will refute misleading claims that abortions are complicated and unusual and remain controlled by specialists and doctors.

"While Colombia was inspired by Argentina's legalization of abortion up to 14 weeks and Mexico's ruling that penalizing abortion is unconstitutional, Colombia's advocates hope to inspire other states, such as the U.S., The Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Honduras, to make abortion rights part of their agenda. "We are going to inspire people in the United States to defend the rights set out in Roe v. Wade," Martinez Coral told The New York Times.

Contact Andrea at andrea.gonzalez@student.sbu.edu

UK ENDS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS IN "LIVING WITH COVID" PLAN

Sophie Ulm
Staff Writer

For the first time in two years, England has lifted all government-sponsored COVID-19 restrictions in what has been dubbed the "living with COVID" plan. According to ABC News, England will no longer require mask wearing, mandatory isolation for those who test positive for COVID-19, or financial aid for people who have lost part of their income due to isolation. Beginning on April 1, free testing will also be scaled back. Scotland, Wales, and Ireland are all following suit in reopening, however with slightly more cautious policies.

Many citizens of the United Kingdom felt confused as to where this left them. According to The Guardian, free at-home testing is expected to be scaled back, as well as policies from schools and universities

requiring twice-weekly testing. Requirements for people who test positive to self-isolate will be dropped, in addition to the scaling back of contact tracing efforts. Masks will continue to be recommended, but not required in most spaces. One of the only things that remains the same in the UK's COVID-19 plan is an increased emphasis on the importance of people continuing to get vaccinated and boosted against the virus.

Reuters reports that this plan is aimed at helping to boost Britain's economy after the toll that the past two years have taken. Prime Minister Boris Johnson claimed that the cost of maintaining these COVID-19 policies and protocols was becoming much too expensive, and that it needed to be "scaled back" to allow for an economic recovery to be made.

Prime Minister John-

son stated in a press conference that "today is not the day we can declare victory over COVID because this virus is not going away," reports BBC News. The new plan for lifting restrictions is aimed at helping people navigate back towards normalcy, though what defines normalcy may have changed in the past two years. As COVID-19 continues to mutate, English officials felt that it was time to acknowledge the new reality the world faces—that of a life in which COVID-19 will likely never fully disappear.

England's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty, stated that this was not a drastic adjustment, but something that England had been gradually striving towards for a long time. BBC News continues that, while the number of people infected with the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is still very

high, the variant's spread has peaked and continues to decline, one of the reasons that British officials felt that this was the right time for the changes.

Not all of England's medical and scientific experts agree with the policies, however. According to , many health experts are confused as to why England is ending its self-isolation requirements. Dr. David Nabarro, the World Health Organization's special envoy on COVID-19, said that while the world must acknowledge that COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon, that does not mean "just accepting whatever the virus chooses to do." Rather, Dr. Nabarro and many other experts believe that it means creating a more dynamic approach to tackling the virus's spread so that people are prepared for whatever the virus might do next.

These new changes

also apply to travelers, reports NPR. For fully vaccinated travelers, proof of a negative COVID-19 test will no longer be required to visit England. Many airlines are praising this move after feeling the brunt of travel limitations over the past two years. Airports and tourist destinations are now making plans to reopen their doors, though this has been met with some concern from those who believe that the reopening is much too fast and could lead to another massive outbreak.

This news was met with mixed feedback amongst British citizens, reports. While some felt that this change was a way for Prime Minister Boris Johnson to increase his popularity while under fire for other scandals, others felt that the lifting of restrictions came later than it should have. A common thread in both lines of thinking is

that COVID-19 will now be treated more like a common cold, which is frightening to many at-risk groups, but a comfort for those who believe that their lives will improve if they could get a newer, weaker strain of the virus and move on.

Contact Sophie at sophie.ulm@student.sbu.edu

KILLER OF NOOR MUQADDAM SENTENCED IN PAKISTAN

Brianna Millican
Staff Writer

On February 24, Zahir Jaffer was sentenced to death by hanging for the 2021 high-profile rape and murder of Noor Muqaddam in Pakistan, reports The Guardian. The killing of Muqaddam has been front page news in Pakistan since its occurrence, due to the upper-class status of both individuals. Muqaddam, the daughter of former Pakistan diplomat Shakaut Ali Muqaddam, and Jaffer, the son of one of the wealthiest industrial families in Pakistan, had known each other for most of their lives, as they had grown up in high society with the same circle of friends, reports BBC News.

On July 20, 2021, Jaffer held Muqaddam hostage for two days at his family home, BBC News adds. CCTV footage obtained by Pakistani police shows Muqaddam attempting to escape multiple times. One of those attempted escapes seen on the footage shows



The case of Noor Muqaddam spurs discussion on Pakistan's criminal justice system. Courtesy of The Artist Studio (Unsplash)

Muqaddam jumping from a first-floor window and subsequently being dragged back into the Jaffer family home, where Jaffer eventually tortured, raped, and beheaded her. Jaffer did not deny murdering Muqaddam, saying she had refused to marry him, continues BBC.

Along with Jaffer, two of his employees were sentenced to 10 years in prison for abetting in Muqaddam's murder, reports NBC News. The sentencings were a relief to Muqaddam's family and for wom-

en throughout Pakistan. Noor's father, Shakaut Ali Muqaddam, called the verdict "a victory for justice." Mr. Muqaddam's lawyer commented on the verdict saying, "justice has been served and today's Pakistani women will be empowered."

According to NBC News, the death sentence of Zahir Jaffer is a milestone for Pakistani women, as only a fraction of cases involving violence against women result in the perpetrator being punished. The conviction rate in Pakistan for cases of violence against wom-

en is less than 3 percent, reports The Guardian. Thousands of cases of violence against women, including rape, murder, domestic violence, acid attacks and forced marriages, go unreported each year. Women and young girls are left vulnerable to attacks and assault due to Pakistan's lack of laws criminalizing domestic abuse and violence, adds CNN. Since Muqaddam's death was made public, Pakistani women have been protesting and speaking out about the need for change in the

country's criminal justice and legal system. Activists have used Muqaddam's death to call on Parliament to enact legislation that would imprison offenders for committing acts of violence and abuse against women and children, continues CNN. Women's rights activists have been outspoken about the importance of protecting Pakistani women from violence

over the past few years, as violence against women has only increased. According to Al Jazeera, activists have started to call the frequent crimes against women "femicide" in an attempt to reach an international audience. CNN reports that in 2020, legislators introduced The Pakistan Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill. If passed, the bill would define domestic violence and establish a system of protection and rehabilitation for women who are vulnerable to or who have experienced

domestic abuse, states The Library of Congress. The main obstacle against the bill's is the Council of Islamic Ideology, a conservative, all-male group that has been criticized for upholding archaic and patriarchal views, continues CNN. Their influence on the Pakistani legal system has prevented Pakistani women from having the same rights as their male peers.

The brutal killing of Noor Muqaddam serves as an eye-opener into the flaws of the Pakistani legal system against women. Women across Pakistan and beyond are hopeful that the death of Noor Muqaddam will inspire Pakistani leaders to create laws that protect women from domestic abuse and violence. In the eyes of many women, if an affluent diplomat's daughter is not safe from violence, then no woman in Pakistan is safe.

Contact Brianna at brianna.millican@student.sbu.edu

RUSSIA TAKES CHERNOBYL AND HOLDS STAFF HOSTAGE AS RADIATION LEVELS INCREASE

Kathryn Natale
Staff Writer

On February 24, Russian troops captured the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and its exclusion zone, the 30 kilometer area around the site of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, reports Radio Free Europe. The situation escalated when it was reported by CNN that soldiers were holding power plant staff hostage. On February 25, Reuters said that both the Ukrainian nuclear agency and interior ministry had reported increased radiation levels coming from the plant.

The capture of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was first announced by Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal. Radio Free Europe reports that he stated there were initially “no victims at the moment.”

The Ukrainian Nation-

al Guard met the Russian troops at Chernobyl, but when the fighting ended on the first day of the invasion, the power plant was under Russian control. The Associated Press reports that a senior American intelligence official said the accepted belief was that Russian forces would take Chernobyl and then move on to the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, which lies about 80 miles to the south of Chernobyl.

CNN reports that information about the hostages still remains unknown, such as how many there are or what their names are, but the White House has said that the reports of their existence are credible. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki called the action “obviously incredibly alarming and greatly concerning,” condemning it as “unlawful and dangerous,” as re-

ported by CNN. She went on to say “[w]e condemn it and we request their release.” According to Reuters, a Russian security source said that the capture of Chernobyl was intended as a signal to NATO that they should not engage in the conflict, which is the “biggest attack on a European state since World War Two.”

After the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl on April 26, 1986, attempts were made to contain the radiation that still leaked from the plant. If these containment facilities are damaged due to the fighting, they could seriously affect civilians living in the surrounding area. Anton Herashenko, a member of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry, warned that the radiation could impact Ukraine, Belarus, and other European countries.

Compounding this,

Reuters reported on February 25 that the troop activity at Chernobyl was already causing the measured radiation levels to increase up to 9.46 micro-Sieverts per hour in some places, which experts believe could be the



Reported increases in radiation levels place international agencies on high alert.
Courtesy of Vladyslav Cherkasenko (Unsplash)

result of increased troop and machine movement kicking up radioactive dust. The International Atomic Energy Agency says that this level does not put the general public at risk, and the radiation

CRIIRAD, a French-based company that watches nuclear radiation around the world, reports RTE.

The Director General of the IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, has

appears to be contained at the site, with neighboring Poland not detecting any increase within its borders. It is also possible that the increase in radiation is inaccurate and is the result of cyberattacks targeting technology, says

said that “maximum restraint” on conflict around Ukraine’s nuclear facilities is needed to maintain safe operations, according to CBS News. The 1986 disaster in Chernobyl led to at least 32 immediate deaths and around 11,000 cases of thyroid cancer in its aftermath. A nuclear disaster in the midst of the current armed conflict could have terrible consequences.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky tweeted on February 24 that the Ukrainian “defenders are giving their lives so that the tragedy of 1986 will not be repeated.” He went on to say that the capture of Chernobyl was “a declaration of war against the whole of Europe.”

Contact Kathryn at kathryn.natale@student.shu.edu

US LAUNCHES SANCTIONS AGAINST HOUTHIS FINANCIERS

Drew Starbuck
Staff Writer

On February 23, the United States took a major step in supporting allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates by announcing sanctions against key members of an international financing network accused of diverting funds for Yemen’s Houthi rebels, reports The Independent. The sanctions were launched in response to recent conflict escalation by the Houthis, who have launched an increasing number of missile and drone strikes against Saudi Arabia and the UAE. As Reuters reports, this widespread financial network, run by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard and a Houthi financier, has helped funnel tens of millions of dollars to the rebel group to fund its military operations against the Saudi-led coalition government.

The Houthis have previously been backed by Iran, and the Iranian

government continues to support the group’s campaign in Yemen against the Saudi government, its main regional rival. Voice of America reports that the rebel group seized control of the capital of Yemen, Sana’a, and most of the country’s northern territory in 2014. In response, the Saudi government led a coalition in a military campaign against the rebels in 2015 to keep a puppet Yemeni government in place, which has seen limited success.

The Houthi group has resisted attempts by the Biden administration to coordinate peace negotiations between them and the Saudi government, instead escalating their missile attacks against American partners in the Gulf region. U.S. military forces in the UAE have launched Patriot missile batteries to protect against airstrikes in response.

This financial network is reported to have used an intricate design of front companies and

individual actors to ship fuel and other petroleum products throughout the Middle East and into Asia and Africa, Reuters con-



President Biden imposes sanctions as Houthi rebels refuse to negotiate with Saudi Arabia.
Courtesy of Werner Bayer (Flickr)

tinues. The Treasury Department reports that the new sanctions have been launched after extensive consultation and collaboration with the United States’ regional Gulf partners. These sanctions will freeze all assets of the targeted individuals or entities that are subject to American jurisdiction and bar Americans from conducting any business with them in general.

However, according to The Associated Press, these sanctions installed by the U.S. Treasury Department were less severe

than the Gulf partners had requested. This position has shown the difficulties that the United States faces in imposing financial penalties and sanctions on the Houthis, who have immured themselves to Western financial networks. Economic sanctions also risk worsening the humanitarian crisis, including famine and cholera, in the poorest country of

against implementing severe sanctions against the Houthis. Many Democrats in Congress have expressed similar concerns. Along with the sanctions, President Biden also expressed a willingness to redesignate the Houthis and their leaders officially as terrorists, which would ensure harsh U.S. government penalties for anyone involved in doing business with the group,

the Arabian Peninsula, a situation which Al Jazeera reports has caused aid organizations and human rights groups to caution

reports Al Jazeera. Previously, the Trump administration had imposed the designation of “terrorist group” on the Houthis in his final days in office. The Biden administration lifted the designation to lessen the humanitarian crisis, but the recent attacks have caused the move to be reconsidered. The Associated Press reports that reinstating the designation is supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, along with some American and Yemeni politicians, as they believe the designation could deter the Houthis from further attacks and pressure them into negotiations. The consequences of the decision that the Biden administration chooses to make will likely have major repercussions upon the situation in Yemen.

Contact Drew at drew.starbuck@student.shu.edu

CHATHAM HOUSE MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY WITH CLIMATE CHANGE PANEL

Megan Gawron
Managing Editor

Chatham House, an international affairs think tank, hosted a panel discussion on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2022, called “Feminist Solutions to the Climate Crisis.” The panel brought together Dr. Sherilyn MacGregor of the University of Manchester, founder of EmpoderaClima Renata Koch Alvarenga, Executive Director of the Center for 21st Century Issues Titilope Ngozi Akosa, and Director of the WoMin African Alliance Samantha Hargreaves to discuss how climate solutions can be more intersectional. The panel was moderated by Nina Jeffs of Chatham House and included opportunities for questions from the audience.

Prefacing the discussion, Jeffs emphasized the global failure to include women in international climate decisions. Of the 140 delegates present at COP26 this past fall, only nine of them were women. Women are underrepresented at the highest levels of decision-making,

something that Jeffs underscored as a “global assault on women’s and girls’ dignity.” She went on to cite the World Economic Forum in explaining that the impact of COVID-19 has set women’s rights back by a generation, diminishing the voices that were barely being heard in the first place.

Renata Koch Alvarenga spoke first, highlighting the need to understand the structure of patriarchal societies and how they cause women, especially in the Global South, to be disproportionately impacted by climate change. She founded EmpoderaClima or Empowered for Climate, to serve this educational purpose.

To Alvarenga, women- and climate-related issues cannot be resolved until there is adequate education to fight the current stigmas surrounding them. She is currently seeking to empower women to be a part of climate leadership, especially in the Global South, through discussion forums and online databases to amplify a feminist climate approach to education.



Panelists discuss problem-based solutions to climate change in the 21st Century.
Courtesy of Davi Mendes (Unsplash)

On the EmpoderaClima website, these databases are available in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish—attempting to maximize the site’s accessibility.

While Alvarenga was most concerned with education, Samantha Hargreaves chose to focus on the channels of persistence that enabled women to be disproportionately harmed by climate change. Her section of the panel featured criticism of capitalism—emphasizing that existing economic structures are patriarchal, racist, and classist in nature, sharing close similarities to the colonialism of the past.

Jeffs reminded listeners that social, economic, and environmental issues

are often intimately intertwined, a reality that demands intersectional solutions. Hargreaves underscored this need for intersectionality, questioning who carries the historical responsibility for climate change and suggesting that people work together to form a post-extractivist society. She was particularly interested both in enabling women to stand up for their communities by saying no to extractivism, but also in enabling them to say yes to climate solutions by bringing them to the table.

Titilope Ngozi Akosa supported Hargreaves’ line of thought, explaining that “women are experts in their own issues.” Her section was defined by the explanation that wom-

en are not a homogenous group. Instead, women, both across and within countries, have vastly different backgrounds and experiences—all of which must be represented when making global climate decisions. When discussing a feminist climate approach, it is insufficient to just bring women to the table; women of all backgrounds must be included for intersectionality to truly exist.

Co-author of the Feminist Green New Deal for the UK, Dr. Sherilyn MacGregor wants to engage with environmental, women’s, and social justice issues through policy and legislation. She explained that, currently, climate policy in the UK is incredibly techno- and economic-centric, failing to address intersectional concerns. Her co-authored work includes 11 recommendations for policy changes that could transform legislation as to not reaffirm the patriarchy. In the panel, she highlighted objectives such as investing in co-housing, infrastructure, and shorter workweeks. MacGregor explained that these things

both aid and destigmatize care work, which becomes increasingly important in the face of climate change and is currently devalued because it is feminized. By shifting stigmas through policies, MacGregor believes the world can move toward a more equitable future.

Chatham House brought together scholars and advocates to acknowledge that, currently, the world is not doing enough to bring together gender and climate issues. The women represented at this panel all emphasized that attempting to move forward on climate change legislation without acknowledging patriarchal influences will only serve to worsen forces of oppression both domestically and internationally.

Contact Megan at megan.gawron@student.shu.edu

ALUMNI INTERVIEW: EMMA TOBIN

Waina Ali
Staff Writer

Emma Tobin, a 2019 graduate of Seton Hall University’s School of Diplomacy and International Relations, recently sat down with the Diplomatic Envoy to reflect on her experiences throughout her time at Seton Hall leading to her career aspirations now. Before her time at Seton Hall, Emma took a gap year to explore Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Morocco. Part of her desire for global experiences was due to her upbringing in Europe. One of her most influential experiences was in Morocco where she worked at a non-profit organization, where she worked on sanitation projects and women’s empowerment projects. She also met a woman who became her mentor, though communicating was difficult because of the linguistic barrier between them. These inter-

national experiences were incredibly beneficial for Emma leading up to her studies at Seton Hall University, she said.

The opportunities Emma received through Seton Hall and the School of Diplomacy strengthened her professionalism and networking skills. She worked on admissions panels where she interacted with various prospective students, where she felt fulfilled by the ability to impact students’ futures. As a freshman, Emma had the opportunity of attending a counterterrorism briefing at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, which helped strengthen her knowledge of the United States military’s actions. Furthermore, Emma noticed the lack of discussion about violence against women occurring on college campuses. To help encourage more conversation, Emma founded the KnowMore program,

which is focused on educating students about sexual violence prevention. Her time with KnowMore helped her develop the skills needed to advocate for women’s rights and equality.

Emma also pursued a minor in Arabic at Seton Hall following her time in

State Critical Language Scholarship. She spent eight weeks in Morocco where she was completely immersed in the Arabic language, which was especially rewarding as it was the country where she met her mentor. Emma described her experience as the “most challenging



School of Diplomacy alumni shares her experience at Seton Hall.
Courtesy of Seton Hall University

Morocco, where she felt inspired to study the language because of the language barrier she experienced while traveling. Her persistent drive to learn Arabic culminated in winning the Department of

yet rewarding program” as she worked to bridge the language barrier she experienced before. Her multiple tries applying for the Critical Language Scholarship taught her that rejection is redirec-

tion; each rejection of her application taught her something new and eventually led to her success. She advises students to ensure their application reflects their genuine goals and ambitions.

Emma interned at the United Nations during her time at Seton Hall. Her experience changed her view of the international relations field by demonstrating to her what a true public servant looks like: a “game-changer” who weaves through the complex issues they face. Another major takeaway from her U.N. internship was her discovery of the Truman Scholarship; by becoming a Truman scholar, Emma was able to pursue the role of the diplomats she observed at the U.N., providing her the opportunity to pursue her passion for women’s global equality and work towards her graduate degree at Oxford University in England.

As of now, Emma is at

Oxford, writing her thesis with a focus on gender inequality, specifically on female genital circumcision in Indonesia. She plans to work towards an academic understanding of issues like this and eventually turn that knowledge into culturally specific solutions. Her gap year taught her that these communities have the power to heal when given the proper tools to do so. Reflecting on her time at Seton Hall, Emma truly feels that the School of Diplomacy helped her to create the tools she needed for success. She urges students to remember their potential and not lose focus of their goals, no matter how distant they seem.

Contact Waina at waina.ali@student.shu.edu

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Elsie Tierney
Staff Writer

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, an estimated 3.1 million Ukrainians have fled the country, reported by the Brookings Institution as of March 18. It is currently estimated that the number may reach 4 million if Russia's military offensive continues at its current rate.

The European Union has acted quickly to accommodate the influx of refugees, specifically countries bordering Ukraine including Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Poland and Romania prepared reception facilities with capacities of up to 1 million people each before the war even broke out, according to the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

The EU unanimously enacted the never-before-used Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) on March 3. It was de-

veloped in 2001 after the Yugoslav Wars during the 1990s and allows for a specific, clearly defined group fleeing a conflict to receive a collective protection status in the EU. It also allows Ukrainians to move through the EU, unlike national temporary status.

TPD acts as a symbol of political unity across the EU and openness to the incoming group of refugees. While the EU has adopted this policy, not every other region has been as welcoming. The United Kingdom has done next to nothing to help Ukrainians fleeing their country, reports Al Jazeera. However, while the UK stated that it will not be offering refugee status to Ukrainians, it will try to speed up family unification.

On Sunday, March 13, the British government announced it would be starting a program called "Homes for Ukraine" wherein the government pays 350 pounds (\$456)

a month to individuals or charities who host an uncapped number of Ukrainian nationals for at least six months. This program is aimed at those trying to enter the UK with no family ties.

This response from the UK isn't out of the ordinary. The Conservative party-led govern-



Over 3.1 million refugees have fled the war in Ukraine. Courtesy of President Of Ukraine (Flickr).

ment is trying to pass the Nationality and Borders Bill through Parliament, which has been criticized by many human rights groups as a legal assault on refugee rights. Furthermore, UK citizens have

been able to enter Ukraine without visas since 2005, yet that policy has never been reciprocated.

Hungary, which similarly has a long history of opposition to immigration with refusal to accept refugees from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, opened its borders to all refugees fleeing Ukraine, including

border with Serbia.

There are some clear motivations for Eastern Europe to be more open in the current refugee crisis. For example, Ukraine is a neighboring country and there are large Ukrainian diasporas in many countries in Eastern Europe. Many countries in the region similarly know the experience of living under Soviet aggression.

The crisis has also ignited debates about the racial part of the EU's response to this refugee crisis vs. the Syrian refugee crisis. Currently, in Ukraine, numerous students from Africa and India have gotten stuck in the country. However, at the borders, buses taking people to safety have only been prioritizing Ukrainian nationals, reports CNN. There have also been accusations of violence against these students at the borders by Ukrainian or other local police and military.

These issues are also still prevalent in the EU's

Temporary Protection Directive: it doesn't clarify if it will protect Ukrainian nationals who are refugees or any refugees fleeing Ukraine.

In addition, many refugee crises start with an overwhelmingly positive attitude and support from the public. However, this typically fades over time as governments and citizens try to integrate into their new homes. The second stage of the TPD, where refugees are spread out around the EU into volunteering host countries, may never come to pass because of bureaucratic barriers.

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Contact Elsie at elsie.tierney@student.sbu.edu

UKRAINIAN RESISTANCE

Madeline Field
Staff Writer

Ukrainians have mounted a "stiffer-than-expected" military and civil resistance since Russian troops invaded the country in late February, the New York Times reports.

The Ukrainian military, one of Europe's largest with over 370,000 active and reserve troops, has spent billions training its soldiers to counter Russian offenses in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Thus far, it appears that their efforts have paid off - Russia, despite its military and economic advantages, has managed to capture only one major city in 10 days, the southern city of Kherson. The 40-mile-long Russian column of tanks and troops expected to reach Kyiv in a matter of days has slowed to a crawl thanks to relentless anti-tank bombardment

by Ukrainian troops. According to the National Interest, the country's air defense system has managed to limit Russia's air operations.

Many female or elderly Ukrainians, unable to take up arms or flee, have taken to the streets in public protest against their occupiers. Demonstrations in several major cities have become violent but served as a rallying point for a determined populace.

President Volodymyr Zelensky has been largely responsible for strengthening Ukrainian resolve despite increasingly common shelling and violence by Russian troops. Zelensky, the Stars and Stripes writes, has maintained a reassuringly strong international and domestic presence throughout the conflict and has continued to speak publicly, even when warned by American officials that Russia wants to "destroy Ukraine politically by

destroying the head of state" and install a puppet government.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has had his eye on Ukraine since his election to office in 2000. Putin's decades-long approach to foreign policy has promoted above all a "Russian World," in which ethnically and linguistically Russian states, supposedly incorrectly divided in nation-state paradigms by Westerners, become "one people."

Ukraine, and in particular its eastern Crimean, Donetsk, Donbass, and Luhansk regions, is perhaps the most ethnically, historically, religiously, and culturally similar to Russia besides Belarus, which has volunteered itself as a staging ground for Russian troops, having been united in the ancient Kyivan Rus empire. Yet, The Conversations writes, Ukraine's ethnic similarity to Russia is not natural - rather, it is the result of a concerted effort

by Russian elites to suppress Ukrainian cultural independence reaching back to the 18th century.

As a result, many Russians refer to Ukraine as Malorossiya, or Little Russia. However, a growing majority of the Ukrainian population, particularly youth who have grown up in a sovereign nation their whole life, see Russia as an imperialist foe hellbent on annexing the whole country.

The Conversation reports that public opinion of Russia has fallen drastically since the 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovich, a pro-Russian politician from the now-separatist region of Donetsk. Yanukovich was ousted from power after signing an economic union treaty with Russia in 2013 in lieu of closer ties with the European Union. Putin, under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians from nationwide protests sparked by

Yanukovich's decision, annexed Crimea in 2014. Since then, Ukraine has outright rejected traditional Russian propaganda, entertainment, and employment. The Ukrainian government passed a series of laws in 2015 aimed at "decommunizing" society and the government, resulting in a "wholesale rejection of Soviet symbolism" and propaganda, according to the Atlantic Council. The approach has resulted in a crumbling of Moscow-backed political parties, which garner only 20% of a rapidly-aging population's vote.

A strong Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invasion amid increasingly popular anti-Russian sentiments is unsurprising. However, while Ukrainians should be immensely proud of their successful resistance thus far, the West cannot ignore the reality of the situation—that sheer power-of-will cannot de-

feat a sophisticated air and ground campaign unafraid of inflicting civilian casualties. Ukraine, without further diplomatic and military assistance, is in real danger of falling.

Contact Madeline at madeline.field@student.sbu.edu

INSIDE RUSSIA

Christopher Benitez Cuartas
Staff Writer

Russian President Vladimir Putin is invading Ukraine. As illogical as the move seems from the perspective of internal politics, the Kremlin's foreign policy is an attempt at bringing back the olden days of Soviet nationalist sentiment.

The invasion of Ukraine follows a trend by Putin of declaring wars to boost popularity. During the Chechen Wars in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Putin gained pop-

ularity due to a combination of a wartime leader popularity boost and the fact that the Chechen independence movement had a history of terrorism in Russia. In 2008, the Russo-Georgian War managed to further raise Putin's approval rate to 88 percent despite a bleak background in finances and military.

The world in 2022 is very different, however. Just a year before, Russians protested the jailing of opposition leader Alexey Navalny, the sanctions previously put on Russia have not gone anywhere,

and two decades of rule by the same man has started getting under the skin of a new generation of Russians eager for change.

Analysts in the West consider the man in the Kremlin as eager to reconstruct the glory of the Soviet Union, says The New York Times. However, many Russians, including young people, have protested what is being called imperialist moves by the Kremlin. Today, they instead watch on television as their president—the only leader their country

has ever known in their lifetime—declare the "denazification" of neighboring Ukraine as they turn on social media and see the devastating images war brings about until they can no longer due to censorship.

Massive protests mobilized in the wake of the invasion. The first of these happened at Pushkin Square in Moscow on February 24, leading to 1,702 arrests, reports The Guardian. As the war in Ukraine raged on, the protesters received much praise from foreigners on social media, as well as foreign dignitaries. Zelensky, who had called them into the streets in the first place, publicly thanked them, stating that "we see you. It means that you heard us," says CBS News.

The flip side to all of this is the fall of the Russian economy's access to the outside world. The ruble's devaluation caused long lines outside banks to form, reminding some in the older generation of the drama in the immediate aftermath of the

fall of the Soviet Union, according to CNBC. Al Jazeera reports that the situation has become so unbearable for some Russians that they are leaving the country altogether, risking the prejudice of the people in their destinations—the Baltic states, Georgia, and Turkey.

Russian authorities have dishied out censorship in the traditional manner, with one prominent first victim being the opposition-lined Echo of Moscow radio station. The station went off the air on March 3, according to The New York Times. Meanwhile, Russian public media has been the opposite, though much noticeable in its propagandistic aims. The subtext became text in this scenario as Channel One editor Marina Ovsyanikova broke onto the screen and held a sign while unexpectedly proclaiming "They're lying to you," says an additional report from the Guardian.

Made-for-export state media RT has been blocked on YouTube as

of March 11. The impact the conflict has had on social media mostly revolves around Meta (formerly Facebook) and its presence in Russia as well as its users worldwide who give opinions on the topic. Gizmodo reports that Instagram was officially banned after Meta allowed for the glorification of violence in the context of the conflict, and particularly the slogan "death to the Russian invaders" used by Ukrainian nationalists.

Contact Christopher at christopher.benitezcuartas@student.sbu.edu

Joshua Powanda
Staff Writer

Although the United States and its European allies have so far avoided direct military contact with the Russian armed forces, they have engaged in a different kind of warfare. Economic warfare has been employed to deter further Russian aggression in Ukraine and punish the regime for its illegal territorial expansion.

Following the various phases of the Russian invasion, the international community has imposed substantial short-term and long-term sanctions. Al Jazeera explains the first measures came swiftly after President Vladimir Putin announced the independence of Ukraine's breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk regions and deployed Russian forces to the territories.

Western countries and other allies throughout the world introduced sanctions against several Russian banks, oligarchs, and other wealthy individuals. Additionally,

Germany halted the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, a major blow to Russian energy output and revenue.

Although these initial measures inflicted a significant dent on the Russian economy, the real damage came after Putin launched an all-out assault on the entire Ukrainian homeland. In the days following the full-scale invasion, President Biden announced the U.S. was freezing all Russian central bank assets in the U.S. This would prevent Putin from using foreign reserves to counter economic downfall and continue to finance the war.

CNN reports that the Biden Administration also sanctioned several more Russian banks, as well as Russia's technology and aerospace sectors. These restrictions highlight the long-term consequences of the sanctions as the U.S. seeks to prevent Moscow's ability to modernize technology and weapons industries.

Additionally, the U.S. blacklisted Vladimir Putin himself, along with

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and several Russian oligarchs. The direct targeting of Putin and his inner circle is something the West has previously only done on a limited scale.

According to an additional report from Al Jazeera, this move was coupled with sweeping sanctions from the European Union, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. Switzerland has also joined in sanctioning Russia, which is notable because of the country's past neutrality in European conflicts.

In coordination with the U.S., the European

Commission, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Canada announced that they would expel certain Russian banks from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), a Belgian-based international transaction system used by banks. The move was meant to restrict those banks' ability to move money around the world and slow Russian transactions.

Experts say the slew of sanctions imposed on Russia will have serious short and long-term consequences. According to CFR, the likely result of

this coordinated economic warfare is "widespread economic pain in Russia, including rapid inflation and a further decline of living standards."

There are already signs that the sanctions are beginning to take hold. The Russian central bank has doubled its interest rate to 20 percent to strengthen the declining value of the ruble.

The reasoning behind many of these measures is to put enough pressure on the Russian President and the country's elites to force a behavior change. Despite this, such a change will likely not take place. Not only has Putin become accustomed to living under sanctions—albeit not to this degree—Russia is still receiving large amounts of revenue from its crucial energy exports.

Europe's reliance on Russian natural gas, oil, and coal as a primary energy source means that it is difficult to completely ban such imports. Reuters reports that the EU imports up to 40% of its natural gas from Russia.

While European countries have pledged to gradually phase out Russian energy from their economies, the United States has taken unilateral action to immediately ban all imports of Russian oil, gas, and other energy. The Wall Street Journal reports that this move was possible because the U.S. imports only about 8% of its oil and gas from Russia, a reality that is strikingly different from Europe.

It remains to be seen what economic move the Biden Administration will make next. Up to this point in the conflict, however, it seems Vladimir Putin is determined to carry out his territorial expansionist goals in Ukraine, despite the cost to the Russian economy and the livelihoods of the Russian people, who are perhaps paying the greatest price for their president's tyranny.

Contact Joshua at joshua.powanda@student.sbu.edu



Russian President Vladimir Putin has justified the war as a battle against Nazism. Courtesy of haberlernet NET (Flickr)



Western countries have placed heavy economic sanctions on Russia. Courtesy of Mathias P.R. Reding (Unsplash)

AS THE GLOBAL WEST PREPARES TO RELAX COVID RESTRICTIONS, IS IT DOING ENOUGH TO COMBAT VACCINE INEQUALITY ACROSS AFRICA?

Katherine Dorrer
Communications Liaison

It has been two years since the World Health Organization's designation of the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic. Since then, there have been 452,201,564 confirmed cases of COVID-19, along with 6,029,852 related deaths worldwide, reports WHO. As the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and local governments relax COVID-19 restrictions within the United States, the pandemic is still raging in developing nations, as both their economy and national morale struggle to regain normalcy. The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately highlighted the growing global divide in the distribution of vaccine doses, particularly exposing vaccine inequality across Africa.

The CDC reports that there have been 695,483,935 total vaccine doses delivered within the United States. However, rates within much of Africa still sit substantially lower. The East African nation of Eritrea has yet to start vaccinating its population, with

zero administered vaccine doses registered in the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention database. Rates of vaccination against COVID-19 are still low across Africa, with just under 13 percent of the continent's total population receiving both doses. While a number of African countries tout vaccination rates near 90 percent, states like Burundi, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have had less than 1 percent of their population immunized. As Our World in Data shows however, western nations are seeing vaccination rates in the mid-70 to 80 percent, furthering emphasizing the divide in access to life saving medical resources. Since there is a limited supply of vaccines throughout Africa and given the various subregions and demographic structures of the continent, the challenges of administering vaccines are plentiful. In order to guarantee equitable access across the globe, high income states must recognize their harmful



Low vaccination rates in Africa raises questions regarding unequal distribution.

Courtesy of Ed Us (Unsplash)
practice of purchasing more vaccines than their population is in need of, a by-product of economically-dominant countries' immediate access to vaccines and their related material.

Given the emergence of new variants of COVID-19, such as the Omicron variant, world leaders have further urged the need for vaccine equality across the globe. WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus explained that "fostering local vaccine manufacturing capacity throughout the globe, supplemented by temporary intellectual property waivers for COVID-19 tools, will help bring this pandemic to an

end and keep us all safer," as reported in a press conference by the United Nations. Dr. Ghebreyesus asked the world to take on three challenges: support the WHO's goal target of a 70 percent global vaccination rate, help funding the ACT African Vaccine Acquisition Trust, and support for the vaccine technology network.

Three months into 2022, within the long two-year battle against the pandemic, millions of people have received their full doses against the virus, along with a booster vaccine. Though this seems to be remarkable progress, it is also indicative of inequitable distribution. As concerns

rise regarding access to vaccines and related technologies in these developing nations, the issue has drawn comparisons to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa, once again bringing forward the long history of healthcare inequality on the continent.

Reported by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, "Between 1997 and 2006, UNAIDS estimates that 12 million Africans died because the medicines were priced out of their reach by pharmaceutical monopolies and the greed of profit versus public good," stated by Executive Director of UNAIDS Winnie Byanyima.

The global community has seemingly not learned from the HIV epidemic, and continues to allow high income nations to hoard vaccine stock, leaving economically developing nations to scavenge for low-quantity high priced vaccines. The Director of ACDCP expressed how, "we don't know what the trajectory for COVID will look like in the coming years,

but we know that HIV has been with us for 40 years [and] has killed almost 37 million people...

But we should be mindful of what COVID can do to erode the significant progress that we have made in achieving remarkable progress in controlling HIV/AIDS over the years," to The World.

In order to combat this vaccine inequality across Africa, vaccine manufacturers must first prioritize the creation and distribution of doses to COVAX and countries in need, in order to have an even distribution across the globe. Additionally, to have the support from the G7 nations alongside WHO Chief Ghebreyesus. There is no question that the path to fair vaccine distribution and equity across Africa must include a clear and comprehensive plan to supply the continent with its necessary doses.

Contact Katherine at katherine.dorrer@student.sbu.edu

WITH THE WORLD WATCHING, COULD TAIWAN BE AT RISK?

Chimdi Chukwukere
Staff Writer

Considering the strategic and symbolic significance of Taiwan to the People's Republic of China, several experts have argued that China's invasion of the island is a matter of when and not if. Many have questioned Chinese President Xi Jinping's decision to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine, given that Russia's actions are in direct contradiction to China's century-long foreign policy tenet of non-interference. Some experts are of the view that by providing support to Russia, China has been caught up in some kind of difficult "unexpected" terrain that might come back to hurt its interests regarding Taiwan, The Council on Foreign Relations explains. However, this is not entirely true. True, China has for over a century centered its foreign policy on safeguarding national independence

and state sovereignty. Also true is the fact that China's support for Russia's invasion betrays this goal. What is not being considered is Xi Jinping's desire and commitment to achieve a great Chinese renaissance & reunification, a goal that trumps the state's supposed defense commitment to its five principles of peaceful co-existence.

The Chinese Communist Party has in recent years shown such penchant for 'dramatic' policy shifts, particularly seen in the decision to eliminate a two-term presidential limit and allow Xi to remain in power when his second term ends in 2023. If supporting Russia ensures that China achieves its goal of reunification with Taiwan, the government might just be willing to make as many compromises as needed.

Regarding the potential for Chinese invasion of Taiwan, PLA experts estimate that China is about 5-6 years away from

possessing the military capacity to successfully invade Taiwan. However, the feasibility of such a military campaign remains in question. Can China successfully wage a war of attrition on Taiwan? What nature will such a war take? And can Taiwan expect a strong defense response from its allies, mainly the United States, the QUAD alliance, and Europe if such a war were to occur?

Reuters reports that in the wake of the Winter Olympics, China and Russia announced a renewed partnership, in which both parties declared that "friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation." China's support of Russia's military action in Ukraine should not come as a surprise. With such solidarity established, China is guaranteed Russian military support if they were to invade Taiwan at any time. China would

likely not be afraid of U.S. deterrence because in such a scenario, it now possesses a nuclear-armed ally. China's cooperation with North Korea also implies the potential support from another nuclear rogue state. One of the fears of the West regarding the current Ukrainian crisis is that any military assistance to Ukraine may result to a nuclear conflict. Such fear will still exist should China actually invade Taiwan, and as such, current evidence suggests that in the case of an invasion, the U.S. would not be willing to provide military support to the Taiwanese people.

On the possibility of China launching a war on Taiwan, Chinese expert Alexis Turek stated, "Taiwan being an island with difficult terrain, that would make the invasion very logistically difficult for China. Beyond simple military capacity, Taiwan is a major supplier of semiconductors and

thus key to world supply chains, Were China to invade Taiwan that would certainly garner some sort of backlash from the U.S., and very possibly Japan, the Quad countries, and the EU, though of course any exact retaliation tactic is difficult to predict."

As shown in a recent simulation by CSIS, although invasion seems unlikely right now, an increase in Chinese grey zone activities is always possible in the near future. Given the symbolic importance of Taiwan to Chinese nationalist ideology, invasion should not be considered an impossibility, even if it would be an irrational decision by the Chinese state. As highlighted by The Guardian, the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has sent shock waves around the globe, being most notably felt in Taiwan. However, as U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan recently highlighted in an interview, the special ar-

rangement between the United States and Taiwan is one major factor that distinguishes it from the situation in Ukraine. Although currently unknown, the uncertainty of a military response from the United States, should China launch a military campaign against the island, might continue to keep Taiwan safe. But for how long?

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

SANCTIONS MAY NOT STOP PUTIN, BUT THEY WILL CERTAINLY HURT THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

Hamzah Khan
Associate Editor

As the world watched in horror while Vladimir Putin launched his illegal and indefensible invasion of Ukraine, many immediately called for the harshest sanctions possible to be imposed on Putin's regime. The United States and its allies showed remarkable unity in implementing comprehensive sanctions targeting key sectors of the Russian economy. According to Vox, the U.S. and Europe immediately sanctioned Putin and other Russian oligarchs by freezing their assets and confiscating properties belonging to individuals close to the Russian government.

The global community also removed Russian banks from the SWIFT banking communication system, a huge blow to the Russian financial sector, and the U.S. announced that it would ban all Russian energy im-

ports. The Russian central bank was sanctioned as well, the first sanctioning of a G-20 bank. The ban on Russian oil coupled with Germany's cancellation of the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline are especially punishing to the petrostate's economy and will have significant implications on global energy prices. The ruble has fallen to its lowest point ever, along with nearly \$1 trillion worth of Russian assets; as a result the Russian economy is expected to contract 35 percent in the second quarter of 2022, reports Reuters.

The goal of these sanctions, according to the Biden administration, is to "impose severe costs on the Russian economy," according to NBC News. But will these punishing sanctions really change Putin's behavior? Recent history shows that American sanctions have not been effective at changing the behavior of certain authoritarian countries, but have had horrific im-

pacts on civilian populations within those countries. While the scale of the sanctions on Russia is unprecedented, the U.S. has imposed severe sanctions on Afghanistan, North Korea Iran, Syria, and Venezuela in recent years and yielded pitiful results, according to the Cato Institute.

U.S. policymakers have largely adopted sanctions as an economic weapon and an alternative to military conflict, which they can use to coerce lower income countries. Under the Trump Administration, Iran continued to enrich uranium despite the "maximum pressure" campaign the president championed. The real effect on the Iranian people was quite dire, however, with many people including cancer patients unable to access life saving medications, according to Human Rights Watch. The sanctions currently imposed on Afghanistan against the Taliban government could kill

more Afghans than the 20-year war that ended last August, according to the Center for Economic Policy and Research. U.S. sanctions were notorious for possibly killing nearly half a million Iraqi children in the '90s as well, a price which Secretary of State Madeline Albright famously claimed was "worth paying", yet did little to curb Saddam Hussein's behavior, according to The Guardian.

Likewise, the severe comprehensive sanctions imposed on Russia may have similar effects on the Russian people. Inflation is skyrocketing and basic goods will become more expensive for average Russians as the ruble continues to drop, reports BBC News. American companies are abandoning Russia in droves, leaving many Russians unemployed as their economy is on the verge of collapse. Soaring gas prices around the world have also shown how sanctions are impacting people out-

side Russia. USA Today reports that Russia is also one of the world's largest exporters of wheat, making up 17 percent of the world's supply, and sanctions on this industry could cause food shortages around the world and in Russia.

While the use of sanctions has occurred for more than a century, their use has sometimes exacerbated conflicts rather than prevent them. According to Foreign Policy, economic sanctions were largely the policy of choice adopted by the League of Nations after the horrors of World War I. While the policy was initially successful at deterring smaller countries from going to war, sanctions against Italy and Germany were perceived as acts of war and incentivized the fascist states to rapidly begin expanding to lessen the effectiveness of sanctions. Likewise, U.S. sanctions on oil exports to Japan made attacking Pearl Harbor

seem like a rational strategy.

Similarly, experts like International Relations scholar Paul Poast believe that sanctions on Russia will not stop Putin and may risk further antagonizing him. Previous sanctions on Putin did not stop him in 2014 and the sanctions being imposed today may be perceived as an act of war. Comprehensive sanctions that target civilian populations are not a humane alternative to war. Replacing bullets and bombs with blockades and banking sanctions can have the same, or arguably worse, impacts on civilians. If the only purpose of these sanctions is to bring Russia to its knees, it will not be Putin, but the millions of Russians who did not choose this war bearing the consequences.

Contact Hamzah at hamzah.khan@student.sbu.edu

IS ISRAEL BEING UNFAIRLY TARGETED BY THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL?

Anna Thibodeau
Staff Writer

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) recently created a special commission of inquiry to investigate allegations of crimes of apartheid committed by the Israeli government against Palestinians. The fact-finding mission is being used to respond to allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by Israel, according to the UNHRC. The inquiry was initiated following an 11 day conflict between Israeli military forces and Palestinian nationalist troops, known as Hamas, in the Gaza strip, which led to the deaths of 260 Palestinians as well as 14 people within the state of Israel, according to Deutsche Welle. Some have claimed that this special commission is discriminatory against Israel. The UN International Convention on the Suppres-

sion and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid defines apartheid as "a crime against humanity" and asserts that "inhuman acts resulting from the policies and practices of apartheid and similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination,... are crimes violating the principles of international law, in particular the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and constituting a serious threat to international peace and security."

Israel and Palestine have a long history of tension and mutual aggressive action. However, the rates of Israel's destruction of Palestinian property since the election of President Joe Biden have accelerated, according to The Intercept. Since Biden's inauguration, over 1,300 Palestinians have been displaced and over 1,000 demolitions of Palestinian property have been recorded. Israeli defense forces have also conduct-

ed assassination attempts in the West Bank against powerful Palestinian political leaders, a major reason why many international human rights groups have labeled the Israeli state as an apartheid country.

The Guardian reports that advocacy groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B'Tselem have all accused Israel of apartheid within the last year. Joining these groups in leveling accusations against Israel include South African judge Navi Pillay, who has compared Israeli policies to the former system of apartheid in South Africa, reports Deutsche Welle. Pillay is the head of the special commission of the UNHRC for investigating allegations of apartheid in Israel; however, she has admitted that she is unable to act unbiased on this topic. The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Mierav Eilon Shahar, has expressed her concern that Israel will not receive "reasonable, equitable and non-dis-

crimatory treatment" by this commission. Israel is firmly against this commission and has stated that it does not intend to cooperate in any investigations.

More than 40 members of the U.S. Congress have sent letters to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken calling Biden to end the UN commission investigating Israel, according to Middle East Eye, believing that this commission reflects a "continued broader bias against Israel." The members of Congress also stressed that the commission would allow for probes into "an allegations against Israel in the past or in the future, whether in the West Bank or Gaza or in all of Jerusalem, and even with the recognized pre-1967 borders of the state of Israel," Middle East Eye continues. The Biden Administration has formally opposed the commission and voted to entirely defund it in December 2021. It is important to note that

while the U.S. condemns the current commission of investigation into the Israeli government, the U.S. has not dismissed the many war crimes committed by Israel against its Palestinian citizens.

The U.S. raised up valid concerns that are not being seriously considered by many of the other countries and entities which are accusing or investigating Israel of apartheid. Should this commission really have the ability to probe Israel on these allegations, particularly if this investigation will set a dangerous precedent for the future? The commission of inquiry, according to Deutsche Welle, is the strongest tool the UNHRC has. Further, the head of this commission has already publicly stated that she is biased against the state of Israel. Based on this fact alone, it is very easy to see why the UNHRC is being accused of treating Israel unfairly. In conjunction with the concerns brought up by

Congress, that fact becomes even more clear.

If the UN wishes to continue their investigations into these allegations of apartheid, they must revise their current plan. First, it is imperative that they reassign the roles on the commission to delegates that are more equipped to maintain an unbiased view of Israel during the investigations. Secondly, they need to consider the ramifications of using this tactic and either revise their current investigation plan or create a new one which will take into consideration the precedent being established by investigating the government. This is a delicate topic, like so many issues on human rights are, that must be approached with the utmost caution by the UN.

Contact Anna at anna.thibodeau@student.sbu.edu

DR. MARGARITA BALMACEDA DISCUSSES THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AND ITS ENERGY IMPLICATIONS

Thomas Johnson
Staff Writer

On March 4, Dr. Margarita Balmaceda was hosted by the Diplomacy Alumni Association of Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations to provide more understanding of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The event began with Dr. Balmaceda's explanation of how the situation had escalated to war. She spoke about the dissolution of the Soviet Union and how when it split into fifteen republics, only one was recognized as the legal successor to the Soviet Union. The other republics were asked to give up their nuclear weapons in return for guarantees which were not fully recognized. This led other countries, specifically the Russian Federation, to take advantage of their weakness.

Ukraine also had a serious issue with corrupt leaders and with its ties to Rus-

sia. In 2013, Ukraine was set to improve relationships with the European Union, with former President Viktor Yanukovich insistent on making a deal despite concerns of provoking Russia, says Reuters. However, just three months later, Yanukovich struck a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin, with \$15 billion invested into the Ukrainian government. Then, the Revolution of Dignity occurred, which Russia used to claim that Russian speakers were in danger and invaded the Russian Spring, eastern and southern Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine, according to Al Jazeera. The Russian Spring was engineered by Putin and the corrupt Ukrainian President, giving Russia control of parts of Ukraine since 2014. These parts were then controlled by Putin's puppets, described by Dr. Balmaceda as "mafioso

terroristic regimes." Russia then forced Ukraine into the Minsk Agreements, which would have allowed the Russian-controlled states back into the Ukrainian Parliament.

Ukraine has not followed the Minsk Agreements, which, if they were followed, would have allowed the Russian-controlled territories into the Ukrainian parliament with veto powers. According to Dr. Balmaceda, these territories would have exercised their power as wedges against progress away from Russia. This is

a process that Russia has done numerous times in the past to maintain some form of control over former Soviet territories.

Regarding energy, Dr. Balmaceda's specialty, Russia has supplied Ukraine with energy since 2013 and continued to do so through the uprisings in 2014. Russia has also worked to discredit Ukraine in the energy market and maintain its superiority. Russia became known for its reliability, discouraging European nations from looking elsewhere and

creating Ukrainian invisibility. Germany has also contributed to creating Ukrainian invisibility, preferring Russia and previously the Soviet Union to be reliable sources of energy. This is why Dr. Balmaceda found it so encouraging that European countries were canceling certain projects such as Nord Stream 2 and the import of Russian energy.

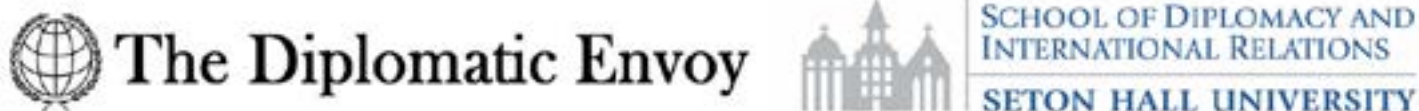
Dr. Balmaceda also believes that Putin is caught up in his own lies and beliefs in a world of Russian greatness and becoming a victim of his own propaganda, isolated from his advisors. He no longer lives in reality, but rather lives in a world of Russian superiority and control. His advisors no longer have any true input, but rather seem to be afraid of Putin. She also noted that Putin is using mercenary forces to attempt to fight the war on the cheap and not risk as many Russian lives;

she then suggested that the United States should also step up either sending in significantly more military aid or following Russia's actions and hiring private military contractors to support Ukraine.

Contact Thomas at thomas.johnson@student.shu.edu



Professor Balmaceda provides her knowledge on the War in Ukraine. Courtesy of Seton Hall University



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

CONTRIBUTORS

- Anna Thibodeau
- Andrea Gonzalez
- Andrea Hebel
- Austin Delsontro
- Brianna Millican
- Catherine Anderson
- Christopher Benitez Cuartas
- Christopher Foran
- Chimdi Chukwukere
- Drew Starbuck
- Elsie Tierney
- Hamzah Khan
- Jarrett Dang
- Joshua Powanda
- Katherine Dorrer
- Kathryn Natale
- Leah Chan
- Madeline Field
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- Waina Ali