



The Diplomatic Envoy

ALEXEI NAVALNY, PUTIN'S FIERCEST CRITIC, DIES IN RUSSIAN CUSTODY

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Staff Writer

Alexei Navalny, Russia's most prominent political prisoner and the figurehead for the opposition movement against Russian President Vladimir Putin, reportedly died in prison on February 16 at age 47. His death was announced through a message to his mother by Russian authorities at a high-security Arctic penal colony where he had been serving a combined 30 1/2 year sentence since 2021, according to a post on X by Navalny's spokesperson Kira Yarmish.

The Federal Penitentiary Service of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District said in a statement that Navalny felt unwell after a walk at the IK-3 penal colony in Kharp, about 1,900 km (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow, according to Reuters.

The Associated Press reported that an ambulance arrived, but Navalny was not able to be revived.

Navalny's death comes less than a month before a Russian election that is likely to keep Vladimir Putin in power for at least six more years.

In a talk on Friday, according to CSPAN, President Biden blamed Vladimir Putin for Navalny's death, calling it "proof of Putin's brutality," and said that "there is no doubt that the death of Navalny was a consequence of something Putin and his thugs did." Biden joined many world leaders in placing the blame on Putin.

Navalny rose to prominence in 2011, organizing mass protests that year and the following after it became clear Putin would win the election, PBS reports. He went on to run against and come ahead of Putin's candidate in

Moscow's Mayoral Election in 2013, putting him in the political spotlight. Despite multiple arrests, repeated threats, and concerns for his safety through the following years, Navalny pressed on in opposition to Putin's party.

Navalny continued organizing mass protests and led an anti-corruption campaign, the Anti-Corruption Foundation, or ACF, that harnessed the internet and social media to get his message across. His message led him to gain over 6 million subscribers on YouTube.

In 2020, Navalny survived an FSB poison attack on a flight from Tomsk, Siberia, to Moscow. According to The Guardian, after his plane made an emergency landing and he subsequently received treatment, he was taken to Germany, where scientists and doctors confirmed that he had been poisoned with Soviet-era Novichok. He slowly recovered in Europe and prepared to return to Russia.

In January 2021, Navalny returned to Russia with his wife and was

detained upon his arrival. Following his arrest, he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison, causing mass protests and the arrests of over 10,000 protestors in Russia, according to The Associated Press. He continued to be sentenced for more offenses in the months following, and at the time of his death, Navalny was set to serve more than three decades in prison.

According to Navalny in his video interviews, he faced oppression, stating that the kremlin wanted to "break him" for staying alive, according to The Guardian. He went on hunger strikes and complained of pains that many feared were the result of a "slow-poison," which would have been used to kill him slowly over time.

In December, Navalny went dark and his location became unknown. Many feared the worst

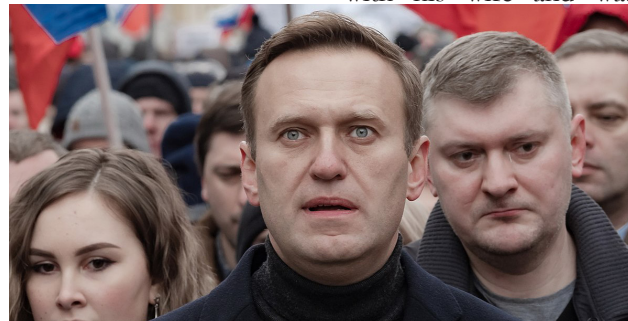
until his allies located him a few weeks later at a penal colony above the Arctic Circle, which would be the last place he would live, reported The Guardian. Yarmish said last month that he had spent more than 280 days in isolation, according to BBC News.

Navalny leaves behind a legacy of activism and standing up to the face of corruption, even when threatened with arrest, harm, or death. His death leaves an even larger stain on Putin's track record of silencing enemies to maintain power.

In a prerecorded video of the event of his death, he was asked what he would say to the Russian people if he were killed.

"My message for the situation if I am killed is very simple: don't give up."

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Alexei Navalny attends a memorial march in 2020. Courtesy of Michal Siergiejevicz (Wikimedia Commons Creative Commons 2.0)

OLEG KONONENKO SETS WORLD RECORD FOR THE LONGEST TIME IN SPACE

Sophia Alicea
Staff Writer

On February 4, Oleg Kononenko, a 59-year-old Russian Cosmonaut, set the new world record for the longest cumulative time spent in space. Born on June 21, 1964, in Chardzhou, Turkmenistan, he joined the Russian space program and has participated in multiple space missions and made significant contributions to space exploration. According to The Guardian, Kononenko documented a remarkable 878 days and 12 hours in orbit. Kononenko is the commander of the Russian space agency, "Roscosmos Cosmonaut Corp".

The International Astronautical Federation notes the Roscosmos Cosmonaut Corp as a branch of the Russian space agency from the

Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC) — Yuri Gagarin, the first person to orbit the Earth, is honored by the center's name.

According to The European Space Agency, Kononenko was selected as a cosmonaut candidate in 1996. He completed his basic spaceflight training and became a cosmonaut in 1998. Kononenko has been a part of various space missions, including both short-duration and long-duration stays on the International Space Station (ISS). His missions have involved performing scientific experiments, conducting spacewalks, and contributing to the maintenance and operation of the ISS.

The ISS celebrated this record when the report was received by Kononenko. The ISS noted his celebration 263 miles

away from the Earth's atmosphere where he stated, "I fly into space to do my favorite thing, not to set records," in an interview from the ISS, according to Reuters.

As Kononenko is on his fifth space expedition, he is on track to reach 1,000 days in space by June 5. His first expedition was in 2008, launching a career that has led to his current trip to the ISS, which began on September 15. He launched

alongside NASA's Laura Ohara and Ross Cosmos as well as fellow Russian Cosmonaut, Nikolai Chub in a joint collaboration with NASA and Roscosmos which would put him at 1,100 days in space in late September reports Times of India.

Becoming the first person to achieve this accomplishment as well, Kononenko's achievements are essential to the conduct of science in the special environment of

space. The ISS is used for scientific research that sheds light on several scientific disciplines, including biology, medicine, and physics. Kononenko's participation in these studies advances the discipline's knowledge of how various processes are impacted by microgravity.

Kononenko's contributions are not only measured by the advancements of science but also by the costs of being away from home. In an interview with Russian news agency, TASS, Kononenko stated, "It is only upon returning home that the realization comes that for hundreds of days in my absence, the children have been growing up without a papa", which serves as a reminder that science comes at the cost of sacrifices that humans make for the discipline.

While Kononenko re-

flects on his incredible journey, the ISS remains a symbol of international cooperation between Russia and the United States' dedication to science amidst tumultuous times. As reported by The Moscow Times, on December 28, Roscosmos announced the extension of a cross-flight program with NASA to the ISS until 2025. Emphasizing continued cooperation amidst the estranged relationship between the two nations since the creation of the ISS in 1998, following the Cold War's "Space Race" between Russia and the U.S. as noted by NASA.

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Kononenko (center) on board the International Space Station. Courtesy of NASA Johnson (flickr) Creative Commons 2.0

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JOIN THE TEAM!

BOYCOTT IN HUNGARIAN PARLIAMENT OVER SWEDEN'S NATO BID

Sophie Ulm
Staff Writer

On January 23, 2024, Türkiye voted to approve Sweden's bid to join NATO, leaving Hungary as the only country that has not yet ratified it. Hungary had an emergency session of parliament called by six opposition parties to ratify the bid on February 5, but the ruling Fidesz party boycotted the session, according to The Guardian.

This boycott came shortly after Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán assured Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's secretary general, that he would urge his party to ratify the bid in parliament at the soonest possible opportunity. Orbán and the Fidesz party have not raised any official complaints about Sweden's ascension to NATO membership, nor have they provided any clarity to other NATO members about the cause of their delay.

Agnes Vadai, a member of the largest opposition party in Hungary's parliament, has accused Orbán of delaying the vote due to "personal vanity," reports Al Jazeera. Vadai asserted that Orbán was "undermining the unity of NATO and the EU" in an attempt to make headlines in international news and send a message to Russia. The opposition parties have called this move humiliating, and though they have announced that they will maintain their attempts to vote on Sweden's bid, many leaders have said that they

lack confidence that the Fidesz super majority will allow them to do so.

Orbán and his party have recently said that in order to ratify the bid they would like Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to visit Hungary to negotiate, according to the Associated Press. Kristersson has accepted the invitation to go to Hungary, but only after the Hungarian parliament has voted to approve Sweden's bid. Fidesz has said that they will now vote on the matter during one of their regular parliament sessions, which are set

to begin on February 26, but only after receiving a visit from Kristersson.

Orbán and his party have been criticized by many of their NATO allies for standing alone on the issue, reports The Guardian. David Pressman, the United States ambassador to Hungary, said in an interview after the boycott that the U.S. was disappointed in the delay, and in the lack of clarity as to what is causing it. Pressman critiques what he described as Hungarian leaders' policy of waiting out other leaders and governments to achieve their goals and missing the time to act on issues because of it.

Both the U.S. and Sweden, among other nations, have critiqued Hungarian democracy recently. Pressman, who is a human rights lawyer, critiqued Hungary's new sovereignty protection office, a government body that has wide authority to investigate citizens with-

out judicial oversight, "a serious step backwards in Hungary's democracy," according to The Guardian. In March of 2013, Orbán criticized Swedish leaders of spreading "blatant lies" about Hungarian democracy when the European Parliament urged Hungary to draft reforms after declaring Orbán's government "a hybrid regime of electoral autocracy," reports the Associated Press.

Orbán and his party are widely viewed as the most pro-Russian members of the EU and NATO, according to Bloomberg. Several NATO members have recently noted that the recent aid package sent by the European Union to Ukraine was only done by overcoming a veto from Orbán to the funding, reports the Associated Press. Orbán has openly casted doubts on Ukraine's ability to defend itself from the

Russian invasion in recent televised interviews.

Both Finland and Sweden began the process of joining NATO in 2022, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Both countries have abandoned decades of nonalignment policy in order to join NATO, reports the Associated Press. Finland's bid was approved in April of 2023 while Sweden is still in turmoil, despite the two nations applying at the same time. Many Western leaders view Sweden and Finland as key elements of maintaining peace and power in the East and hold that their entrance to NATO is paramount in strengthening the region.

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Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party have yet to approve Sweden's bid to join NATO. Courtesy of European Parliament (flickr) CreativeCommons 2.0

PROTESTS SURGE IN HAITI OVER CALLS TO OUST PM

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It has been nearly three years since Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in a case that is still unsolved. Now, as the Caribbean country faces a crisis of rising gang violence, unsecure state authorities, spiking inflation, and a total absence of democratically-elected leaders, The Associated Press reports that protestors last week shut down major cities and demanded the resignation of appointed Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

The protests caused the closure of banks, schools, and government agencies across the state. Photos show clashes between police and protestors blocking streets, firing tear gas, looting businesses, and setting cars and tires ablaze. The Associated Press continues that public transportation networks also shut down. Five armed agents

from the Security Brigade for Protected Areas, Haiti's environmental protection agency, were killed in the violence after firing in the direction of police, according to Al Jazeera. The bureau is now in open rebellion against Henry's administration.

Following Moïse's assassination, an agreement was drafted in December 2022 that was supposed to see Henry hold elections and cede power by February 7, 2024. Al Jazeera continues that Henry's lack of initiation to this end has led to the uptick in protests. The coun-

try has held no elections of any kind since 2016, the presidency is vacant, and with the term expiration of the country's last 10 senators in 2023, the National Assembly is vacant, according to The Washington Post.

Several rebel leaders across Haiti have called for Henry's resignation. Chief among them is Guy Philippe, a longtime rebel leader who led the 2004 uprising that resulted in the exile of then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Philippe has called for "civil disobedience" across the

country until Henry steps down and has appeared at protests across the country to garner support for a revolution.

According to The Washington Post, Philippe is a former police chief and senator from Northern Haiti. Philippe pled guilty to corruption charges in the U.S., brought on after he acknowledged taking bribes and protecting drug trafficking rings shipping cocaine through Haiti. He was sentenced in 2017 to nine years in U.S. federal prison for money laundering and returned to Haiti last year. Experts question the decision of U.S. officials to return Philippe to Haiti, especially at such a politically turbulent time.

Philippe has also garnered the support of the Security Brigade for Protected Areas, which has recently come under scrutiny for its increased clashes with police. According to VOA, Haiti's government has recently cracked down

on the movement and activities of the agency's members, announcing Jan. 29 that no armed agents may move throughout the country.

This order has not stopped the agency's protest activity, however. Armed agents arrived at a protest in Hinche, according to the Associated Press, and their commander, Joseph Jean Baptiste, gave a rousing speech demanding Henry step down.

"I want Ariel to stand in front of my bullets, so they go through him," the commander told a cheering group of protestors. "We're the ones who have the support of the population."

Meanwhile, Henry has called for peace, breaking days of silence with a radio address on Feb. 8. ABC News reports that he urged Haitians to "put our heads together to save Haiti, to do things another way in our country," and to stop thinking of Haitian authorities as enemies. However, Hen-

ry has not responded with a concrete plan to restore democratic order or change the status quo.

The protests have died down in intensity, however there is still no end in sight for Haiti's political crisis. Many Haitians remain hopeless, dismissing Henry's words as propaganda, according to ABC.

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Haiti PM Ariel Henry (left) is hosted in Argentina. Courtesy of Casa Rosa (Wikimedia Commons) CreativeCommons 2.5

CONFLICT WITH HOUTHI MILITANTS ESCALATES IN RED SEA

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On January 11, two United States Navy SEALs were killed in a raid of a Houthi militant boat, highlighting a recent uptick in conflict within the Red Sea. The conflict first escalated on November 19, 2023, when members of the group hijacked an Israeli-owned cargo ship. Since the initial attack, the Houthis have conducted more than two dozen attacks with drones, missiles, and speed boats. Following the most recent escalation, the U.S. and United Kingdom conducted airstrikes against over a dozen Houthi targets in Yemen, as reported by CNN.

The Houthis, also referred to as Ansar Allah, are an armed faction that controls the majority of Yemen. The Houthis became an established group in the 1990s, first gaining international attention after initiating a rebellion

against the Yemeni government under President Ali Abdullah Saleh. This rebellion spanned from 2004 to 2014 according to the Arab Center in DC. In September of 2014, the Houthis seized control of Hodeida, Yemen's capital, marking their political introduction.

The political control of the Houthis in Yemen elicited international backlash, prompting a military intervention spearheaded by Saudi Arabia with widespread support from the Arab world and the United States. Attacks by foreign powers against the Houthis, in combination with the negligent government in power, led to what humanitarian organizations declared one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, as reported by The Human Rights Watch.

The violence between the Houthis and international powers persisted until the U.S. withdrew from the conflict in 2018.

Since this disengagement, the Houthi faction has struggled to gain support in Yemen, and violence on a smaller scale has continued. In an effort to gain greater domestic support and unity, the Houthis have recently re-directed their focus to engaging in conflict against Israel to support the cause of Arab Palestine. This support for Palestine has been demonstrated through Houthi led attacks on Israeli-owned ships on the Red Sea.

The Houthi attacks on the Red Sea are underpinned by a few motives. Internally, the ongoing conflicts in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has served as a catalyst to foster a cohesive sense of Arab unity across the wider Middle East, and in the Houthis' context, within the Yemeni population. This collective sentiment has garnered a heightened sense of pride and unity against what the population sees as the common

enemy- Israel. Moreover, as prominent global actors, including the U.S., engage in dialogue and negotiations with the Houthi faction, the Yemeni population has begun to see the Houthis as a more legitimate governmental body, despite not being officially recognized as Yemen's government.

From a broader ideological perspective, the origins of the Houthi movement are similar to those of Hamas. The Houthi ideology is represented by its slogan, "Death to America, Death to Israel, curse the Jews, and victory to Islam," as reported by Reuters. Thus, this alignment serves as a broader narrative that resonates within Yemen and with the Houthi's historical roots.

It is important to note, however, that although the Yemeni Houthis are conducting these attacks, the Houthis are funded by Iran, as reported by the United States Institute of

Peace. Thus, the response by the U.S. and UK to conduct airstrikes against the Houthi targets in Yemen have broadened the conflict to more closely resemble proxy war between Western forces and Iran, says Politico. In response to the conflict, the leader of the Houthi faction, Abdulmalik al-Houthi, commented, that it is, "a great honor and blessing to be confronting America directly," as reported by The Guardian.

Although the conflict is currently confined to the Red Sea, experts warn that the attacks have already impacted the broader economy. The Red Sea is one of the most important arteries in the global shipping system, and in response to the conflict in the region, carriers have already diverted upward of \$200 billion in trade away from the route, reports CNBC.

This disruption in shipping has resulted in increasing freight rates,

additional surcharges, and longer shipping times, all of which could possibly lead to future inflation across the globe. On January 3, the White House made a joint statement with Canada, Germany, the UK, and eight other countries, stating that "The Houthis will bear the responsibility of the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, and free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways," reports Al Jazeera.

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CHINESE-AUSTRALIAN WRITER GIVEN A SUSPENDED DEATH SENTENCE IN CHINA

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Early this month it was revealed that 58-year-old Chinese-Australian Journalist Yang Hengjun received a suspended death penalty verdict in the Chinese Government's espionage case against him. In China's legal system, a suspended death penalty means that the defendant is given a two-year reprieve from execution that extends into life imprisonment, and the defendant is imprisoned throughout the whole process, according to Reuters.

Hengjun is a democratic activist, blogger, and spy fiction writer that was originally born in China but became an Australian citizen in 2002. Prior to becoming an activist of democracy and political commentator, Hengjun was a Chinese diplomat and state security agent.

In 2019, he and his wife were detained in Guangzhou airport when

arriving to visit family in China from New York, and he was later charged with espionage. Al Jazeera reports that these charges have a minimum of three years, the death sentence being the highest degree of punishment, and the espionage charges entail "endangered national security with particularly serious harm to the country and the people." The Australian government has denied the accusation that Hengjun was a spy, the Chinese government has not made any evidence supporting the charges public, and a closed-door trial was held in 2021.

The closed-door trial meant that no evidence was released to the public and Australian diplomats were not allowed access to the trial. Hengjun's attorney, Mo Shaopin, stated to The Washington Post that, "his client has 10 days to appeal his sentence. But in China's court system, where conviction rates are as high as 99 percent, such appeals are

unlikely to go anywhere."

Ryan Mitchell, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, told Reuters that "[a suspended death penalty] has been used more commonly in recent years as a way to reduce the prevalence of executions without abolishing the death penalty altogether." Mitchell also mentioned how parole is "usually not capable of being granted until after half of a fixed term has been completed, or after 10 years have been served in case of life imprisonment." But China's top court can make exceptions in "special circumstances."

Chongyi Feng, an associate professor at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia has been very outspoken against Hengjun's arrest, detention, and conviction, as he was Hengjun's former doctoral supervisor and close friend. According to The Associated Press, Feng stated in an email that "This is

an outrageous political persecution for Yang's publications advocating universal values such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as China's transformation toward constitutional democracy."

Hengjun claims that during time imprisoned, he has been tortured, forced to confess to crimes he did not commit, and treated with inhumane practices. The Guardian has released personal accounts from Hengjun saying, "The first six months, when I was in RSDL [residential surveillance at a designated location - a type of secret detention], it was a really bad period. They tortured me." He was subjected to 300 interrogations at all times of the day and night, and the majority of the time he was restrained by shackles.

Human Rights Watch has called Chinese interrogation practices into question for many years, and this sentencing has

sparked more criticism. Elaine Pearson, the director of Human Rights Watch Asia, said to Reuters in another article that Hengjun's case raised a series of concerns and claimed the outcome as "outrageous." The Director of the Australian Human Rights Watch Sector, Daniela Gavshon, revealed to CNN reporters that the government's decision was "catastrophic" for Hengjun and his family and urged for "stronger action" from Canberra to increase pressure on Beijing. She also mentioned that "After years of arbitrary detention, allegations of torture, a closed and unfair trial without access to his own choice of lawyers - a sentence as severe as this is alarming."

The Australian Government has been working actively against Hengjun's detainment and prosecution and have met a lot of resistance from the Chinese governments. The Australian Foreign Minister, Penny

Wong, told The Associated Press that "The Australian Government is appalled" about the sentencing Hengjun received. His detainment, torture, and trial have made China's relations with Australia more tense and unstable than they were during the COVID-19 outbreak, when Australia urged the World Health Organization to investigate the outbreak originating in China, says The Guardian in another article. On top of the sentencing, Hengjun also has had a significant decline in health, developing a four inch cyst on his kidney and losing a significant amount of weight. He said in a letter to his sons last year that he has not felt sunlight in four years, says The Associated Press.

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RUSSIAN FIGURE SKATER KAMILA VALIEVA ISSUED 4-YEAR BAN IN DOPING SCANDAL

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Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva's doping case reached a conclusion two years after it was initially brought to light during the 2022 Beijing Olympics. The Court of Arbitration for Sport announced that she was banned from international competitions for four years, reports *The New York Times*. Valieva took the skating world by storm, smashing records and winning gold in both domestic and international competitions throughout her career, however, her guilty ruling, based on a doping test taken on December 25, 2021, put an eventual end to her reign.

Valieva tested positive for trimetazidine, a medication used to treat heart-related conditions, as it metabolizes fatty acids to help the body use oxygen, according to the European Medicines Agency. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), in a case involving the Rus-

sian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA), International Skating Union (ISU) and World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) came to the long-awaited decision on the skater's case, hitting her with a 4-year ban from the sport, reports CNN. As the investigation unfolded at the beginning of the Beijing Olympics, Valieva was initially not to be named due to her status as a protected minor, however just days after the initial news broke it was leaked that she was the culprit. In her defense presented to CAS, it was said that trimetazidine entered Valieva's system via a strawberry cake her grandfather prepared for her prior to the 2021 Russian National Championships, reports BBC News. Allegedly he prepared the dessert on the same cutting board he used to crush up his medications, thus contaminating the cake entering Valieva's system. The CAS decision stat-

ed that Valieva was "an honest, straightforward and credible witness," but her defense had no concrete evidence and lots of shortcomings, reports NBC News. "There are too many shortcomings in the evidence, and too many unanswered questions, for the panel to decide that her account is more likely than not," the court said. As a result, CAS upheld WADA's prior proposition to instate a 4-year ban. Many experts believe this ban could have been shorter if Valieva's defense was more plausible.

Despite Valieva's case coming to light during the Olympics, her protected person status allowed her to continue competing in the Games, as no verdict held her guilty yet. She participated in the team event, where Russia was initially deemed victorious over the United States and Japan. At the time medals were not rewarded for the event due to the delicate

circumstances of the competition. Following CAS' ruling, The International Skating Union (ISU) released a statement that disqualified Valieva's participation in the team event, redistributing medals based on points acquired by her teammates. This changed the awards of the event to United States- gold, Japan- silver, Russian Olympic Committee (ROC)- bronze. The ruling was controversial, despite removing the ROC's 10 points earned by Valieva, it did not bump up other ladies or add points to their respective team's results, which would have actually given Canada the bronze medal. The ISU defended their decision in a later statement despite pushback from national federations, saying they based their decision on a comprehensive review of the tournament rules, reports the Associated Press.

Valieva also competed in the individual event days later, where she was a heavy favorite for the gold medal. Despite this, pressure surrounding her case was likely the cause of Valieva's messy performances, leading her to place 4th overall. Her teammates Anna Shcherbakova and Alexandra Trusova placed 1st and 2nd, respectively; the girls trained at the same rink under infamous coach Eteri Tutberidze. Tutberidze's students have dominated the international scene for years, however, their reign is now limited to the domestic circuit as the International Skating Union upholds a ban against Russian athletes due to the Russo-Ukrainian war. Tutberidze is an extremely controversial coach at the center of many abuse cases resulting in lifelong injuries for former students due to her coaching methods, according to *Essentially Sports*.

While many figure skating fans hoped Tutberidze and her team would face punishment in the wake of Valieva's case, they have remained untouched.

Ultimately, CAS' ruling stripped Valieva of all results and records, both internationally and domestically, since December 25, 2021, which include her 2021 Russian National Championships gold, 2022 European Championships gold (and world records set at the event), her 2022 Olympic results, and all domestic results after the Russian ban. Per RUSADA protocol, Valieva is unable to train or perform at state-sponsored facilities, which make up an overwhelming majority of rinks in the nation. The ban and a combination of other factors will likely mark the end of 17-year-old Valieva's once-golden career.

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NAVIGATING MARKET VOLATILITY THROUGH ELECTION CYCLES

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As the U.S. presidential elections draw closer, investors are voicing concern about the impact of the election cycle on their portfolios. Yahoo Finance says the discussion on potential election results overshadows talks of inflation, interest rates, and recession fears. The moment calls for an analysis of the interplay between presidential election cycles and stock market performance.

Yale Hirsch, creator of the *Stock Trader's Almanac*, analyzed data from 1833 from which he suggested *The Presidential Election Cycle Theory*.

This theory displays a cyclical pattern in stock market performance linked to presidential terms. On average, the first two years of a presidential term tend to be the weakest for stocks as the winner focuses on fulfilling campaign promises, a period known as

the heavy lifting. This is followed by recovery and potential peaks as the president prepares the economy for potential reelection. Is there such a connection between the stock market and U.S. elections? While the pattern exists, historical data suggests that election outcomes have little impact on market performance in the medium to long term, according to Morgan Stanley.

Presidential Election Cycle Theory explores research spanning decades. The third year of a presidency overlaps with the strongest average

market gains. According to Morningstar, the U.S. stock market returns have been generally positive throughout the final year of a White House administration, with the first quarter showing the strongest returns to investors, particularly in years of divided government with a democratic president. While American investors are concerned about the political impact of a rematch between Joe Biden and Donald Trump on their portfolios, historical data can offer more nuance.

It is older generations who express significant

concern about the outcome, especially on the short-term volatility of their retirement savings and policy implications on Social Security and healthcare. For younger investors, the stakes are on career growth and personal debt management, which are less impacted by presidential elections. But fear not; research has shown that past cycles have not consistently caused market selloffs, and the stock market often remains steady, providing favorable returns despite looming political uncertainty.

At U.S. Bank Investment, strategists revealed intriguing patterns during election cycles spanning 75 years of market data. They concluded that divided government scenarios have noteworthy correlations with market performance: midterm elections consistently outperform the S&P 500 the year after midterms, regardless of party control in Congress – that is, "markets may simply be

rewarding gridlock," as the president's party often faces setbacks in midterm elections. During the cycle, investors test the White House's ability to unify the party behind the agenda.

Additionally, while presidential election results may not have a significant medium to long-term market impact, they could affect individual sectors and industries tied to regulation, proposed tax policies, global conflicts, immigration, and spending priorities, suggests the CFA Institute. Lastly, uncertainty varying election results introduces further short-term uncertainty in the market, leading to volatility in some asset prices until clarity emerges – i.e., raw materials, energy, etc.

Although the *Presidential Cycle Theory* has merit, definitive answers still need to be established. There have been 23 elections since the S&P 500 Index began, and 19 of the 23 (83 percent) provided posi-

tive performance. While market returns tend to be positive throughout the final year of a presidential term, attempting to time market action based on politics is complicated due to the limited number of presidential election cycles and many factors influencing the financial market.

As the U.S. approaches the presidential election, stock market concerns about the outcome may be overstated. Examining the complexities of the relationship between election cycles and market performance helps investors make informed decisions to navigate market volatility confidently, prioritizing their long-term strategies through short-term political fluctuations.

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Investors fear a Biden-Trump rematch, although these concerns may be overstated. Courtesy of The White House (Wikimedia Commons) Creative Commons 3.0

THE BOOMING CONCERT ECONOMY

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Taylor Swift's Eras Tour has helped some cities recover from the economic tolls they suffered during the pandemic, writes the Wall Street Journal. In each city where Swift performed, fans came in droves to see her. The concertgoers did not only fill stadiums- they took up space in hotels, restaurants, bars, and frequented other small businesses, boosting local economies continues the Wall Street Journal.

In many cities, these fans included both people who had tickets to the show, and thousands of others who would gather outside stadiums just to listen to Swift's performance. In Cincinnati, writes the Wall Street Journal, thousands of people gathered in parks near Paycor Stadium during both nights' performances. In May, when Swift was

in Nashville, the Country Music Hall of Fame displayed a pop-up Taylor Swift exhibit; that month was the highest grossing month in the museum's history, writes the Wall Street Journal. When the Eras Tour came to Minneapolis, a local donut shop posted pictures of Taylor Swift themed donuts-fans lined up on the street, and the store could only sell 150 boxes before it had to stop taking orders, continues the Wall Street Journal.

While on the local level, it seems that the Eras Tour was economically beneficial, on a national level, it is unclear whether the tour, as well as other large-scale tours, cause more economic harm or good. As CNBC News reports, some economists argue that Swift's tour, as well as Beyonce's and other large artists, could actually be contributing to high inflation rates. Concert ticket prices are high,

but they are only part of the problem; the costs of food and drink in concert venues is high, and so are travel and accommodation prices, writes CNBC.

An example of the direct economic relationship between concerts and a national economy occurred in Stockholm, Sweden, when Beyonce performed there. Around the time of the show, reports CNBC, many hotels in the area were fully booked, and prices of accommodations were significantly higher than they normally would be around that time of year. Some economists argue, however, that a single artist cannot significantly affect a country's economy, especially in a developed nation. According to The Economist, not only is it highly unlikely that a single artist could cause prices to rise to the point that it would impact the consumer price index, but even if they did, it is not

likely that the rising costs of concert tickets could contribute to a rise in cost of other goods, like hotels.

In smaller countries, The Economist continues, it is more likely that a single event could affect goods like hotel prices. In March, for example, Swift will perform in Singapore, which will be her only show in Southeast Asia, and thousands of fans are expected to fly in. According to the Economist, it is possible that Singapore, and other small countries, could see a "small bump" in inflation around these tour dates.

It is not possible, however, for hotels in the area to charge these higher rates year-round. Regardless of whether Swift, Beyonce, or other artists are directly causing inflation, it seems clear that people are spending more than they did in pre-pandemic times on concerts. This is likely because the pandemic left people with a stron-

ger desire to go out and socialize, reports the Wall Street Journal. Additionally, according to CNBC, the pandemic allowed people to save more money, which means that they have more to spend on expensive concert tickets.

As Yahoo Finance reports, Swift's tour, Beyonce's tour, as well as the summer's "Barbenheimer" release combined to add \$8.6 billion to the U.S. economy. These high prices are, in many cases, higher than they actually should be. As Reuters writes, even with many countries seeing inflation rates decrease, concert ticket prices have remained high. Ticket prices for Swift's tour, for example, were especially high on resale sites like Stubhub. Additionally, on sites like Ticketmaster, people struggled to get tickets; as one concertgoer told Reuters, some fans created multiple Ticketmaster accounts

and spent thousands of dollars just to get tickets. For him, and many, the hassle and the costs were worth it- in part, because the pandemic left people with a higher-than-normal demand for these types of experiences.

Congress, as well as the Senate, have both introduced measures to make the ticket purchasing process easier and more user friendly. As Barrons reports, Congress recently introduced an act that would ban ticket sellers from hiding fees from consumers, and would ban third party apps from selling tickets they don't already own. A similar act, discussed in the Senate, would prevent bots from buying up concert tickets, preventing potential concertgoers from accessing them themselves.

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PAKISTANI POLITICIANS AND THE GAMES THEY PLAY: THE ROLE OF CRICKET IN PAKISTAN'S ELECTIONS

Ashley Yomtob
Staff Writer

The Pakistani political tensions have reached an all-time high after years of internal turmoil. However, a new controversial component to the nation's electoral woes is at the heart of its current political dysfunction: cricket, the nation's most beloved sport. To better understand the issue as it stands today, it is important to understand the role of cricket in Pakistani society overall. Cricket is by far the most popular sport in Pakistan and has "totally eclipsed other sports, even ones Pakistan excelled at," according to the Associated Press.

The initial controversy that pertains to the nation's recent election began in March 2022, when the country appeared to maintain neutrality regarding the ongoing military conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The Intercept reports that on March 7, 2022, officials from the U.S. State Department met with

representatives from the Pakistani government, asking for the removal of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Intercept further explains that "The diplomatic meeting came two weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which launched as Khan was en route to Moscow, a visit that infuriated Washington." Al Jazeera elaborates on the current situation, noting Khan's arrest that followed his publication of a classified cable sent to Islamabad by Pakistan's ambassador to the United States in 2022.

Khan and his former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, both prominent leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, have been jailed for ten years for allegedly exposing state secrets. According to Reuters, Khan "has been fighting dozens of cases since he was ousted from power in a parliamentary vote of no confidence in 2022. He was sentenced to three years in jail in a corruption case in Au-

gust, which has ruled him out of the February 8 general elections." However, Reuters also reported that in public opinion polls, Khan was a highly regarded and beloved leader, and his arrest summoned national unrest amidst an economic crisis.



"Cricket is by far the most popular sport in Pakistan and has 'totally eclipsed other sports, even the ones Pakistan excelled at.'" Courtesy of Reggie Wan (flickr) Creative Commons 2.0

Among what seems like constant accusations of political corruption, PTI is now battling a new wave of roadblocks in the upcoming election. France24 explains that the party's campaign avenues have been greatly restricted and barred from television airwaves. It was also reported that "Pakistani internet freedom watch-

dog Bytes 4 All recorded four hours-long social media shutdowns in January that cut off access to TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube while Khan's PTI live-streamed to its supporters." However, the blackouts were deemed to be "technical

difficulties." The party has also released reports of its website being blocked, and fake phishing schemes appear to be taking its place. Moreover, the symbol of PTI is also in jeopardy as VOA News reports that the Pakistan Supreme Court has upheld a decision from the electoral commission that prohibits the par-

ty from using the iconic black bat cricket symbol to identify its candidates.

Khan has been coined a "cricket hero turned prime minister," and the party has attempted to use the legacy of its founder to build a strong image for itself. Part of Imran Khan's popularity stems from the fact that he was the former captain of Pakistan's national cricket team when they won their only World Cup in 1992. VOA News also noted, "Election symbols are essential to campaign tools to identify candidates on ballot papers in the nation of about 241 million people, where most constituencies are in rural areas with low adult literacy rates." This is a great piece of evidence and deserves commentary. How does the ban reflect on Pakistan's Supreme Court, when millions depend on these symbols to identify their candidates at the ballot?

This new limitation will undoubtedly hinder the party's labored efforts. The Associated

Press explained that in August 2023, the Pakistan Cricket Board excluded the former World Cup champion and prime minister from a video released in honor of the nation's Independence Day, further politicizing the sport. It was noted that "to show Pakistan's cricketer achievements, stars such as Akram, Javed Miandad, and Salim Malik were seen celebrating the 1992 World Cup win. Khan, who led the team to the title by beating England in the final, was left out, however." Many regard cricket as a critical shared love in Pakistan. However, its role in the nation's current political woes is causing trouble both on and off the field. The election results remain unclear, and reports from Al Jazeera note that analysts are predicting civil unrest and a military crackdown. dignity.

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TAIWAN

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The 2024 election of a small island in East Asia might have a large implication on the relationship between China, the United States, and its own liberty. On January 13, Taiwan held federal elections, demonstrating a major contest between the country's most popular parties – the anti-China Democratic People's Party's (DPP) headed by Lai Ching-te, and pro-China Kuomintang (KMT).

Despite efforts of China to silence the DPP, Lai Ching-te emerged victorious. However, this success is not without its impending challenges. Nikkei highlights the challenges faced by Lai and the DPP, including the loss of their majority in the legislature and China's unwavering commitment to reunification. This, combined with potential Chinese influence through local bribes, raises concerns about the potential shift towards more pro-China policies in the future. NPR reports the lack of support of the

DPP party might send a ripple of more pro-China policies in the future.

According to BBC News, China sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that will someday come back under Beijing's control, even if that means force is needed. In the context of this election, China regards the DPP to be a separatist movement and warned the Taiwanese population that a vote for the DPP would be a "choice between peace and war prosperity and decline," as reported by The Atlantic Council.

Taiwan's robust democratic system operates on the principles of fairness and freedom in elections, with an average voter turnout of 70 percent, as reported by Brookings. The democratic process in Taiwan, characterized by competitive elections, ensures a peaceful transfer of power and the protection of civil liberties, as acknowledged by Freedom House.

The 2024 Taiwanese presidential election marked the eighth democratic election in Taiwan, the first being in 1996. Across the Taiwan Strait,

the Communist Party of China (CPC) perceives this electoral process not merely as a challenge to China's claim over Taiwan but as a potential threat to the very existence and preservation of China and its cultural ideals. Taiwan's commitment to a more liberal democratic model has, as reported by Al Jazeera, stirred frustration among the population in mainland China.

In response to these fears, Beijing is being accused of employing various tactics to influence the election, including the distribution of propaganda, financial support for pro-China influencers, and organizing trips to China for Taiwanese politicians, as highlighted by The Washington Post. One specific method employed by Beijing involves the promotion of 'yimeilun,' or "America skepticism," where China circulates misinformation to instill fear about the role of the U.S. in Taiwanese politics. This strategy is designed to undermine support for the DPP, ultimately serving China's interests.

Additionally, Reuters reports that China enticed numerous local-level politicians with lavish trips to China during the recent winter, a calculated effort to sway their political affiliations before the election.

A wave of frustration has been expressed on social media platforms, particularly on Chinese social platform Weibo. In reaction to the Chinese government's criticism of Taiwan's electoral process, one social media user voiced their discontent, stating, "Enough, already – how can you criticize others' elections when you don't even allow elections at home," Al Jazeera continues. Notably, many of these comments face removal by the Chinese government, sometimes within mere minutes of being posted.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserts that the election in Taiwan "will not change the basic fact that Taiwan is part of China, and there is only one China in the world."

This assertion aligns with China's 'One China' policy, a diplomatic stance that contradicts Taiwan's view of itself as a breakaway province. Although the DPP secured another term in the presidency, it is evident that China will persist in its efforts to achieve reunification with Taiwan, utilizing military exercises and propaganda, as reported by BBC News.

On a global scale, China's interference in this election and its subsequent impact could encourage a pattern of authoritarian influence over democratic elections worldwide. Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu emphasizes this concern, stating, "In 2024, there are more than 40 significant democratic elections globally. If China achieves success in Taiwan, it will undoubtedly leverage that experience to interfere in the elections of other countries," reports The Washington Post.

The election showcased Taiwan's commitment to a robust democratic system, supported by a high voter turnout and fair election process. However, Chi-

na's unwavering determination to control Taiwan, evident in its attempts to influence the election through various tactics underscores the broader threat of interference in democratic processes globally. The repercussions of this election extend beyond Taiwan's borders, serving as a potential catalyst for China to replicate such interference in future democratic elections.

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INDONESIA

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Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy, and its 205 million eligible voters made its election on February 14 one of the world's largest elections. Seats were open for executive, legislative, and administrative representatives at all levels, but most importantly, the presidency was up. Three candidates dominated the polls, according to The Guardian: Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, and Ganjar Pranowo.

Subianto won the race last Wednesday, stating "a win for all Indonesians" according to The Associated Press. According to unofficial tallies, Subianto received 57 to 59 percent of the vote, which puts him above the 50 percent of votes needed to win a presidential election in Indonesia. Although he seems to have won by a comfortable majority, many Indonesians worry about Subianto's violent past. According to The



Prabowo Subianto received 57 to 59 percent of the presidential vote following the February 14 election. Courtesy of Maks Stirlitz (Wikimedia Commons) Creative Commons 3.0

Conversation, all three candidates campaigned to continue Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy, which has been in place since 1948, but they have vastly different approaches. The candidates emphasize the importance to continue current President Joko Widodo's policy to

remain neutral between the United States and China. Subianto wants to focus on strengthening defense and being a "good neighbor" to other Southeast Asian countries. Baswedan wants to "globalize" Indonesia, becoming a leading voice in the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN). Pranowo wants to focus on combatting the regression of democracy, global inequality, economic decline, and escalating regional conflicts.

Front runner Subianto is a former military general and the current defense minister. This was his third time running for president after losing twice to current president Jokowi. In his first election, Subianto ran as a military strong man, says The New York Times. The second time he ran on a devout Muslim platform, claiming fraud when he lost and inciting violent street protests from hardline Islamists. Now, he is attempting to distance himself from his former reputation by portraying himself as a cute grandfather figure who cannot dance.

Baswedan, the previous governor of Jakarta, is the only candidate who has not pledged to continue Jokowi's plan to move the capital city from Jakarta to Borneo, says The Guardian. He claims there

are more urgent issues pressing Indonesia and the state's money should be more equally distributed among regions. Baswedan is popular among hardline Islamist groups. Pranowo, the former governor of central Java, ran on the same political party platform as current president Jokowi, but trailed third in the polls. The Guardian says his campaign is based on his portraying as a down-to-earth man of the people. Accord-

ing to The Conversation, Pranowo is endorsed by Indonesia's largest political party, the Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P).

Although Subianto is the current front runner, his campaign worries many Indonesian citizens. Firstly, people are worried that his win would make way for a new dynasty. His running mate is Jokowi's son, who was only able to join the race after a court headed by Jokowi's brother-in-law

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Anies Baswedan speaks at the World Economic Forum. Courtesy of World Economic Forum (flickr) Creative Commons 2.0

SENEGAL

Sofia Diaz
Staff Writer

Voters in Senegal were left confused and outraged over the indefinite postponement of the 2024 Senegalese presidential election, which was initially scheduled for February 25. President Macky Sall formally announced the postponement on February 4, which led to an outburst of protests in the capital city of Dakar, reports Al Jazeera. In the following days, Al Jazeera reports that a parliamentary vote extended the delay until December 15.

President Sall assured the public on February 3 that the reasoning for his declaration of the postponement was regarding potential corruption within the list of eligible candidates. The announcement left his opposers and voters disgruntled. As per BBC News, critics believe Sall is attempting to run again for a third term or that he may have motive to influence his preferred successor, Prime Minister Amadou Ba, however he has de-

nied these rumors. This is a prominent concern for voters considering last month's exclusion of valued opposition members on behalf of Senegal's Constitutional Council.

According to The New York Times, the U.S. Embassy issued a public statement warning of protests in the Dakar perimeter. Despite the public notice, people remained calm and continued business as usual. BBC News reports that Khalifa Sall (unrelated to President Sall), who is a former mayor of Dakar, was said to have declared the postponement to be a 'constitutional coup,' one that voters should be urging to speak up against. Another candidate from the election, Thierno Alassane Sall (also unrelated to President Sall), had allegedly stated that the postponement resembles "high treason" and urged his supporters to protest before the National Assembly, placing emphasis on "standing on the right side of history."

Hundreds of men and women of varying ages

began gathering in the capital in response to the call. Police trained to handle riots were called to the scene and reportedly fired tear gas to disperse opposition leaders' sup-

Shortly following Sall's announcement, Senegal's parliament allowed the extension of his tenure and scheduled the new date for the election to be December 15. BBC News

The United States Institute for Peace states that most Senegalese believe their democracy has been weakened in recent years, according to Afrobarometer, an independent

Constitutional documents. Senegalese authorities allegedly placed restrictions on mobile internet access from the evening of February 4, considering threats to people or public order and hate messages via social media.

A protester wanting to be addressed by first name only, Dame, informed Reuters that "Senegal has been known as a country with a strong democracy, but this is no longer the case," as himself and the remainder of the voters have one interest in mind: a fair election.

Research and advocacy group Human Rights Watch has warned that Senegal's democracy is at risk after events surrounding the 2024 presidential election.



Senegalese president Macky Sall announced that presidential elections would be postponed, sparking outrage. Courtesy of European Parliament (flickr) CreativeCommons 2.0

porters, according to Al Jazeera. France 24 reports candidate Thierno Alassane Sall to have stated, "the situation is deplorable. We came to pray, and we got gassed. It's intolerable." Reuters reports the death toll amid protests has raised to three, as of February 11.

reports that some of the opposing leaders stated that their affiliates had been "forcibly removed from the parliament building by police in riot gear," with the intent to stop their ability to vote.

Voters fear that Senegal's longstanding stable democracy is now at risk.

research group that has conducted repeated annual surveys. Al Jazeera reports that so far, at least three of twenty candidates have filed motions in response to the delay, with two additional candidates planning to litigate the matter in the courts, according to confirmed

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Ganjar Pranowo spoke at the University of Indonesia in late 2023 as a part of his presidential campaign. Courtesy of Jeromi Mikhael (Wikimedia Commons) CreativeCommons 1.0

Continued from page 6... tweaked eligibility criteria, states The Guardian.

Reuters adds that while Jokowi has not explicitly endorsed any candidates, he has made highly publicized appearances with Subianto, despite tradition for the incumbent candidate to remain neutral. Protests which broke out on February 12 have accused Jokowi of abusing power by backing Subianto in an attempt to prepare his son to run for president in the future.

Many older voters also regard Subianto as a symbol of the 32-year kleptocratic regime that ended in 1998, says The New York Times. In 1998, Subianto was discharged from the military for kidnapping and torturing pro-democracy activists, many of whom are still missing today. He was also criticized for leading special forces into East Timor and slaughtering hundreds of citizens, leading him to be banned from the U.S. for many years. Subianto was

never charged in a criminal court. The Guardian says that Indonesia has a large young voter population, with more than half of voters between 17 and 40 and about a third under 30. Because much of this painful past is not covered in Indonesian textbooks, says The New York Times, young people do not know about Subianto's past.

According to The Economist, all three candidates have a strong presence on TikTok. Subianto has been flooding TikTok with bad dancing

videos which gain average of 20 million views. Baswedan was able to take second place in the polls by appealing to the Indonesian K-Pop community. All three candidates have also been using "buzzers," fake accounts paid to praise a politician online.

Experts say that these TikTok campaigns reduce the election to memes, songs, and dances, and claim that the campaigns focus more on gimmicks than actual programs tailored to young people. The Economist also cites a study that found

that TikTok approved the highest percentage of false political advertisements in the U.S. 2022 midterm elections compared to other social media websites, showing its potential negative political consequences.

This election has brought up many old and new fears for Indonesian voters. According to The Associated Press, the U.S.-China rivalry permeates across all of Southeast Asia. While each candidate has a different approach to foreign policy, Indonesia's membership in the Non-Alignment move-

ment means any candidate is likely to maintain the country's neutral stance. Foreign policy, re-emergence of dictatorial regimes, misinformation, and trivialization of campaigns permeates Indonesia's 2024 elections. How the population responds will be a better view into the mind and feelings of the young voter.

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President Joko Widodo maintained neutrality between superpowers China and the United States, a policy all three candidates intended to continue. Courtesy of Russian Presidential Executive Office (Wikimedia Commons) CreativeCommons 4.0

MYANMAR'S COURSE TOWARDS CHAOS

Cameron Bird
Staff Writer

For all the rhetoric surrounding Myanmar's instability since its coup d'état in 2021, those paying close attention to Myanmar recognize an even more important fact: it may only become more unstable. The essential combination of historical precedent and political theory suggests that not only is Myanmar better off with a centralized government, but that if it maintains its crash course towards decentralization, it will result in devastating consequences for all different populations in Myanmar. If international actors advocating for the restoration of a democratic Myanmar fail to intervene or otherwise assist democratic advocates in Myanmar, the ensuing conflicts will ravage the state and destabilize an increasingly strategically important region. The inherent nature of Myanmar as a multi-ethnic state has been a source of division since its independence in 1948. Its consistent oppression of the Rohingya people resulted in massive sources of conflict in 2012 and

2017, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. Yet the recent coup has in many ways united many minority groups, creating a common enemy out of the oppressive majority government, which has forced armed rebel groups to work synchronously to effectively combat the military government. Al Jazeera reports that the unity of these armed groups has resulted in the creation of the Three Brotherhood Alliance, composed of the Arakan Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Ta'ang National Liberation Army, which have waged combat against the military junta quite effectively, and garnered significant momentum since late 2023.

When considering the overall instability of the region, the military junta's proven inability to establish sovereignty at home and legitimacy abroad has become flashpoints of concern. The Associated Press reports that inflation and displacement are increasing in Myanmar, whilst economic growth remains stagnant at best. Furthermore, as armed groups establish their own regions of gover-

nance, the decentralization of power will likely result in further economic decline and civilian safety. According to the United States Institute of Peace, the junta's inability to maintain control over specific regions controlled by ethnic minority groups has also destabilized trade in the region, led to increased crime, starvation, and homelessness. It must be acknowledged that the current form of governance in Myanmar is unacceptable from a moral and political standpoint. The Guardian reports that since the military took over in 2021, 4,000 civilians have died at the hands of the military, and the possibility that crimes against humanity have been committed has been raised by multiple rights

groups. Yet the success of armed groups in rebelling against the military has and will continue to only increase these issues. Decentralization has rarely worked in global politics, and although the prospect of multiple ethnicities experiencing self-determination appears a flowery and conclusive concept, the inevitable consequences are frightening. Even in scenarios where ethnic, religious, or racial groups have managed to split into their self-governing states, it is not a process that has occurred peacefully or accompanied by economic growth. Whether it is an artificial split, a practical split, or a blend of both, the potential for genocide, protracted conflict, and continued oppres-

sion persists. Examples of these are plentiful, whether it be Yugoslavia in the early 1990s or Palestine in the 1940s, these regions still maintain incredibly volatile conflicts. Myanmar appears to be set on the same path if multiple ethnic groups continue to establish power within their own regions and decentralize Myanmar as a whole.

It becomes increasingly imperative that the U.S. and other powerful actors stand by supposed liberal values and intervene. The prospect of increased instability in Myanmar is disconcerting to all actors in the region and on the international stage. Additionally, the idea that a democratic state could turn into a decentralized failed state within a decade raises serious concerns about the international community's commitment to these ideals and capability in addressing them. Amid this crisis, China has become an increasingly relevant actor, stepping in to act as a mediator between rebel groups and the military junta, reports Reuters. Motivated by threats to trade and the potential for a refugee crisis, China

has acted in its own self-interest in attempting to stabilize the conflict as much as possible. This contrasts sharply with the actions of important Western actors, who provide only lip service to the values of democratic freedom and anti-authoritarianism that they purportedly espouse. Sanctions and condemnations are insufficient in providing necessary change, and China's proposed rules of order in international politics will only gain more traction the longer the West allows states to drift further towards authoritarian structures. Advocacy for the restoration of Aung San Suu Kyi's democratic government should become a focal point of the Biden administration's Southeast Asian foreign policy agenda. If it does not, the U.S. becomes complicit in the demise of yet another potential democracy.

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Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains detained amidst military coup.
Courtesy of UN Geneva (flickr)
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DEMOCRACY IS ON THE BALLOT AROUND THE WORLD

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According to Foreign Affairs, over 4 billion people will vote for new leadership in more than 80 elections in 2024. From the United States, Russia, and Bangladesh to India, Tunisia, and El Salvador, these national elections have profound implications for the global economy, human rights, and the path to peace in an increasingly turbulent world. Each election will be framed by local issues and the candidates' policies, and possibly hindered by global threats to electoral integrity and democracy. The threats faced by this year's election cycle look to test even the strongest democracies and strengthen authoritarian leanings. The spread of misinformation and manipulation through artificial intelligence and social media platforms, the suppression of opposition candidates, and unreliable elections have made the fate of democracy a

paramount campaign issue all around the globe.

As the United States prepares for a likely rematch between President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump, Americans are increasingly worried about the state of democracy in the nation, according to ABC News. Only 28 percent of adults in the United States said they were satisfied with the way democracy is working in the U.S., according to a survey conducted in December 2023 by Gallup. While members of both parties say they're worried about the future of democracy, their specific concerns about why democracy is under threat reveal the ever-apparent partisan divisions. Both presumptive nominees paint their opponents as a danger to democracy and claim this presidential contest as a "test for the survival of democracy," according to ABC News. Democrats are concerned about what a second term for Trump would mean for the state

of democracy, a fear likely heightened by the January 6 insurrection of the Capitol. Most Republicans say Biden is not fit to be president, due to his old age and alleged corruption. They too, are concerned with what a second term for Biden would mean for democracy and election integrity. Regardless of whether Biden or Trump is declared the winner of the presidential race, which The Associated Press calls the "greatest global wildcard" of this election cycle, it will be consequential to the future of this nation.

In neighboring Mexico, a presidential contest is set to take place in June. For the first time in Mexican history, the people will be electing a woman to lead their nation. Claudia Sheinbaum, the Morena party candidate hand-picked by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, will face Xóchitl Gálvez, a former senator who is heading a coalition of opposition parties, says Foreign Pol-

icy. Until recently, Sheinbaum was the mayor of Mexico City and saw a decrease in murder rates in the capital city. Gálvez is the leader of the Broad Front for Mexico and holds 24 percent of the people's intended vote. The winner will govern a country with rampant gun violence related to its pervasive drug cartels.

In Vladimir Putin's Russia, which Foreign Policy says is "barely pretending its elections are real," the authoritarian leader made his candidacy for a fifth term official in December 2023. Putin's approval rating remains high at 85 percent as of November 2022. Nearly two years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Russian economy has endured sanctions by Western states "surprisingly well." This year, Putin plans to extend the presidential contest to the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. He has virtually no opponents in the election as

opposition leader Alexei Navalny, like Putin's other dissidents, remains behind bars. Elections are not expected to be free or fair and will secure Putin's iron fist on the country's political system.

In Tunisia, the country's presidential election will be the first since President Kais Saied transformed the government into a supra-presidential system with nearly unchecked executive authority, says Foreign Policy. India, the world's largest democratic nation, is also expected to hold elections in 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his right-wing Hindu nationalist party are seeking reelection. While many critics say Modi has weakened India's democratic institutions and suppressed free speech and press, he remains widely popular. Both El Salvador and Bangladesh have reelected less-than-democratic leaders in 2024. El Salvador President Nayib Bukele has been praised for his crackdown on

crime, yet foreign governments have criticized his repression of civil rights to do so. According to The Associated Press, Bangladesh has reelected Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in elections that the U.S. and United Kingdom say were not free and fair. Democracy goes beyond holding elections. Ultimately, it is about the rule of law of the country. As the world endures what The Council on Foreign Relations calls a "democracy recession", where democratic societies have been weakening and authoritarian societies have been on the rise, it is essential to ensure the survival of democratic ideals.

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POLICYMAKERS' MOTIVATIONS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE WAR IN GAZA

Neve Walker
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Recently, the United States military launched dozens of air assaults on different sites in Syria and Iraq that are occupied by Iranian-backed militia and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. This strike comes in retaliation to an initial drone strike that killed three U.S. troops in Jordan, as reported by The Associated Press. The U.S. coordinated strikes hit 85 targets at seven different locations, including intelligence centers, drone and ammunition storage sites, command and control headquarters, and other facilities that were connected to the militias. Because of these strikes, there will be increased conflict involving Middle Eastern countries and the U.S., yet this does not seem to be an issue for certain politicians who capitalizing on the war.

"Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing," U.S. President Joe Biden warned as re-

ported by The Associated Press, adding, "let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: If you harm an American, we will respond." These attacks are related to the U.S.'s relentless support of Israel, and the sympathy to the Palestinian caused by several militant groups originating outside of just Israel. With tensions rising between the Israel-Lebanon border, and groups such as the Houthis from Yemen and Hezbollah from Lebanon militant groups joining in to fight against American influence in this area of the world, potentially larger conflicts are looming ahead, waiting for someone to make the first move.

Now, with the war in Gaza and the unwavering support the Biden Administration is providing to Israel the U.S. citizens are facing the consequences, especially military personnel that are at higher risk for further drone strikes. Furthermore, the conflict in Gaza has turned the U.S. into a more divided country. According to

Gallup, 41 percent of U.S. citizens believe we are doing the right amount of aid, 39 percent believe we are not giving enough aid, and 19 percent believe we are giving too much aid. Along these same lines, 47 percent of US citizens view Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel, unfavorably.

Many U.S. politicians have taken advantage of different crises with the goal to grow their wealth. In cases of foreign wars, this is not an exception. An example of this abuse of power is Presidential candidate Nikki Haley. During her time as a state legislator in 2009, Haley supported an economic development

package valued at up to \$900 million to go to Boeing, a defense contractor, with \$120 million more a few years later. She then joined Boeing's board of directors in 2019, after her time serving as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, making important decisions regarding peace around the world.

One of Haley's biggest actions serving as the ambassador was removing the U.S. from the Council of Human Rights, because of its criticism towards Israel. According to The Human Rights Watch, Nikki Haley "vigorously defended egregious Israeli abuses." As a result of these actions, Haley was able to create a small for-

tune, like many other politicians who have invested in war manufacturers. For Haley specifically, her primary income has come from a lobbyist group, United Against a Nuclear Iran. This advocacy group lobbied in favor of military strikes on Iran.

The U.S. has had a close relationship with Israel since it achieved statehood in 1948 and the war in Gaza has further increased U.S. support. The U.S. has issued support in three main ways: diplomatically, financially, and militarily says Vox.

Antony Blinken, the U.S. Secretary of State, told Netanyahu that "you [Israel] may be strong enough on your own to defend yourself, but as long as America exists, you will never ever have to."

This is hardly the first time the U.S. has gotten involved in conflicts in the Middle East. Since 1928, with the Red Line Agreement, the U.S. has invested interest in the region for its oil reserves, according to the U.S. Office of the Historian. Yet

because of the U.S.'s involvement in the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, and other tensions in the Middle East, the U.S. became increasingly more involved in such affairs, which was further exemplified after 9/11 and the War of Terror.

Whether it is morally right or wrong for the United States to further support Israel during the Hamas conflict is not for me to decide, yet the fact remains that policy makers are financially benefiting from continued strife and conflict, especially in the Middle Eastern region. Because the United States politicians benefit from increased conflict in that area, the US will continue to aid in the continuation of the war.

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Governor Nikki Haley speaks at a rally in Scottsdale, Arizona. Courtesy of Gage Skidmore (Wikimedia Commons Creative Commons 2.0)

THE TRUTH IS UNDER THREAT IN GAZA

Yasmin Obeidallah
Staff Writer

"He, who targets the journalists, fears the truth" read the quote shown over a photograph of a man lovingly kissing his father's head. That photo, posted on Instagram, was used to share the news of the death of journalist Hamza Al-Dahdouh, son of Al Jazeera's Gaza Bureau Chief Wael Al-Dahdouh. According to Al Jazeera, Hamza and fellow journalist Mustafa Thuraya were killed by an Israeli missile strike in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip on January 7. The targeting of Palestinian journalists, and by proxy their families, is ongoing in the siege of the Gaza Strip.

On October 25, Israeli airstrikes killed Wael's wife, son, daughter, and grandson in an attack on the Nuseirat Refugee Camp where the family was seeking shelter. Al-Dahdouh, who had become the voice of Gaza and a beacon of Palestinian resilience, was himself injured in an Is-

raeli attack on December 15. His colleague, video journalist Samer Abu Daqqa, was killed in the strike. These losses resonate with many in Gaza, where 25,000 people have been killed and more than 60,000 have been wounded by Israel's indiscriminate assault on the Strip.

The journalists of Gaza have become a reluctant window into the devastation in Gaza, many through their social media accounts. Moataz Azaiza, Bisan Owda, and Plestia Alaqaad are some of many that have put faces to the victims of the bombardment through their raw, unfiltered footage. Their daily realities serve as a firsthand account of destruction and suffering in Gaza. Palestinians have come to rely on journalists like Azaiza and Owda to report the daily massacres committed against the people of Gaza.

The fate of journalists in Gaza matters to the international press, which has no means of independently reporting

what is happening on the ground in Gaza themselves, says TIME. According to CNN, direct accounts from Palestinians are one of the most reliable ways for people to understand the horrors suffered in Gaza. This glimpse into life in Gaza has become a vital source of first-hand information, something that numbers and news reports cannot capture.

According to The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 76 Palestinian journalists and media workers have been killed since the beginning of the onslaught, with more injured or missing. CPJ describes Israel as having "an apparent pattern of targeting of journalists and their families." CPJ's emergencies director, Lucy Westcott, calls the number of journalistic deaths "unprecedented," according to NPR.

Many journalists have eased their coverage of the bombardment due to fears of being targeted by Israel. Azaiza, who has amassed millions of followers on social media, recently evac-

uated to Qatar. He said he has had to "evacuate for a lot of reasons you all know some of it but not all of it," according to Al Jazeera. CPJ's Middle East and North Africa program coordinator, Sherif Mansour, further told TIME that "infrastructure and protection and safety does not exist" for journalists in Gaza.

Not only do Palestinian journalists put themselves and their families at risk to share daily life in Gaza with the world, reporting in the enclave has been severely restricted under Israeli aggression, due to repeated communications blackouts and a lack of food and housing, says Reuters. Notably, many of the journalists documenting Gaza's horrors speak English, not Arabic, in their videos in an attempt to capture the attention of those worldwide. Palestinians in Gaza are forced to mourn, suffer, and die in front of a camera lens so the world can empathize with them.

While many reporters in Gaza who have been threatened, injured, or suf-

fered loss have returned to work, others must decide whether to continue sharing the truth with a world that does not seem to be listening or to try and save themselves. For journalist jourjour Ismail Jood, the choice was simple. He announced the end of his press coverage in Gaza on Instagram on January 10, telling his followers that "seeking safety within family is a better option than seeking coverage for a world that doesn't know the meaning of humanity and compassion."

Though Israeli forces have maintained that they do not target journalists, it has been established that they have killed people clearly identified as members of the press. A May report by CPJ found that Israeli troops have killed at least 20 journalists in the last 22 years, and none have been charged or held accountable, says Reuters. At the beginning of their attacks on the Gaza Strip, the Israeli military warned international organizations that they could not guaran-

tee the safety of their journalists operating in Gaza. Journalists have long been vulnerable targets of Israel's aggression, including beloved Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, who was fatally shot by an Israeli sniper while covering a raid on the Jenin Refugee Camp in the Occupied West Bank in May 2022. Israel has repeatedly been labeled as a state that values the democratic idea of free press, but their continuous targeting of Palestinian journalists hinders their ability to establish and share the truth.

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STUDENT INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT: CONGRESSIONAL INTERNSHIP WITH NJ ASSEMBLYMAN GARY SCHAER

Anthony Samaniego
Staff Writer

During the Fall 2023 semester for a duration of four months, I had the privilege to intern for my State Assemblyman, Gary Schaer (D-36) of Passaic, New Jersey. The internship opportunity was presented to me as a scholar for the Latino Institute at Seton Hall. I – along with another fellow Latino Institute Scholar and Diplomacy student – applied for this Legislative Internship opportunity. After a structured application and interview process, both of us were offered the position of Legislative Intern.

On our first week interning for the assemblyman, we were introduced to office procedures, went out for a team lunch while receiving a brief tour of the Passaic area around the Assembly office, and met Assemblyman Schaer. Our first tasks consisted of reading constituent letters sent to the assemblyman's office, each letter written about a different issue, and drafting response letters to the

constituents on how the assemblyman will address their concerns. Following our first tasks with drafting responses to constituents, each intern was assigned to call back constituents who had previously contacted the assemblyman to update them with how their concerns were met.

As the weeks went on, each intern received individual or group tasks to complete as policy interns. One of my first individual tasks was to organize contact information from various businesses, non-profits, and other government offices that the assemblyman worked

with. Each intern was also assigned a separate policy assignment regarding different issues discussed in legislature. Each intern was responsible for writing a policy memorandum on their assigned topic to introduce to the assemblyman. My policy assignment consisted of writing a recommendation policy memorandum on cooperative sports programs in the state of New Jersey. In 2017, the allowance of cooperative sports programs passed under state law both in the State Senate and Assembly. However, it was vetoed by then-Governor Chris Christie.

My policy assignment on cooperative sports programs took up a huge percentage of my time interning at the assembly office, at least for a month and a half, due to extensive research and addressing edits in my policy memorandum from the assemblyman's Chief of Staff. While I was working on my policy assignment, I was multitasking with answering incoming phone calls from constituents, informing constituents about the Affordable New Jersey Communities for Homeowners and Renters (ANCHOR) property tax relief program, drafting response letters to constituents on behalf of the office, and analyzing various assembly bills.

Though I consistently worked on policy in the office for Assemblyman Schaer, I also got a glance of the work that the assemblyman and his office do outside of the office through government resource events and visiting local non-profits. On one typical Friday internship day in early November, the office team and I vis-

ited the Paterson-based non-profit Oasis, which aims to help women and children and where the assemblyman has donated money on various occasions. When visiting Oasis, I got a glance at the services they provide for low-income and immigrant communities of Paterson for people of all ages, such as skill classes and food services. On the day the assemblyman's staff and I visited Oasis, we helped distribute food to residents after touring the building and getting to see the organization's work.

During my internship experience, I had the opportunity to visit various other community organizations and events. In late November, I attended a Utilities Resource Fair hosted by the assemblyman's office and Passaic Mayor Hector Lora, which was attended by hundreds of residents. On December 4, 2023, I had the privilege of visiting the New Jersey State House in Trenton with Assemblyman Gary Schaer and his Chief of Staff to witness the Assembly's Ap-

propriations Committee Hearing and voting session.

Having the opportunity to witness the discussions and debates at the Assembly's Appropriations Committee Hearing was the height of my legislative internship. Assembly representatives from various state legislative districts and the education sector were in attendance. During this visit, I got to witness how state representatives vote on and introduce legislation. The New Jersey Assembly Appropriations Committee holds sessions on the decision-making process regarding appropriating funding towards State government functions and resources.

The week I concluded my internship under New Jersey Assemblyman Gary Schaer (D-36), the Assemblyman rewarded me with a certificate of completion of the internship and took a picture with the interns that would be published on his website.

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Samaniego poses with Assemblyman Schaer. Courtesy of Anthony Samaniego

NOBLE PEACE LAUREATE LEYMAH GBOWEE VISITS SETON HALL'S WORLD LEADERS FORUM

Karissa Kromminga
Staff Writer

On November 14, Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations hosted Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee during its World Leaders Forum. The School of Diplomacy hosts these forums to foster dialogue with distinguished visitors concerning critical global concerns. This year's forum focused on Gbowee's views on building peace, grassroots movements, and the importance of including women in the geopolitical sphere.

Madam Leymah Gbowee received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 and is best known for leading a coalition of Christian and Muslim women in a weeks-long nonviolent protest known as the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. This protest played a key role in ending Liberia's fourteen-year civil war in 2003. She then

co-founded and served as Executive Director for the Women Peace and Security Network Africa in Accra before founding the Gbowee Peace Foundation in 2012. Madam Gbowee is a strong advocate for the inclusion of women in geopolitical affairs, peacebuilding, and security.

The forum began with introductory remarks from Dean Courtney Smith, Interim President Katia Passerini, and School of Diplomacy Board Member Gail Thornton. Madam Gbowee began her speech by acknowledging broad challenges facing the world today, identifying that good leaders "show up first and leave last."

Madam Gbowee opened her speech by telling the story of a woman she met while protesting in Liberia who had lost both her sons in the Liberian civil wars and joined the protest so that others would not lose their sons. Gbowee



Leymah Gbowee speaks with School of Diplomacy Dean Dr. Courtney Smith. Courtesy of Seton Hall University

explained that this woman and her story became one of her major motivations to keep fighting for a more peaceful world. She then explained that there is a lack of compassion and discourse in the world that makes working towards peace more difficult. The entire world has become militarized, she explained, to a point where war no longer has limits.

Madam Gbowee's main argument was related to the importance of maintaining acknowledgement of the humanity shared by everyone in the world, even one's enemies. As she told

the audience, "In order for us to make the peace that we needed, we needed to see the humanity of each other." A lack of recognition of others' humanity and connection to others within conflict makes it easier to enact violence.

She witnessed this exact struggle when she recently visited Israel to help a group of women protesting the current conflict in Israel. As world leaders and governments pushed for militarism, the women pushed for dialogue and compassion.

"They were determined, or they are deter-

mined, that peace is the only way," said Gbowee. "But as part of finding the path to peace is understanding that we are one people regardless of how we see ourselves, or which nationality we see ourselves with."

Gbowee further explained that finding peace is not determined by what side individuals are on, but is fostered through everyone being on the side of humanity. This is true not just in Israel and Palestine, but everywhere that there has been war. Ensuring peace means creating a future for the next generation, one in which recognition of the humanity of others is the paramount feature that shapes the world order.

The forum concluded with a questioning period. When asked how to ensure peace before conflict starts, Gbowee responded by explaining that peace begins within each community, through citizens and governments ensuring that people have

what they need so they do not feel like violence is the only option. Her story emphasized the need for connection, compassion, and humanity in the journey to bring forth peace within the world.

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JOSEPH BOAKAI'S INAUGURATION BRINGS HOPE FOR LIBERIA AND DIPLOMATIC REALIGNMENT

Andrew Travis
Staff Writer

MONROVIA - On Monday, January 22, Liberia's new president, Joseph Boakai, took power in a historic inauguration for Liberia at the country's capitol. Boakai, who served as vice president under former leader Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is taking over for former president George Weah. Boakai narrowly beat Weah in a runoff in mid-November, capturing 50.9 percent of the vote, according to Reuters.

The inauguration is a milestone for both the country, which has been through back-to-back civil wars in which over 250,000 Liberians were killed, and for the West African region, which has seen six coups since the beginning of 2020. This inauguration is the second peaceful transition of democratically elected power since the country's civil war ended in 2003. It is also a signal of hope for justice and progress in the country.

Much of the country is optimistic about the new government. Liberian residents who spoke to The

Diplomatic Envoy are hopeful that the new government will bring job growth and a better standard of living. Poverty still plagues the country following the civil wars. Data from the African Development Bank shows that the country had a GDP per capita of \$538.1 USD in 2021 and ranks 175 out of 189 on the Human Development Index.

In his inaugural speech, President Boakai spoke about reconciliation and announced that his administration will explore the idea of organizing a War Crimes Court to prosecute those who benefited from and profited from the country's civil wars. In his speech, he said that the goal of this court would be "to provide an opportunity for those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity to account for their actions in court," Front Page Africa reports.

Setting up a war crimes court may prove challenging for the new president, however. Former President Weah never followed

through on his promise to the United Nations general assembly to set up a war-time court, Human Rights Watch reports. Front Page Africa continues that Mr. Weah faced internal political pressure from influential politicians in Liberia who did not want a court to be set up lest they be prosecuted for their actions in the civil wars.

Corruption was a significant issue for Mr. Weah. In 2022, VOA reports that the U.S. Treasury sanctioned three of his top officials for corruption, including his chief of staff. These shortcomings may have played a role in his loss of the presidential position.

President Boakai is seen by his supporters as a figurehead and experienced politician who has what it takes to get Liberia back on track toward growth, reconciliation, and reconstruction. At the same time, the opposition sees him as too old to run a country, as by the end of his six-year term, he will be 85 years old.

After being sworn in, President Boakai's inaugu-

ral speech was abruptly cut short after he fainted from heat exhaustion in the early afternoon humidity and heat. He was taken away, but his office later announced that he was "doing perfectly fine" and that he was "normal, and he's doing well." He resumed official duties soon after and later met with the U.S. delegation to the inauguration led by U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas Greenfield. Greenfield spoke to Seton Hall students at the World Leaders Forum in April 2022.

At her meeting with President Boakai, Greenfield reinforced the United States' dedication to deepening ties with Liberia and spoke about the country's role as a leader of democracy in the region.

However, Boakai, in his inaugural speech, seemed disillusioned with Liberia's relationship with the U.S. On the country's relationship with the U.S., he stated that "...it is a bit discomfoting to be found debating about how we, as a country, are still struggling to come to terms with the extent to which we think the relationship might benefit us."

The new government under Boakai seems to be moving toward regaining a close relationship with China, which had strained under Mr. Weah's administration. Liberia was one of two African nations to condemn China for its human rights abuses in Xinjiang at the United Nations in 2021. These diplomatic actions led to the suspension of many infrastructure projects planned by the Chinese.

While Mr. Weah had been fostering closer relations with the U.S., Boakai made it clear in his inaugural speech that the country would seek mutually beneficial relations with both China and the U.S. while not downplaying the country's role on the world's stage, The Liberian Observer reported.

"...We will strive for Liberia to rise and take its rightful place in the world as a leader in global affairs, maintaining its traditional liberal and democratic ideals at home while fostering international cooperation driven by development diplomacy focused on a repurposed national de-

velopment agenda aimed at giving our people better livelihoods," said Boakai.

President Boakai's presidency marks a shift in foreign policy and diplomatic relations for a country that stands out as a beacon of peace in a region marked by recent coups or unrest. Whether his experience and influence will prove enough to address the glaring issues that Liberia continues to struggle with more than 20 years removed from civil war remains to be seen.

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The Diplomatic Envoy



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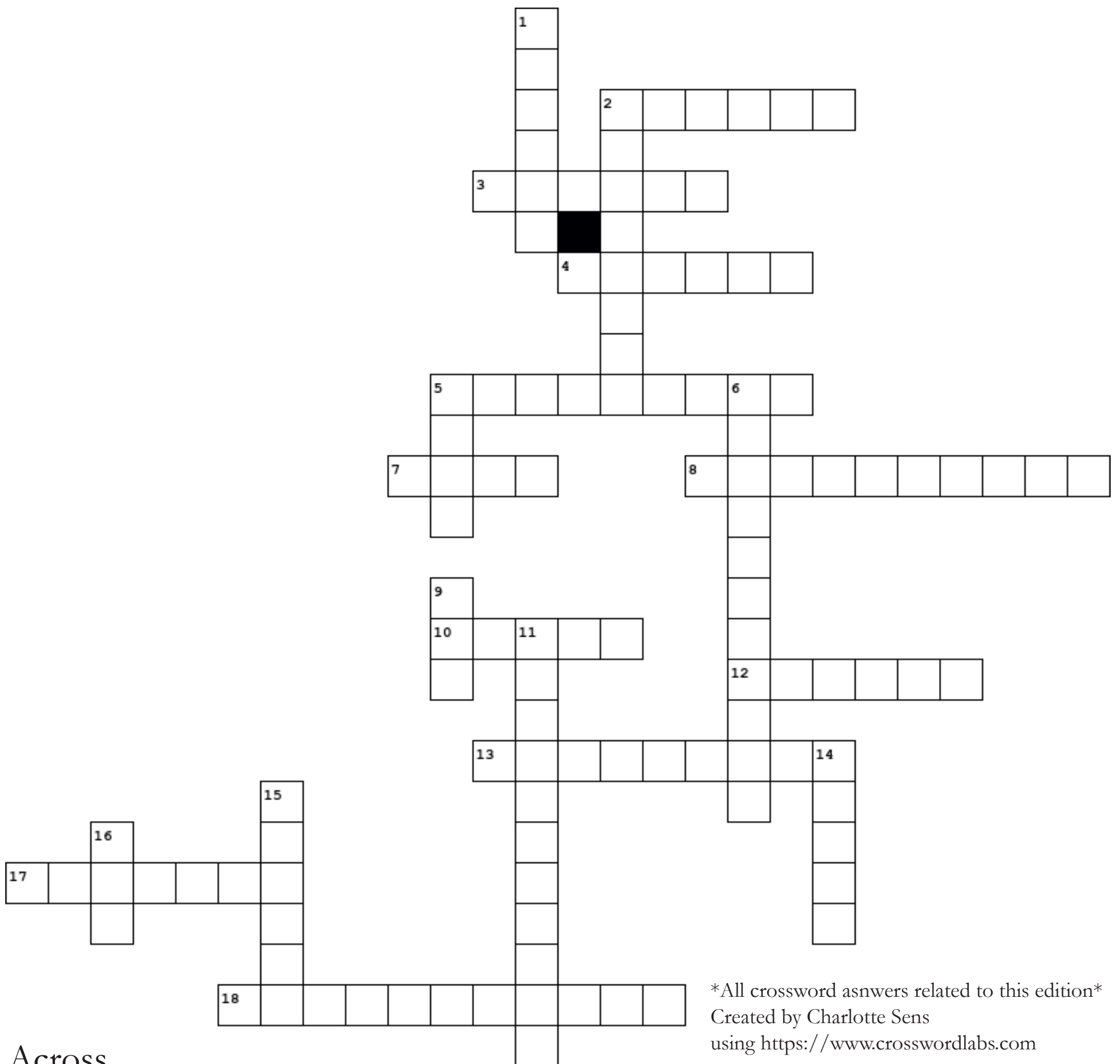
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For more information on sources, go to blogs.shu.edu/thediplomaticenvoy

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February Edition Crossword



All crossword answers related to this edition
Created by Charlotte Sens
using <https://www.crosswordlabs.com>

Across

2. Newly elected president of Liberia.
3. This body of water had been the source of international attention as rebels attack shipping vessels.
4. For the first time in this nation's history, people will be electing a woman for president.
5. This Russian cosmonaut has spent 878 days in orbit, setting a world record.
7. The President of Senegal who has announced that presidential elections are to be postponed.
8. This former U.S. Ambassador to the UN has been a staunch supporter of Israel.
10. Current president suspected of assassinating many political opponents.
12. A student of diplomacy received an internship for this state assemblyman.
13. This Al Jazeera journalist had lost his family to the war in Gaza, a story shared by many others.
17. This nation has experienced a recent coup government has since struggled for legitimacy.
18. This University of Technology professor continues to protest the detention of Yang Hengjun.

Down

1. This Nobel Laureate urged listeners to recognize their shared humanity in a recent speech as Seton Hall University.
2. This Indonesian presidential candidate wants Indonesia to globalize and take a leading role in ASEAN.
5. This former Prime Minister of Pakistan is lauded as a "cricket hero turned prime minister".
6. The Prime Minister of Sweden.
9. This Taiwanese political party clinched victory amidst anti-Chinese sentiments.
11. This artist's tour had striking economic impacts as concertgoers flooded cities.
14. This nation has not held elections since 2016 causing tensions to come to a head amidst nationwide protests.
15. This scholar developed the Presidential Election Cycle Theory.
16. This international court is responsible for deliberating on sporting scandals such as that of Kamila Valieva.