

THE FIELDSTON POLITICAL JOURNAL



Volume 4
Spring Edition



The Rethinking the Future Issue

Letter from the Editors-in-Chief

Hello loyal readers! Thank you for picking up this (digital) copy of the Fieldston Political Journal’s 2024-2025 Spring Edition.

Over the past year, we have published four editions: Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring. These editions have each centered on themes that have evolved as the political landscape of our country has changed: the Summer Edition’s theme was “Democracy;” Autumn’s, “Think Globally, Act Locally;” Winter’s, “Brave New World;” and finally, Spring’s, “Rethinking the Future.” Each of these editions has centered articles on topics such as Kamala Harris’s and Donald Trump’s presidential campaigns to activist spotlights and everything in between. Our writers have explored how art, such as fashion and graffiti, intersects with activism; how congestion pricing in NYC will affect residents; how and where democracy itself is threatened; whether free speech is alive both in our country and at Fieldston; and much, much more.

In this edition, our writers have tackled a range of different issues as our world changes around us. From the Palestinian Nationalist Movement to Africa’s growing political influence to the future of the American dollar, our writers have researched, explored, and presented new theses on many of the most pressing issues our generation faces.

The FPJ serves a unique niche within the Fieldston community—as a journal focused specifically on politics, we produce a wide range of passionately researched and written articles on a variety of pressing issues that are close to our authors’ hearts. Our writers consistently synthesize, define and redefine the issues of the day in their work—we are proud to publish writing imbued with such obvious effort, creativity and personal motivation. The opportunity to serve as Editors-in-Chief of the FPJ this year proved to be as rewarding as it was challenging, and we are so proud of the articles and print editions we were able to share with the Fieldston community. As we prepare to pass the reins down, we hope this past year of the FPJ has intrigued, inspired and ultimately challenged every one of our readers, as we trust it will continue to do.

Signing off,

Adia Stokes

Zeke Tesler

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AMERICA'S POLITICAL HEALTH: UPS, DOWNS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

By CONSTANTINE SVORONOS



Source: The New York Times

The United States is clearly struggling with its political health. Our current president, who was elected with the support of both the electoral college and the majority of voters, has so far held a term in office characterized by repeated attacks on fundamental aspects of the United States government, its political system, and the standards that have upheld the republic for nearly two and a half centuries. Neither is this onslaught against the nation's most founda-

tional democratic tenets recent. In fact, what makes the situation feel all the more fraught is that much of this was not unpredictable. Donald Trump won in 2024 after four years of repeatedly denying the results of the past election. Yet the people still decided he was the best choice for the office. Something must be going wrong.

Donald Trump and his authoritarian, narcissistic, yet perversely appealing (to some) personality is itself one of the most significant direct causes of the decline in

America's political health. Truly launching his political career in 2015, Trump's time in the spotlight has been characterized by a pattern of bullying people into submitting to his will. While Trump's support comes from a wide range of people – from diehard MAGA types with a cult-like obsession, to moderates who provide their support for economic purposes – he has managed to leverage this following to ensure that any elected Republican who defies him must fear being 'primaried' and losing their seat of power. Similarly, cabinet members

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have been chosen for their strict ideological fealty to Trump. This has created a political movement that does not permit dissent and demands near-religious-level loyalty to its leader, Donald Trump.

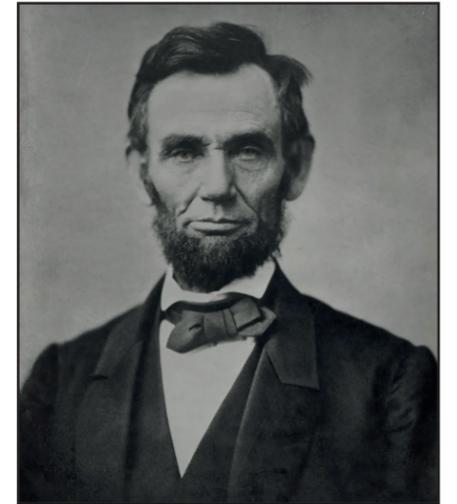
Frighteningly, this loyalty has in some cases proven stronger than loyalty to the United States, its fundamental founding principles, its historical precedents, and even its constitution. Many Republicans followed Trump's lead in refusing to accept the 2020 election. When Trump didn't initially reject the idea of a third term (an idea which he later acknowledged he would not pursue), many Republicans refused to do so as well, even suggesting that there were loopholes in the 22nd Amendment to allow Trump a third term. Similarly, his attacks on the judges who have stopped some of his executive orders demonstrate his hostility toward the principle of the separation of powers created by the Constitution almost 240 years ago.

This particular kind of challenge to the American system is without precedent in American history. However, the country has faced many other challenges, out of which new lessons and the nation as we know it have emerged. To overcome the challenges of Trumpism, one must understand that America has weathered other political storms and will survive this one, too.

Our country is not in its most divided time. In direct response to

the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 – a man everyone knew wanted to stop the spread of slavery into the nation's new western territories – southern states seceded from the Union, beginning the Civil War. While they did not deny the result of the election, the losers of the election were so dissatisfied with Lincoln's victory, they determined they could no longer remain part of the country. In this situation, of course, the United States was not going to be torn apart without a fight, and the Union prevailed after four years of the deadliest fighting in American history. Following the end of the war, the federal government began the process of Reconstruction, which, though it reintegrated the former Confederate states into the Union, completely failed at addressing the problems that newly freed black Americans would face. This failure led to the persistence of virulent racism in the South and to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. It also caused mass poverty and enormous economic disparities for the millions of black Americans living in the South. These vast challenges were confronted by the brave leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, and many were vanquished, though the legacy of centuries of racism and oppression remain evident. And while across the South some fringe radicals still sport "If at first you don't secede..." bumper stickers, for the most part, the South was reintegrated into the Union only a few years after the end of the American Civil War, showing that America can overcome even the most potent internal division – albeit

not without lasting consequences.



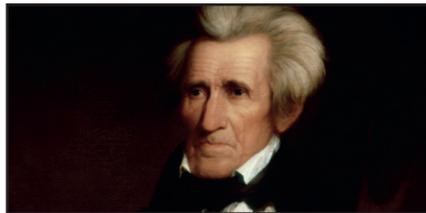
(Source: tinybeans)

There is also an analogy to Donald Trump in Andrew Jackson, the seventh president. Jackson's participation in slavery and infamous Indian Removal Act aside, his worse-than-subpar political behavior bore a number of similarities to Donald Trump's antics. Both are populists who have sought to muscle in on the power of other branches of government. Jackson, for example, ignored the demands of the Supreme Court with regard to the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation. Instead, Jackson (along with the State of Georgia) simply went ahead with his own will. Jackson did not enforce the decided position of the Supreme Court and instead allowed the State of Georgia to remove Native Americans from their land in direct rejection of the Supreme Court's decision. While Jackson later acknowledged that the Supreme Court did in fact hold ultimate authority, this did not undo the material effects of his lawbreaking. Jackson also appointed those he knew would be loyal

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to him, though to nowhere near the same extent as Trump. As a result, Donald Trump idolizes Jackson. Jackson's presence in history proves that although our country has gone through periods of populism that even approach mob rule, we can survive these and emerge a once-again healthy democracy.



(Source: Bettman Archive/Getty Images via History.com).

Similarly, the era-defining illiberal phenomenon of the 1950s, the Red Scare, has lessons to teach us today. This years-long period was one in which many Americans feared that Communist influence was pervasive in civil society and media. Led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, anti-Communist politicians suppressed Americans' fundamental civil liberties, including the right to freedom of speech. McCarthy's tactics bear similarities to some used by Trump today. The two both make heavy use of fear tactics, building on what are often irrational fears. Similarly, they demand complete and utter loyalty to their cause, and, in reality, to themselves. For example, anyone who defied McCarthy's policies was branded a Communist, and nowadays, those in his own party who reject Trump's movement are labeled "RINOs."

Both leaders, in doing this, are able to crack down on freedom of expression without doing so directly, instead using a kind of mob rule to enforce their illiberal will. However, people eventually saw McCarthy's authoritarian tactics for the sham that they were, and after McCarthy made a number of meritless accusations (including against U.S. military figures), he lost credibility and support.



(Source: The New Yorker).

McCarthy's downfall hits on an important fact that was true at the time and remains true today. At heart, Americans are a people who believe in liberal democracy. While some may get caught up in emotion and the heat of populism – as is human nature – the truth is that democratic republicanism has been part of our history for nearly two and a half centuries. Many Americans are misled by influential people like Trump to believe things that are simply untrue. As history has shown, challenges to our system, including those that may seem nearly insurmountable as we undergo them, can and will be overcome. Trump's influence on the country proves that there is a problem with our political health. After all, a 2023 Gallup

poll showed that a large majority of Americans (the largest yet) are dissatisfied with the state of democracy in the country. But this is temporary, and once we emerge, we will come with new lessons to teach the future that they may not allow demagogues to rise again. In order to reach that point, however, we will need Americans to remain true to the values this country stands for. While a bright future is not guaranteed, one ought to have faith in the American people to chart that path going forward.

LOOKING TOWARDS 2028: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

By HUDSON RABATIN



Source: Politico

It's shocking to reflect on the disruption caused by one man in the 100 days since the inauguration of the 47th President of the United States. Trump has dug the United States into a constitutional crisis. Global and domestic markets are extremely volatile, the Trump administration has illegally deported US citizens, the administration has deemed higher education an enemy and Trump fires those who do not agree with him. The Trump administration is on its fourth Commissioner of the IRS in fewer than 100 days. In the midst of all this turmoil, one would expect the Democrats to be stepping up to the plate, and firing at the pitch.

But they haven't. The Democratic Leadership—Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries—have not done all they can thus far. It is time for the Democratic Party to pick a new leader and new Senate and House leadership. The party needs fresh ideas to battle against this new Trump presidency.



(Source: Cory Booker).

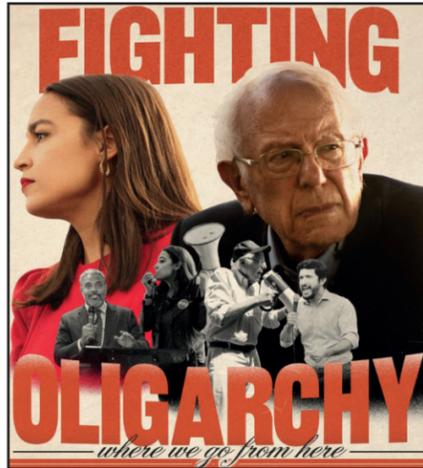
There is some hope. New Jersey Senator Cory Booker has come into the spotlight as a potential new face for the Democrats. At 7 p.m. on March 31st, 2025, Senator Booker performed a marathon Senate speech, which ended on April 1st at 8:05 p.m. This was a remarkable feat by Booker that will go down in the history books. In his speech, Booker gave an plea to his party, saying, "We all must look in the mirror and say, 'We will do better.'" Booker's 25-hour and 5-minute-long speech broke the filibuster record previously set by Senator Strom Thurmond in protest of the Civil Rights Act of

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1957. In a continuation of congressional protest traditions, on April 27th, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senator Booker hosted a sit-in protest on the Capitol building steps, advocating against the proposed GOP budget plan, which would cut roughly \$1.5 trillion in federal government spending. At the beginning of the sit-in, Booker stated, “That bill, we believe, presents one of the greatest moral threats to our country that we’ve seen in terms of what it will do to providing food for the hungry, care for the elderly, services for the disabled, health care, health care for the sick and more.” Cory Booker is charismatic, smart and determined. Booker is a well-rounded man, having played college football at Stanford, where he made the All-Pacific-10 Academic Team—illustrating both academic and athletic excellence. While people argue that Booker can lack policy identity and overly performative, he has consistently been active in advocating for social justice issues and visible presence during times of national tension portray how Booker is committed to public service. Given his experience and persona, Booker remains a significant figure who could begin a larger role in the future of the Democratic Party.

Next, the Fighting Oligarchy Tour, led by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), which shows a slight possibility for new leadership. The

Fighting Oligarchy Tour is a series of political rallies with a firm goal of opposing oligarchy and the sway billionaires and social elites currently have in Washington D.C. with President Trump.



(Source: berniesanders.com).

The tour has amassed sizable audiences, attracting 34,000 people in Denver and 36,000 in Los Angeles. The tour has not just focused on fighting the oligarchy in U.S. politics, but also on advocating for universal healthcare and education, increasing taxes on the wealthy, fighting the income disparity gap and corporate lobbying and generally advocating on behalf of the Democrats. While Sanders and AOC have been effective at highlighting issues of corruption and advocating for progressive reforms, their Democratic-Socialist platform is at odds with the platform of the broader Democratic party—particularly concerning public safety and governing style. According to a 2024 study conducted by Pew Research Center on voters’ policy priorities, these were the most important issues among both Harris and Trump supporters: Economy (81%), Health Care (65%), Supreme Court ap-

pointments (63%), Foreign Policy (62%), Violent Crime (61%), Immigration (61%), Gun Policy (56%), Abortion (51%), Racial and ethnic inequality (37%), and Climate Change (37%).

Credit must be given where credit is due—Sanders and AOC put much emphasis on the economy, especially through their critiques of the wealth gap, calls for universal healthcare/education and rhetoric around taxing the uber-rich. These issues certainly touch on economic justice and major reform. However, their messaging often lacks appeal to moderates and independents because it’s framed through ideological terms that many Americans view as radical. Moreover, they tend to deprioritize voter concerns like immigration enforcement, violent crime, and even foreign policy—which were very important areas in the 2024 election. While Sanders and AOC absolutely energize a strong progressive base, they risk alienating the centrist coalition that Democrats NEED to win national elections.

In the 2024 election the Democratic Party failed to create a unifying message that all sects of Democrats could get behind. The party made several mistakes, including having Biden drop out too late, holding no traditional open primary for the nominee and having the Harris-Walz campaign focus on the wrong issues. In the 2024 Presidential election, Harris campaigned mostly on protecting abortion rights, LGBT+ rights, more gun control, battling climate change, capping prescription drug prices, sending military aid to Ukraine and a ceasefire work-

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ing towards a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. For the most part, the issues she centered her campaign around were not among the main issues—besides healthcare—that American voters wanted to hear about.



(Source: NBC News).

Given this disconnect between progressive rhetoric and broader voter concerns, the Democratic Party must begin to think strategically about its future leadership. With hopes of having a Democratic president in 2028, the party needs a candidate who can energize the base while also appealing to independents and moderates on the most pressing issues: the economy, healthcare, crime, and immigration. A number of new Democratic figures are starting to emerge as viable alternatives to both establishment liberals and more progressive liberals. In my opinion, there are several Democrats who could emerge as strong presidential contenders in 2028, such as Governor Andy Beshear, Senator Cory Booker, Governor Gavin Newsom, Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Representative Ritchie Torres (who represents Fieldston’s district!), Governor Josh Stein, Governor Maura Healey, Senator Jon Os-

soff, and Governor Gretech Whitmer. Kamala Harris and Tim Walz are not among them. Americans have already seen Harris’s campaign fall flat once, and it’s doubtful that they’re eager for a repeat.

The Democrats have to do some real soul searching over the next couple years and figure out what they actually stand for. Potentially, the nation’s top Democrats should head to an outing, off the grid, and perform their own conclave, deciding who the next face of the party is. The Democrats have played this game of black-tie politics: running campaigns that are too focused on their true stances, which can lead to electoral defeat, or moderating their stances and having better odds. It may be sad to say, but that is just the game of politics. There are campaign focuses that can be significant political liabilities. If the Harris-Walz campaign had centered around more of the issues listed above, the duo may have won. The MAGA cult has portrayed “woke ideology” as the Democrats’ main philosophy, and the Democratic Party has done nothing in defense. The GOP spreads disinformation about Democrats, and has successfully damaged the Democrats’ political reputation. An idea the Democrats must ponder: how can they change their platform so that they can get so-called “wokeness” out of the American people’s minds? It is not that what the Democrats are campaigning for is wrong—they are very important issues—but strategically, they’re not as viable. Simply put, the American people don’t want to see an agenda of

things that they don’t care as much about (according to the Pew Research study). For example, where was the mention of gas prices, immigration, bringing housing costs down and grocery prices during the Harris-Walz campaign? Remember Trump’s dramatic news conference with two tables of groceries behind him; that scene undoubtedly resonated with many Americans who were concerned about daily costs of living.

As the Democratic Party gears up for the 2028 election cycle, they must make their platform exciting to the American people and construct a strategically strong political agenda. The Democrats are going to have to get their hands dirty while campaigning, and may have to veer away from their classic buttoned-up rhetoric. They must boast their successes more, and highlight the failures of the Trump administration and specifically the Trump economy. The Democrats must embrace a bolder, more aggressive approach, only then can the Democrats hope to energize voters to reclaim control of the national narrative. The path to victory in 2028 (and 2026) will demand both the grit and willingness needed to break from tradition.

THE UNITED STATES' EMERGING MILITARY-TECHNOLOGICAL COMPLEX

By Felix Steele



Source: Anduril Industries/Bloomberg

Decades of established American policy have been upended in the four months since Donald Trump returned to the White House. An axe-swinging Elon Musk has aimed to dismantle the federal bureaucracy, while Trump has pushed the limits of executive power. For many in Washington, it is a gloomy time, with organizational funding cut, ideologies overturned, and

an unpredictable president at the helm. Yet, the offices of upstart defense-tech contractors are abuzz: the new Trump administration has sent their prospects soaring.

Silicon Valley once shunned the defense market. For instance, Project Maven, a 2018 effort to enlist Google programming talent to military ends, was quietly shut down amid employees' protests. Venture-capital funding for mili-

tary firms was once scarce. Now, though, many of the hottest Silicon Valley startups sell to the military. Foremost among them is Palantir Technologies, a company that provides AI and data analytics to spy agencies that reportedly include the CIA and NSA. Its market value has shot up to almost \$300bn since the start of the Trump presidency. SpaceX, Elon Musk's satellite firm, handles government rocket contracts and is valued at

THE UNITED STATES' EMERGING MILITARY-TECHNOLOGICAL COMPLEX

By Felix Steele

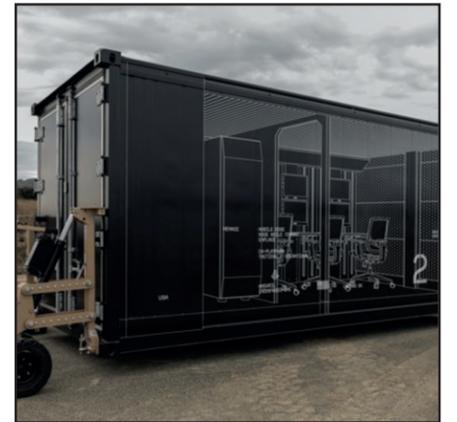
\$350bn: both it and Palantir have overtaken established giants like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies in market value. A wealth of smaller upstarts, like Anduril Industries and Shield AI, are snapping at their heels.

These firms claim to bring the tech mindset to the stodgy world of government contracts. Anduril, for instance, was founded by the Hawaiian-shirted Palmer Luckey, who created the Oculus VR headset company as a teenager before he was bought out by Facebook for \$2bn in 2014. Rather than bidding for government tenders, Anduril releases products like a private company: in anticipation of demand. These are snappily branded with names like Roadrunner (a drone interceptor, pictured alongside Luckey) and Barracuda (a cruise missile), and promoted with slickly-produced videos, some in anime cartoon style. They have won hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts, especially in border security and drone defense.

Fantastical though these companies may seem (Anduril and Palantir are both 'Lord of the Rings' references), and boosted though they may have been by the revolutionary fervor of the Trump administration, defense-tech startups are targeting a real gap in the United States' capabilities. The war in Ukraine has seen million-dollar tanks (both Russian and American-supplied) destroyed by drones

that cost a few thousand dollars and which any tech-savvy teen could assemble at home. Indeed, this has led the Marine Corps to scrap its 450 tanks. In contrast to the years-long procurement cycles of the U.S. military, Ukrainian forces have come to rely on an army of tinkerers who develop new weapons systems in weeks. That is a pace of development that the trillion-dollar bureaucracy of the U.S. Department of Defense, and the five lumbering arms-makers at the heart of the U.S. defense ecosystem, cannot match.

Anduril, Palantir, and their ilk want to change this. For instance, Anduril's electronic-warfare turret (intimidatingly named Menace) ships software updates to the Ukrainian front lines every evening, as new threats emerge. Palantir recently won a NATO contract in record time – six months for the tender to be awarded. Encouraging though these developments are, however, these companies are at risk of occupying a useless middle ground – one in which their systems are too expensive to match Ukrainian bargain-basement systems for disposability, but too cheap to rival established counterparts' for performance. For instance, Anduril's Roadrunner is reported to cost \$120,000 per unit – petty change by U.S. military standards, but no match for the makeshift Ukrainian solution of a shotgun zip-tied to a cheap toy drone. Indeed, Anduril hardware has received mixed reviews from the battlefield in Ukraine (though its software is, by all accounts, top-notch).



(Source: Anduril Industries/Defense One).

The problem seems to lie not in these companies' expertise – their technical chops are formidable, as Luckey's Oculus experience demonstrates – but in the U.S. government's purchasing restrictions. Military hardware is subject to intense quality-control requirements – according to a 2003 report, over 28,300 separate regulations – that ensure military systems are reliable. To a certain extent, these are sensible: a nuclear missile that blows up in its silo is worse than useless. Yet, applying the same standards uniformly, especially to small unmanned equipment like drones, risks inflating the cost of equipment that should be disposable. Sidestepping professionalized military production in favor of 3D-printers and hobbyist labs is part of what has allowed Ukraine to vastly outperform expectations on the battlefield. Allowing American contractors more leeway to roll out cheaper, less reliable products faster would help U.S. forces match the agility of competitors.

However, the prospect of a war-

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ighting environment in which the air is thick with cheap, simple, easy-to-produce drones raises the question: where lies the United States' competitive advantage? The U.S. used to have an advantage in precision munitions, but drones have made accurate guidance cheaper and more abundant. The United States is not the world leader in scale: China has the most established drone industry. One possible answer is artificial intelligence (AI): integrating hardware and software is an area in which American tech companies lead. Given the software excellence of the new wave of defense startups and promising attempts at AI targeting in Ukraine, it seems likely that companies like Anduril will seek to push AI as the United States' competitive edge.

If the Pentagon under the new Trump administration (Trump having historically been gung-ho when it comes to military spending) plays its cards right and invests in companies like Anduril, cheap, semi-autonomous lethal drones may become a standard part of the U.S. arsenal as the age of million-dollar blockbuster equipment fades. Trump must see that he builds new military capabilities, not just defund outdated ones. If the U.S. fails to invest in the new technology that is its greatest competitive advantage, the United States' military edge may go the way of the Ma-

rines' 450 tanks: to the scrapyard.

THE FUTURE OF THE DOLLAR

BY HUDSON MARSHALL



Source: Financial Times

For over 70 years, the U.S. dollar has been the world's reserve currency, meaning it's commonly held by central banks around the globe as part of their foreign currency reserves. The global demand for the U.S. dollar has made it a highly desirable currency, thereby inflating its value. This inflated value typically keeps the price of imported goods cheaper and makes interest rates on U.S. federal loans lower, which is crucial for a country where a one percent increase in interest rates on its nearly \$36 trillion debt adds \$360 billion to the annual budget. Additionally, the dollar's dominance allows the U.S. to enact crippling sanctions

on countries it deems a threat to its national security or a threat to its foreign policy goals. These benefits of a dominant dollar have been instrumental in building the United States' influence and economy.

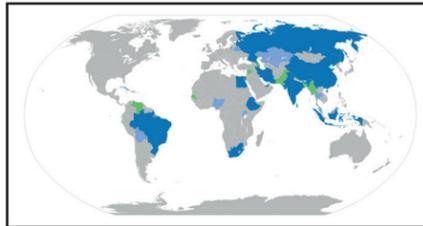
Over the last couple of years, and especially after the election of President Donald Trump, the dollar's unquestionable dominance has begun to waver. Emerging nations, such as China and Russia, are beginning to voice concerns about the financial and geopolitical power of the dollar. Russia has been especially anti-dollar ever since the United States imposed significantly more sanctions on it following its invasion of Ukraine

in 2022. China, on the other hand, opposes the U.S. dollar as it is vulnerable to sanctions from the United States if it ever attempts to expand into the South China Sea. Additionally, China detests that they are bound to American monetary policy as they are forced to keep around \$800 billion in U.S. treasuries for international trade. In order to combat the dollar's dominance, China and Russia, along with other nations in the BRICS organization (an economic alliance involving Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE), have begun to discuss the creation of a new currency to challenge the

THE FUTURE OF THE DOLLAR

By HUDSON MARSHALL

U.S. dollar. This new BRICS currency, while unlikely to exist, still underlines the international community's growing dissatisfaction with the United States' dominance of the world economy through the



BRICS member states (Source: Wikipedia).

International competition is not the sole threat to the dollar's throne. Recently re-elected President Trump has voiced initiatives that could negatively impact the dollar's position in the world economy. Trump has made revitalizing U.S. manufacturing a key objective in his next four years of presidency. He intends to achieve this primarily through tariffs, which would make U.S. goods more competitive in the domestic market. He also intends to decrease the value of the dollar by lowering interest rates, as decreasing the value of the dollar can give the same result as tariffs for exports. If the value of the dollar decreases, American exports suddenly become cheaper for consumers outside the United States as their local currency will have a more favorable exchange rate. This plan to devalue the dollar threatens its position as the

world's reserve currency because it could trigger a crisis of confidence amongst the international community. Artificially manipulating a currency can cause other nations to worry about its stability. The dollar was originally trusted by central banks as it was pegged to gold, meaning that for every dollar in circulation, there was one dollar worth of gold held by the U.S. government. It is now trusted as it's backed by the largest economy in the world and a relatively stable government. Changing the dollar's value through various policies could cause the international community to worry and, therefore, begin to look to other nations for a more stable and trustworthy currency.

Even with all the uncertainty, the dollar is unlikely to drop completely as the world's reserve currency. A situation involving a slow decline has presented itself as much more likely. Currently, there are no suitable challengers to the dollar. It's doubtful that BRICS is cohesive enough to put forward a joint currency or to leverage one of the nations' current currencies into a position of power on the global stage. Additionally, though unstable, the U.S. economy has continued to perform well, and the U.S. government has generally proved to be stable regardless of Trump's irrational actions.

JAVIER MILEI'S LIBERTARIAN CURE TO ARGENTINA'S ECONOMIC DISEASE

By JACKSON WANG



Source: Ricardo Pristupluk via AP.

It has been a year and a half since Javier Milei was elected president of Argentina in December 2023. It has also been a year since I published my article, "Javier Milei and the Hope of Economic Transformation in Argentina." In this article, I discussed the gloomy prospects of Argentina's debt and inflation-ridden economy and outlined Milei's courageously radical plan to revive it. His proposed policies reflected an embrace of libertarianism and capitalism, and stand starkly at odds with the

leftist agenda that had dominated Argentina for more than 60 years. Milei inherited a nation in crisis, and with more than one-third of his four-year term behind him, just how well has he challenged Argentina's economic disaster?

At the heart of Argentina's dire fiscal situation was a political system that encouraged unbounded government spending and extreme overregulation set up by former Argentine President Juan Perón in the 1940s. His pro-labor, state-driv-

en ideology dominated the political environment for the following decades and ultimately drove Argentina's economy into the ground. Milei has promised to use his anti-Perónist chainsaw to aggressively cut this political system down and replace it with the classical liberal policies that made Argentina prosperous a century ago.

The Perónist practice of endless money printing and borrowing to fund massive government

JAVIER MILEI'S LIBERTARIAN CURE TO ARGENTINA'S ECONOMIC DISEASE

By JACKSON WANG

subsidies, social programs, and state-controlled industries led to frequent debt crises and spiraling inflation. In 2023, prior to Milei's election, Argentina's inflation rate sat at around 130%, ranking it fourth-highest in the world. Persistent budget deficits driven by this unsustainable spending led to recurring sovereign defaults (the International Monetary Fund has bailed Argentina out more than 20 times) and recessions. Unsurprisingly concerned, foreign investors quickly withdrew their financial support, further isolating a country already separated from the world by protectionism. While poverty skyrocketed and employment dropped, Perónist leaders refused to cut back on social spending for fear of losing political support.

Milei came into office with two priorities: downsizing the government and deregulating markets. He planned to achieve the first goal by eliminating half of the government's ministries, drastically cutting public spending, and privatizing many state-owned businesses. He planned to achieve the latter through scrapping regulations and currency and price controls, a Perónist practice that had long led to severe consumer goods shortages.

In his first year and a half, President Milei moved quickly. His efforts to cut the budget succeed-

ed in eliminating roughly 30% of government spending. He slashed or merged the number of government industries from 18 to 8, laid off more than 30,000 government employees, shrunk welfare programs, scrapped energy and transportation subsidies, paused almost all public infrastructure projects, eliminated much funding to local governments, and froze public sector wages and pensions, which had been heavily inflated for the past several decades. His cuts have drawn heavy backlash from many Argentines, especially those reliant on social programs. Yet, while it may be painful, it is a necessary pill to swallow if the country wants a sustainable budget. Severe budget tightening for Argentina is not a matter of ideological cruelty but one of survival. The country simply cannot continue funding everything from its bloated public sector to its costly subsidy programs with money it does not have but creates through printing. Fortunately, Milei has emphatically halted the Central Bank's money printing, breaking from a practice that fueled runaway inflation.



A demonstrator holds a giant doll depicting President Javier Milei during a protest demanding the reincorporation of state workers laid off in Buenos Aires on April 5, 2024 (Source: Natacha Pisarenko via AP).

Deregulating the country was an-

other priority, and one on which Milei has swiftly executed. For years, Perónist overregulation burdened businesses with excessive controls, discouraging foreign investment and creating a bloated, inefficient bureaucracy. Businesses wanting to expand were instead met with layers of red tape, arbitrary restrictions, and unpredictable government intervention. To address this, Milei created the Ministry of Deregulation and State Transformation, headed by Federico Sturzenegger, which has averaged roughly two deregulations per day since its inception. Milei's measures eliminated or modified existing regulations in a free-market-oriented direction that spanned all industries. Milei also trimmed capital controls (measures that prevent capital from leaving the country) with the intention of attracting foreign investment.

Devaluing the peso has been another priority. With inflation far ahead of the controlled exchange rate, foreign currencies are suddenly worth a lot less. For example, a single U.S. dollar is officially worth 1,145 pesos at the time of writing — but with inflation surging, that same dollar buys less and less in real goods and services locally, unless the exchange rate keeps pace. To address this imbalance, the government initiated a crawling peg devaluation in which the peso is devalued by 2% each month, allowing, for instance, a single U.S. dollar to buy more pesos as time goes on. A weaker peso makes foreign currencies worth more, enticing foreign spending on Argentine goods. However, the

JAVIER MILEI'S LIBERTARIAN CURE TO ARGENTINA'S ECONOMIC DISEASE

By JACKSON WANG

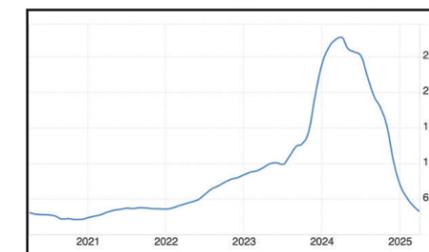
peso remains overvalued since inflation, currently at a monthly rate of 2.8%, beats the peso's rate of devaluation. The government is now hoping its fiscal austerity will further lower inflation to converge on the crawling peg rate. Milei has also seriously explored replacing the peso entirely with the far more stable U.S. dollar — a process known as dollarization. However, he has pointed to strong political resistance as a key obstacle.

Milei has drafted plans to privatize more than fifty state firms. State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Argentina suffer from chronic mismanagement, operating without profit incentives and shielded from competition, leaving them with little motivation to improve services and productivity. Milei's plan to privatize SOEs will reduce the fiscal burden on the state, attract private investment, and deliver more competitive services to the Argentine public.

On taxes, Milei has withheld lowering taxes across the board in fear of reducing much-needed government revenue. However, Milei has initiated tax breaks for companies investing in key sectors like energy and technology, giving Argentine companies a chance to regain ground against their foreign competitors.

The improvement in Argentina's economy has been undeniable and

remarkable. According to the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) reports in April, Argentina's annual inflation rate stands at 47.3%, as compared to 211% in December 2023, when Milei took office. Monthly inflation stands at 2.8%, as compared to 25.5% in December 2023. Lower inflation has prompted the Central Bank to cut interest rates from 133% in December 2023 to 29%, attracting businesses and consumers to start borrowing and spending again. Milei's ban on printing pesos to finance the government and his drastic cuts to government spending, though painful, have successfully put Argentina on the path to achieving a sustainable inflation rate. A less widely recognized driver of Argentina's falling inflation has been Milei's rapid elimination of regulations, policies that have, for years, distorted prices and reduced competition. For instance, Milei ended rent controls in December 2023, leading to a tripling in the supply of rentals in Buenos Aires and a 30% drop in price. In another example, the government's move to open the market to Starlink and other telecommunication companies has brought connectivity to large swaths of Argentina while lowering internet prices.



Argentina's inflation rate in the past 5 years (Graph: INDEC).

Milei's cuts to government spend-

ing have also brought Argentina its first budget surplus in over two decades. In fact, Milei achieved a balanced budget in his first month in office. With a fiscal surplus, the country can rebuild market confidence, ease borrowing costs, draw in foreign investment, protect Central Bank reserves, and improve the country's debt outlook.

The country's economic recovery hasn't been entirely rosy. Poverty rates initially climbed to a record high of 52.9%, and GDP continued to contract, as sudden cuts to social programs, public works, and subsidies reduced support and incomes for vulnerable groups. Protests erupted around the country, demanding the restoration of state-funded social services. Fortunately, the rapid fall in inflation boosted consumer purchasing power, reducing the poverty rate to 38.1% as compared to 41.7% prior to Milei, and a 2.1% fourth quarter growth in GDP, the country's first in six consecutive quarters, lifting the economy out of recession. Growing economic activity was also driven by a trade surplus, as foreign investment and purchasing outweighed capital flight.

Income inequality remains a significant challenge in Argentina, with the wealthiest 10% earning 24.5% of total income. However, inequality has slightly eased under Milei's administration. In 2022, the top 10% held 29.8% of income, while the bottom 20% earned just 5.4%. Today, the bottom 20% accounts for 8.6% of income, reflecting a modest im-

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provement in income distribution, though it remains a problem.

It is a new era for Argentina. Milei will likely continue his fiscal austerity, market-friendly reform, government downsizing, and currency stabilization. His success cannot be ignored, though it has come at a painful cost. While his volatile, sometimes erratic, personality (as evidenced by his MAGA sympathies and use of a chainsaw at political rallies) is off-putting, Milei's fiscal policies have largely worked. Flor Maffaia, a retired Argentine school teacher, captures the sentiment of many: "It was difficult to vote for him at first... but I see that more and more Argentines are realizing every day that his plans are working ... There's a new wind (of hope) in Argentina."

Milei's ability to extend his plan is dependent on the success of his party, La Libertad Avanza (Freedom Advances), in local and federal elections. While the Perónist coalition, Unión por la Patria (Union for the Homeland), has been mired in political infighting, it remains unlikely that the party that has dominated Argentine politics for more than sixty years will disappear. The next presidential election will remain crucial, as power risks returning to the Perónists and, with them, the undoing of all forms of economic revival Milei has brought about.

Regardless of the outcome in the next election, Javier Milei has made a serious case for libertarianism and capitalism. His policies should inspire other fiscally profligate countries — in the Americas and around the world — to similarly escape state-driven practices and embrace the free market.

A NATION WITHOUT A STATE:
THE PALESTINIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

By VERA KOONTZ



Source: Hazem Bader/AFP via Getty Images

“Whose land is it?” This question lies at the heart of the Palestinian nationalist struggle. It’s a question tangled in the collapse of empires, the drawing of borders by foreign entities and the establishment of Jewish settlements by Zionist immigrants with a vision of a Jewish homeland. For Palestinians, nationalism is not an abstract ideal. Palestinian nationalism emerged in response to loss of land, autonomy, and recognition—and has evolved into a fight for political self-determination.



The Ottoman Empire: 1350 to 1918 (Source: Palestine Portal).

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From the early 16th century until the end of World War I, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. Though formally governed from Istanbul, Ottoman authority in the region was often indirect. Administrative control shifted over time—from Damascus to Sidon and Acre—until 1887, when the area was reorganized into the districts of Nablus and Acre under the province of Beirut, while Jerusalem remained an autonomous district reporting directly to the capital. In practice, local elites held real power. Leaders like Dahir al-Umar and Ahmed al-Jazzar operated as semi-independent rulers in northern Palestine and Acre, consolidating authority through trade monopolies, taxation, and military control. Their rule brought a degree of stability and even earned recognition from Istanbul, but it also reinforced elite dominance, curbed local political autonomy, and increased dependence on European markets.

In the 19th century, Ottoman reformers sought to modernize their weakening empire. During Egypt's brief occupation of Palestine (1831–1840), Egyptian authorities implemented policies of increased taxation, land registration, and the encouragement of foreign missionary activity. These reforms continued under restored Ottoman control, which was accompanied by a growing presence of European

consulates, commercial missions, and general influence. The 1858 Land Law, designed to formalize private land ownership, instead opened the door to foreign land acquisition. Backed by European Zionist organizations, early Jewish immigrants and settler groups began purchasing land—sometimes from absentee landlords, some of whom were Arabs themselves. These sales at times displaced Palestinian farmers, contributing to growing unease about their futures.

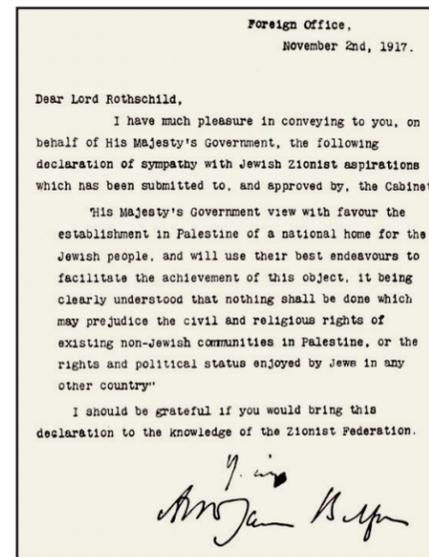
By the turn of the 20th century, Arab nationalism was growing across the Ottoman Empire. Palestinians took part in this movement, serving in the Ottoman parliament and participating in the Arab cultural revival known as the *Nahda*. But as Zionist immigration accelerated, a distinct Palestinian national identity began to take shape—not just as part of a broader Arab awakening, but as a direct response to demographic, political, and territorial change.



Source: BBC.

After World War I, Britain took control of Palestine under a League of Nations mandate. It was a prom-

ise wrapped in contradiction: the British pledged to create a “national home for the Jewish people,” as stated in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, while also ensuring “that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities.” Historians recognize, though, that British policy increasingly favored the Zionist project, granting it institutional support and legal recognition. Palestinian political aspirations often faced substantial obstacles, and their leadership felt that Mandate authorities failed to address Arab concerns. For many Palestinians, these obstacles created the impression that they were subjects, not citizens, in a persisting British-colonial system that prioritized Zionist political aspirations.



The Balfour Declaration.

As Jewish immigration grew—18,000 newcomers between 1919 and 1921, swelling to over 400,000 by the mid-1930s—Palestinian political organizing intensified.

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By ADIA STOKES

The Arab Higher Committee, led by Grand Mufti Amin al-Husseini, demanded an end to immigration and land transfers. When petitions failed, resistance turned militant.

The Arab Revolt (1936–1939) was a defining moment in the realization of Palestinian nationalist identity. It was a mass uprising against both British rule and Zionist expansion, combining armed attacks and political boycotts. Britain responded with aerial bombardments, mass arrests, and public executions. Though British forces ultimately suppressed the revolt, it demonstrated the extent of Palestinian opposition to British policies and the un-enforced regulations on Zionist immigration, in turn highlighting the significant military measures the British employed to maintain control.

World War II brought new urgency. With the Holocaust devastating the European Jewish community, the push for a Jewish state intensified. Zionist militias, including Irgun and LEHI, carried out attacks on British targets. In 1946, the King David Hotel in Jerusalem was bombed. In 1944, Lord Moyne was assassinated in Cairo. In 1939, the British government issued the White Paper aiming to cap Jewish immigration into Palestine; however, Zionist groups largely ignored these restrictions and continued to facilitate im-

migration. Following World War II, U.S. President Harry S. Truman persuaded Britain to admit 100,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors into Palestine. Palestinian leaders, many of whom had supported the Allies under the promise of fair treatment, perceived this shift in British policy as a betrayal.



Source: BBC.

The Arab League tried to intervene diplomatically, calling for a democratic resolution that respected all residents of Palestine. The Arab League advocated for a unified Palestine with protections for minorities but rejected the 1947 UN Partition Plan, which proposed dividing British Mandate Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Under this plan, the Jewish state would receive 56% of the land, despite Jews comprising less than a third of the population and owning less than 7% of the land at the time. The subsequent UN vote in favor of partition was met with rejection by Palestinian Arab leaders and Arab states, further fueling Palestinian nationalism and contributing to the radicalization of segments of the movement. War followed.

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion—Executive Head of the World Zionist Organization and Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine—proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv. This declaration, known as the Israeli Declaration of Independence, marked the end of the British Mandate over Palestine and the beginning of Israel as an independent nation. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which followed Israel's declaration of independence and the subsequent invasion by Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, over 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes amid the fighting. This mass displacement is known to Palestinians as the Nakba, or ‘Catastrophe’. Israeli forces depopulated and destroyed more than 400 Palestinian villages during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Refugees poured into Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank, many never to return to their homes. For Palestinians, the Nakba was not just a humanitarian disaster—it was a foundational trauma that both redefined and unified their collective identity around dispossession and exile.



Source: BBC.

A NATION WITHOUT A STATE:
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Nearly twenty years later, Israel’s victory in the 1967 Six-Day war further reshaped the region. Israel now occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Over 300,000 more Palestinians became displaced. Under Israeli occupation, Palestinians in these territories face military administration, land confiscations for military purposes and settlement construction—which, in many contexts, is considered illegal under international law—restrictions on movement, and violence from settlers, alongside ongoing conflict and armed resistance.

Post-war, these events pushed the Palestinian nationalist movement into a new phase—less reliant on Arab states and more defined by its own political institutions. The PLO, founded in 1964, emerged as the central body of resistance. After the war, it came under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and his Fatah movement, which emphasized armed struggle and refugee mobilization. Militant groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) also took shape, reflecting a turn toward what some Palestinians considered radical, self-directed resistance, but what Israel and the international community considered terrorism. In 1974, the United Nations recognized the PLO as the

representative of the Palestinian people. At this point, Palestinian national identity had emerged as a distinct and independent movement. While it remains connected to the wider Arab world culturally and historically, the identity of Palestinians—one shaped by collective memory—has evolved into a separate and more focused expression of nationhood.

Though fragmented and often contested both from within and without, Palestinian nationalism continues to endure—not as a relic of past conflict but as a living movement, still defined by unanswered questions of land, rights, and self-determination. Despite ongoing occupation and geopolitical pressure, Palestinian identity—not yet fully realized—remains anchored in a shared history of loss, an assertion of existence amidst ongoing conflict over land and rights. The fractured legacy of the British Mandate, along with the subsequent wars and inflammatory politics across the region, have contributed to the Palestinians’ continuing quest for statehood and self-determination. The failure to uphold the promises put forth in the original Mandate for Palestine condemned Palestinians to an inescapable condition—as a nation without a state.

AFRICA’S GROWING GLOBAL INFLUENCE

By JAVIN GASCA



Source: African Union

From the scorching sand dunes of the Sahara Desert to the vibrant cultural centers of Cape Town and Johannesburg and the lush highlands of the Congo, Africa is a continent alive with promise. Africa was once a peripheral player in global politics, but its countries are now establishing themselves on the world stage and engaging in growing international discourse. With a young and growing population, vast natural resources and a restored focus on regional integration, the continent is not only positioning itself as a partner, but a power. No longer content with being a passive recipient of foreign policy decisions, Africa is stepping confidently into the spotlight on its own terms.

This transformation is largely due to a population boom. By 2050, it is expected that the continent will

be home to about 2.5 billion people, over a quarter of the global population. In contrast to aging populations in Europe, the United States and Asia, Africa’s population is dynamic and increasingly connected. This demographic momentum is not only fueling domestic change, but also elevating Africa’s strategic importance to the rest of the world. A young workforce represents not just labor, but innovation, economic power and future global leadership.

Already, African youth are demanding more from their governments: more transparency, more accountability and more opportunities. Social movements highlighting the plight of young Africans in countries like Senegal, South Africa and Nigeria are growing online.

For instance, in Kenya, 2024 saw Gen Z activists organize mass protests against a controversial finance bill, with The Guardian noting that “tech-savvy young people used social media to educate, mobilize, and ultimately force the government to withdraw the bill.”



Gen Z protesters in Kenya (Source: CSIS).

In Uganda, where 78% of the population is under 30, youth have used platforms like Twitter and TikTok to engage in electoral campaigns such as #UGVotes2021, using “memes and videos to sim-

AFRICA'S GROWING GLOBAL INFLUENCE

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plify complex political issues” and drive participation (Wilson Center, 2021). As citizens become more digitally engaged, governments are modernizing their services through digital reforms. For instance, the Ghanaian government launched the Ghana.gov portal in 2021, which is a centralized digital platform for accessing public services and making payments. The government asserts that Ghana.gov will reduce corruption opportunities, improve public trust and make government services more accessible to ordinary citizens. Since its rollout, Ghana.gov has demonstrated significant success in achieving these objectives. As of February 2024, the platform has facilitated over 17 billion (USD) in revenue collection, underscoring its effectiveness in streamlining financial transactions and enhancing transparency. This substantial revenue generation reflects the growing trust and confidence of citizens and businesses in digital government platforms, marking a paradigm shift towards digital-first governance that prioritizes convenience, accessibility, and accountability in service delivery.

Another example of how youth citizen pressure is driving meaningful policy reform is Sierra Leone’s Free Quality School Education (FQSE) initiative, launched in 2018 in response to growing public demand for better access to education. The program eliminated school fees for primary and

secondary education, increased teacher recruitment and improved learning materials across the country. Citizen activism is transforming African institutions through this initiative.



Source: The Sierra Leone Telegraph.

At the same time, Africa’s economic landscape is undergoing a profound shift. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which officially launched in 2021, has created the largest free trade zone in the world by number of participating countries. By reducing trade barriers and fostering cross-border cooperation, AfCFTA aims to accelerate industrialization and make African economies more competitive globally. This economic awakening has not gone unnoticed. Major powers like China, the United States and Russia are racing to deepen their ties with African nations. Various global and regional actors have invested billions of dollars in Africa’s infrastructure, energy, and technology. The European Union (EU) has also invested extensively in Africa, particularly in energy, sustainable development, and technology. The EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund focuses on energy, transport, and water projects. In 2021, the EU and the African Union launched a partnership aiming to invest over 300 billion Euros in infrastructure

and technology across the continent by 2030.

Similarly, during climate negotiations, African nations have emerged as strong voices pushing for climate justice, sustainable financing and support for those most affected by environmental change. As the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) emphasized at the 2021 COP26 summit, “Africa contributes the least to global emissions but suffers the most from the impacts of climate change, and it is imperative that the international community provides greater support for adaptation and financing” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). Yet what’s most striking today is the changing dynamic of these relationships. African leaders are no longer passive partners; they are negotiating deals that reflect national and continental priorities. Countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Ghana are increasingly seen as policy innovators and diplomatic leaders in their own right. For example, Rwanda has actively positioned itself as a diplomatic leader in Africa. In 2024, the country hosted the inaugural Africa Climate Summit and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA6), reinforcing its role in global environmental governance. Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi highlighted Kenya’s achievements, stating, “Today, we celebrate six decades of remarkable diplomatic milestones that have positioned Kenya as a regional and global powerhouse.”

AFRICA'S GROWING GLOBAL INFLUENCE

By JAVIN GASCA



Source: Nax Today.

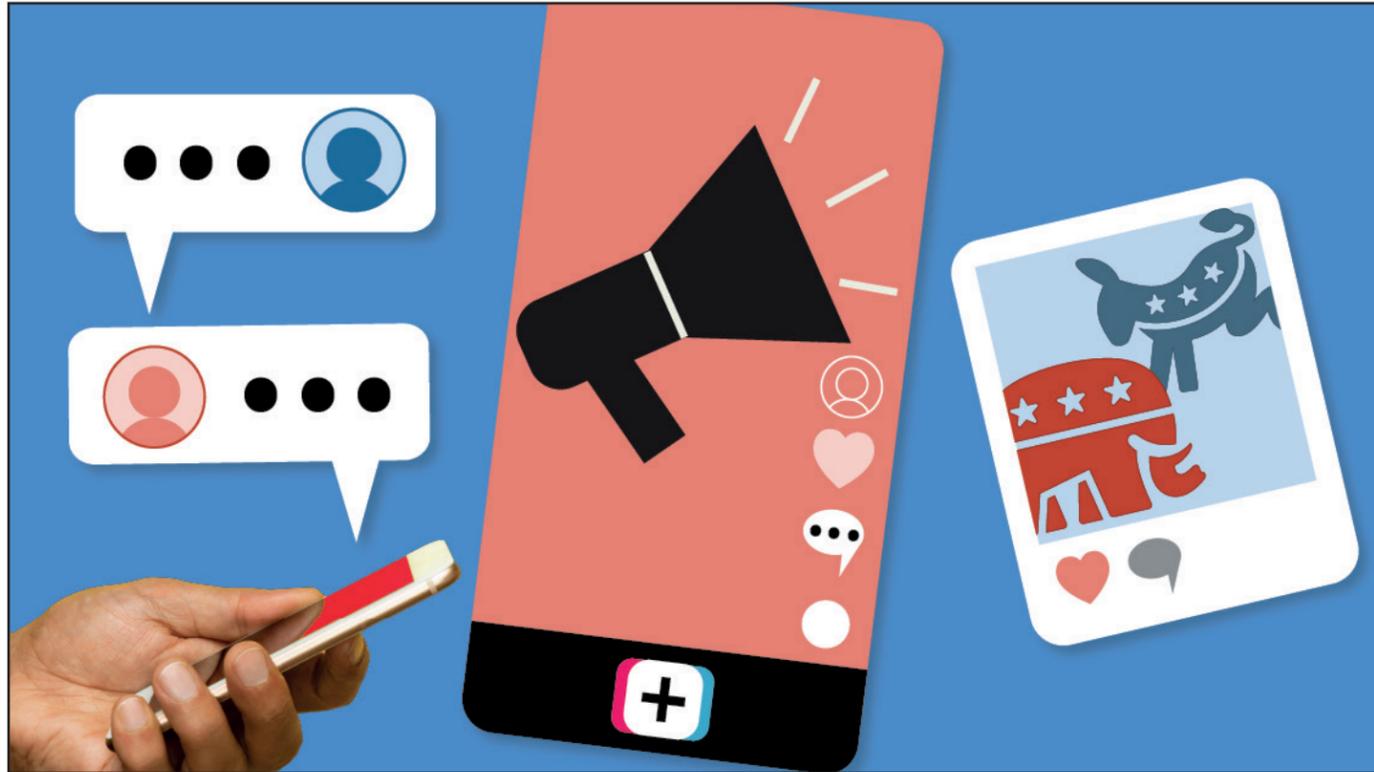
On the global scale, Africa has successfully demanded a louder voice. In 2023, the African Union received a permanent seat on the G20, an international forum for global economic cooperation, marking a major milestone in the continent’s fight for increased global representation. This seat was not merely symbolic. It was a recognition of Africa’s geopolitical and economic weight, and a signal that future global challenges cannot be addressed without African leadership. In the United Nations, African politicians are calling for reform on the UN Security Council, where an African nation currently lacks a permanent seat. With more than 1 in 4 African UN states suffering from cultural and political violence, African diplomats argue persuasively that global governance must better reflect today’s multipolar world.

The road ahead is not without obstacles. Political instability continues to plague parts of the continent, particularly in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Debt, unemployment and corruption remain

serious challenges. War and terrorism rage on in Somalia, Mali, the Congo, Sudan and Ethiopia. But the momentum behind progress is clear. A new generation of leaders — reform-minded, tech-savvy, and globally connected — is charting a different path for Africa’s future. People no longer view Africa through the lens of dependency, crisis, and barbarism. It is being recognized for its potential, its agency and its growing prominence in shaping global conversations. As the continent continues to integrate, innovate and influence, the message is unmistakable: the era of African influence is not coming, it’s already here.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AMERICAN POLITICS: MORE INFORMED OR MORE DIVIDED?

BY SAM FIROOZI



Source: Pew Research Center

The American electorate is becoming more reliant on social media platforms to inform them on the key political matters that dictate their vote. According to their research published in 2024, the Pew Research Center reported that more than half of American adults (54%) received their news at least sometimes from social media, which continues an increased trend over the last decade. Facebook and YouTube are the most common social media sites where Americans receive their news. The remaining sites that vie for Americans' political attention include Instagram (20%), TikTok (17%),

and X, formerly known as Twitter (12%). Another commonly used site for younger generations includes Snapchat (5%). Interestingly, even though some sites have smaller audiences online, their viewers get the majority of their news from that site, which speaks to the specific influence some of these sites have on Americans using these apps. X is a prime example; 59% of X users get their news on that site. The same is true for Truth Social, Donald Trump's social media platform, where 57% of its users get their news primarily from that site. These numbers for both sites are increasing, with

up to a 50% increase at Truth Social since 2023. The same report broke down the demographics of the users and how they consume news and politics. Women make up a majority of news consumers for sites like TikTok (62%), Facebook (60%), Snapchat (60%), and Instagram (59%). On the other hand, men made up large numbers of users on X (64%), Truth Social (58%), and YouTube (57%).

Other very telling statistics held specific political ramifications, such as 48% of news consumers on WhatsApp being Hispanic and LinkedIn having the largest number

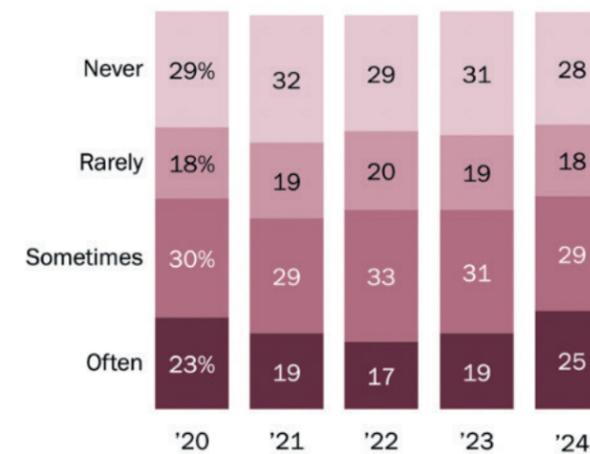
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AMERICAN POLITICS

BY SAM FIROOZI

of news consumers being college educated (55%). These statistics speak to the cultural and socioeconomic divide in these different apps. There were also clear differences in political allegiances when it came to these sites. Truth Social news consumers were 88% Republicans, whereas Democrats made up a majority of users on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. So, what does all this data mean in terms of the effect of social media on American politics? The answer is that social media has assumed a huge role in American politics, with an effect we are only beginning to understand.

News consumption on social media

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media ...



Source: Pew Research Center.

Many observers and experts have increasingly been sounding the alarm bell on the political polarization effect of social media in the U.S. Political experts Paul Barrett, Justin Hendrix, and Grant Sims have published their concerns in a recent Brookings Institution publication. They state: "Our central conclusion, based on a review of more than 50 social science studies and interviews with more than 40 academics, policy experts, activists, and current and former industry people, is that platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter likely are not the root causes of political polarization, but they do exacerbate it." Partisanship is not a new concept in American politics. Some would say it is part of the DNA of politics in the U.S. However, studies have shown that social media appears to serve as an accelerant to further divide the opposing sides of the political spectrum, which includes mainly Democrats and Republicans. One of the primary tenets of social media platforms is to keep their users constantly engaged, to direct news consumers to eventually consume whatever is being advertised by corporations on the platforms. How do the social media platforms

keep the mouse on that wheel? The answer is by creating AI-generated popularity-based algorithms that capture the attention of their users. The user is fed news that aligns with their politics, further polarizing the American public. These algorithms do not provide opposing views from other political parties, and most of them reinforce the personal politics of their users. The result is a digital echo chamber that Americans cannot escape.

When it comes to the actual content, putting aside the high emotions that are involved in the political exchanges that occur on these sites, there is also concern with the accuracy and truthfulness of the information shared. Unlike traditional news sites, which are held to a journalistic standard of vetting all information shared with no bias, social media sites have far less vigorous checks and balances. According to Peter Suci from Forbes magazine, "the bigger concern should be that by allowing and perhaps even promoting a 'them versus us' mentality, social media has effectively polarized populations by providing a constant stream of disinformation alongside biased, one-sided perspectives and outrage." Even though some of the political information shared on social media is biased and one-sided, there is also a divide in the level of trust about the information from the different political parties. In a 2025 report from the Pew Research Center, Republicans appear to have more trust in social media platform news delivery than in the past, with Donald Trump back in

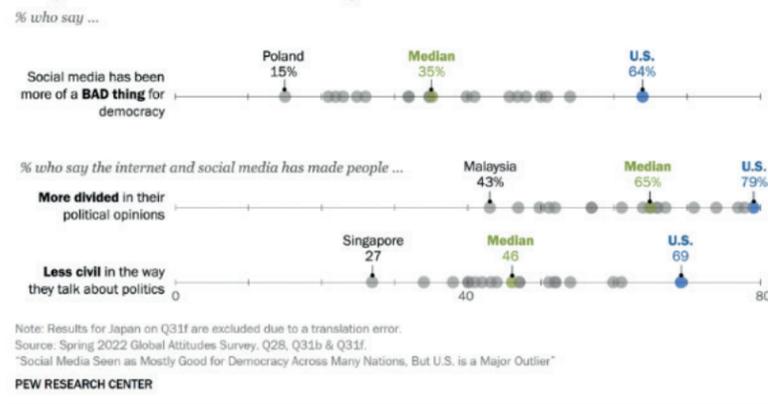
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN AMERICAN POLITICS

By SAM FIROOZI

office after the 2024 Presidential Election. According to authors Elisa Shearer and Kirsten Eddy, who compiled the report, “They (Republicans) are now more likely than last year to say they have at least some trust in the information that comes from social media sites (45% vs. 37%, an 8-point increase). Republicans’ trust in social media has been increasing steadily since 2021, when 19% said they trust the information that comes from social media at least some ... compared with 38% of Democrats”. There are even differences within the specific parties. Conservative Republicans are less likely than moderate/liberal Republicans to trust news from social media, and conservative/moderate Democrats are less likely to trust social media compared to liberal Democrats. There is also an age gap when it comes to news presented on social media. Only 28% of Americans older than 65 trust the information on these sites. The opposite is true for younger Americans. 54% of Americans ages 18 to 29 (the first generation to grow up with social media) have at least some trust in the news when it comes from social media, according to the same Pew Research Center report. If this is an accurate trend, then news from social media is here to stay.

What about how Americans feel about what social media means for democracy compared to other countries in the world? According to Richard Wike from the Pew Research Center, “There are substantial cross-national differences on this question, however, and the United States is a clear outlier: Just 34% of U.S. adults think social media has been good for democracy, while 64% say it has had a bad impact. In fact, the U.S. is an outlier on a number of measures, with larger shares of Americans seeing social media as divisive.” Wike also found differences in the political parties, stating that “Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party (74%) are much more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners (57%) to see the ill effects of social media on the political system.” Yet despite this data, larger and larger shares of Americans are turning to social media for their news. This likely means that Republicans and Democrats will be less and less likely to trust any news that is not in keeping with their political views, further polarizing Americans in the future. While some may argue that news can be accessed more readily via social media websites, it remains clear that this access has counterproductively created more divisions among Americans. As a result, even though social media has appeared to have created a more informed public, has it also created a more divided republic?

More Americans see negative political impact of the internet and social media, compared with other countries surveyed



Demographic profiles and party identification of regular social media news consumers in the U.S.

% of each social media site's regular news consumers who are ...

	Facebook	YouTube	Instagram	TikTok	X (Twitter)	Reddit
Men	39%	57%	39%	36%	64%	68%
Women	60	42	59	62	35	31
Ages 18-29	22	24	39	45	38	43
30-49	41	37	41	38	36	46
50-64	22	23	13	13	19	9
65+	15	16	6	4	7	3
High school or less	42	37	32	44	31	27
Some college	30	31	31	31	29	28
College+	28	31	37	24	40	44
White	56	48	39	41	51	53
Black	12	16	17	16	16	13
Hispanic	21	20	28	33	19	16
Asian*	6	10	10	6	9	12
Rep/Lean Rep	50	50	37	39	47	34
Dem/Lean Dem	43	45	58	55	48	63

* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.
 Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanic adults are of any race.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 15-Aug. 4, 2024.
 PEW RESEARCH CENTER

THE LINE OF CONTROL:
THE UNENDING STRUGGLE FOR KASHMIR

By SHAAN DALY



A caravan in Kashmir. Photograph circa 1950s. Control for the scenic Himalayan valley has been a point of conflict between India and Pakistan for decades.

In Led Zeppelin’s epic “Kashmir,” the lyrics evoke a dreamlike image of sunlit landscapes and distant horizons. The real Kashmir, however, is far removed from the rock-ballad fantasy. While its natural beauty is undeniable, it is overshadowed by a brutal history of political violence. A militant ambush in late April, in which gunmen killed dozens of Hindu pilgrims in Indian-administered Kashmir, set off a fierce new cycle of strikes. India vowed to

“take out” militant camps allegedly based across the Line of Control, and on May 6, it launched what it called Operation Sindoor, a 25-minute barrage of missile attacks that targeted “terrorist infrastructure.” The operation, according to Indian officials, did not claim any Pakistani civilian lives and did not harm economic or military sites. The Indian government framed its actions as a preemptive strike against terrorism. The attack struck Pakistan’s heartland

in Punjab, the first such incursion since 1965, when India and Pakistan fought a full-scale war. In the wake of the operation, Pakistan denounced the strikes as a blatant breach of its sovereignty, reporting dozens of civilian casualties, and vowed to retaliate “at a time, place and manner of its choosing.” Within hours, the region had entered its most dangerous confrontation in decades, as both governments mobilized forces along the divid-

**THE LINE OF CONTROL:
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By SHANN DALY

ed Himalayan frontier. A ceasefire was brokered on May 10 by the U.S., although both armies still reported heavy cross-border shelling and occasional drone fire on the volatile line of contact. Violence has subsided for nearly a month, and tourism levels in Kashmir have almost returned to normal. The latest surge of violence, however, did not occur in a vacuum—and it is unlikely to be the last. To comprehend the present turmoil, it is first necessary to examine the region’s tumultuous history—a long and tangled past defined by small skirmishes, full-scale war, insurgency, failed peace treaties, and constitutional revisions.

**The Seeds of Unrest
1947**

The India-Pakistan rivalry over Kashmir has its roots in the 1947 partition of British India. During independence, Britain split India, its former colony, into two different countries. The first was Pakistan (split into east and west), with a Muslim majority. The other country, consisting mainly of Hindus, kept its name: India. The fate of the princely state Kashmir, however, remained unknown. Besides the politics of nationalism involved, the fight over Kashmir can be assigned to its military value due to its borders with China and Afghanistan. It also includes the

Siachen Glacier (world’s highest battlefield), as well as key mountain passes critical for surveillance and defense. Additionally, it contains the headwaters of the Indus River system, making it a vital source of water for both India and Pakistan’s agricultural and energy needs. India and Pakistan both quickly laid claim to Kashmir following the Indian partition. Initially, the Kashmiri Maharaja, Hari Singh, was unwilling to submit his sovereignty. Eventually, though, he chose to accede to India in return for military aid against invading Pakistani tribal militias. Years later, when the former ruler of Kashmir passed away in 1961, the New York Times would describe his actions in his obituary as contributing to a “continuing bitter dispute between India and Pakistan.” Singh’s decision sparked the first Indo-Pakistani war of 1947-48, and a United Nations-brokered ceasefire established a de facto Line of Control dividing Kashmir. India would control roughly two-thirds of the area, and Pakistan the other third. The dividing line was not supposed to be a permanent political settlement.



Indian troops stationed on the Baramulla road defending Kashmir from Pakistani invaders. Nov. 9, 1947 (Source: WHRO).

**Declaration of Arms
1965**

It was the summer of 1965. Political tensions were already high. Skirmishes in the south area of Kashmir escalated into full-scale war when Pakistan conducted an offensive across Kashmir’s ceasefire line. The war lasted three weeks, and was short-lived yet bloody. In January 1966, an agreement was signed that would settle any future disputes through peaceful means.



Indian troops prepare for war (Source: Prahlo).

**Lines Drawn
1972**

In 1971, India intervened in a regional war to help East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, gain independence. During the war, India and Pakistan became determined to resolve the issue of Kashmir. In December of 1972, the Simla Agreement was signed between the two nations, reaffirming the Line of Control as the boundary. A New York Times correspondent at the time described India-Pakistan relations over Kashmir as one of “goodwill and mutual understanding.”

**THE LINE OF CONTROL:
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Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (left) and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (right) after signing the Simla Agreement (Source: BBC).

**Insurrection
1987**

By the late 1980s, both countries had tested nuclear weapons, dramatically raising the stakes. In 1987, contention over the possibility of a rigged local election would lead many Kashmiris to militancy. Pakistanis supported and even promoted this insurgency. Into the 2000s, Kashmir state police would report thousands of bombings, shootings, abductions, rocket attacks, and other assaults. Relations between the two nations were on edge.



Indian forces beat Muslim protesters at a demonstration during a curfew in Kashmir in 1993 (Source: WHRO).

**Failure of Diplomacy
1999**

In 1999, the prime minister of Pakistan invited the Indian prime minister over to Pakistan for peace talks in an unprecedented display of diplomacy. An Indian prime minister had not visited Pakistan in over a decade. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to healthy relations, especially with each foreign power possessing nuclear arms. The meeting culminated in the Lahore Declaration, which aimed to establish a framework for peaceful relations and dialogue. Yet, three months later, war erupted once more. Infiltrators from Pakistan had taken control of areas within Indian-administered Kashmir. The Pakistani government denied that it had any involvement in the siege, pinning the operation on independent freedom fighters, yet both India and Western analysts believed this to be false. The Pakistani prime minister was eventually overthrown in a military coup, led by the very general who was believed to have ordered forces to invade Kashmir.



Indian and Pakistani prime ministers meet on the Line of Control (Source: Paki Mag).

**Autonomy Revoked
2019**

In 2019, after a militant suicide attack killed 40 Indian soldiers in Pulwama, a city in the disputed Kashmir, India retaliated with air strikes on targets in Pakistan. This led to a brief aerial skirmish that caused casualties on both sides. In August 2019, India controversially revoked the special constitutional status of Kashmir, integrating the disputed region more tightly into India’s union. Islamabad publicly condemned this as a “grave injustice,” and froze peace talks and recalled its ambassadors. However, real red lines had already been crossed. Over the past few years, India has garrisoned the region with tens of thousands of troops, imposed strict security measures, and promised to root out militant networks. Meanwhile, Pakistan has continued to insist that Kashmiris deserve self-determination and that Islamabad would back any diplomatic or proxy efforts to oppose India’s control. Yet it remains unclear what Pakistan’s true intentions would be if Kashmir were to gain independence—whether it would respect such sovereignty, seek to exert influence, or even move to integrate the region under its own administration. This uncertainty complicates the narrative, suggesting the conflict is not simply India versus Pakistan or India versus Kashmir, but a more layered contest over who defines Kashmir’s future—and whether that future would genuinely reflect the will of its people.

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The conflict over Kashmir must not merely be seen as a geopolitical dispute. It is a human tragedy that is defined by war, broken diplomacy, and deep mistrust between these two nations. From the violent partition of 1947 to the present-day missile strikes and military escalations, Kashmir has become a symbol of unresolved national trauma for both India and Pakistan. Despite numerous agreements, peace declarations, and diplomatic gestures, the region remains locked in a cycle of violence, with civilians bearing the greatest cost.

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