**RAFFLES INSTITUTION**
**YEAR 6 GENERAL PAPER 2023**
**STUDENTS' INFORMATION PACKAGE**

**Unit: Politics and Governance I**



Note: Those in bold denote foundational readings

# 1. Introduction

*Politics and Governance I* is meant to introduce students to basic concepts in politics. Specifically, systems of government, with a particular focus on democracy (it being the dominant form of government in the world today), the tension between individual rights and state needs, and between government and the media.

As you work through this package, you should seek to (i) know the classical definitions of the terms *politics*, the *state* and *citizens*, (ii) know what the roles of a government are, and decide for yourself which, in your opinion, are the most important roles, qualifying your opinion with evidence. Crucially too, **aim to have a good grasp of the essential understandings on the next page and the reasons for each**.

This basic package will be continued in Term II with *Politics and Governance II,* which takes an in-depth look into Singapore's politics.

**What this package is:**

This package is meant to supplement your learning in class by spurring independent thinking and facilitating active discussion on questions and key issues. It is also intended for self-study to gain content knowledge, as well as reflection upon key issues raised. The articles in this package are selected and customised to be of the standard of comprehension expected of an A-level candidate. Related examination questions are highlighted beneath each article—these are meant to guide your thinking and focus your learning. For students interested in going further, links and suggested readings are provided where appropriate. For students requiring background information, particularly with regards to specific countries, additional links are also provided beneath the appropriate articles.

**What this package is not:**

This package is NOT an exercise in memory and regurgitation, nor is it a "model answer". General Paper is not about thoughtless memorisation of facts and/or essay scaffolds. It is about close reading of sources, critical analysis of issues raised, and the formation and clear expression of your own logically sound opinions, which are substantiated by factual evidence.

## 2. Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions:

**Enduring Understandings:** What will students understand as a result of this unit?

***Countries' methods of governance are shaped by a range of historical and socio-economic factors.***

**EU1:** Whatever the choice may be in method of governance, there will be advantages and disadvantages, effects and consequences on the people, economically and socially.

***Governance is about negotiation between tensions. These tensions can happen on multiple levels.***

**EU2:** The tension between individual freedom and social stability always requires compromise.

**EU3:** The tension between individual freedom and the amount of power vested in the state always requires compromise.

**EU4:** The tension between the needs of the majority and those of the minority always requires compromise.

**EU5:** The tension between how resources are managed and allocated over the long-term and short-term always requires compromise

**EU6:** The tension between domestic interests and global pressures always requires compromise.

***The increasing influence of the media on society has an impact on governance.***

**EU7:** The media can shape the public's perceptions of and behavior towards political actors/institutions, consequentially aiding or hindering governance.

### Essential Questions: What are the essential questions of this unit?

1. Is government necessary and/or avoidable (in all aspects of life)?
2. What is good governance?
3. How do competing values influence political discourse?
4. Can we have effective democratic government without knowledgeable and aware citizens?
5. Should governments be required to allocate resources to help those who are responsible for their own problems?

# 3. For Further Reading and Viewing

## Recommended news articles from Global Issues in Context:

*Log on to IVY → RI Library → E-Resources → E-Database → Global Issues In Context → type key words in the news article in the search function.*

1. Politics (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. 2nd ed. 2008)
2. Democracy (International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences 2nd ed. 2008)
3. Aid to Developing Countries (Global Issues in Context Online Collection. 2018)
4. Digital Information Privacy (Global Issues in Context Online Collection. 2018)

## Recommended videos from BBC Active Kanopy Play:

*Log on to IVY → RI Library → E-Resources → E-Database → E-Video → BBC Active Kanopy Play. Note that this resource is accessible only via the school's local network.*

1. The Weathermen (terrorism)
2. Junk Food Mums (government policy and personal responsibility in healthcare)
3. Egypt: Children of the Revolution (The Arab Spring)
4. Wikileaks: Secrets and Lies

## Recommended reading:

*1)* Introduction to philosophers on politics (Hobbes: *Leviathan Ch. XIII*, Aristotle: *Politics*, Plato: *The Republic*, Machiavelli: *The Prince*
*2)* George Orwell: *Politics and the English Language*
*3)* Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (autobiography of the 'Iron Lady')
*4)* Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (another autobiography; an insight into the intellectual and political formation of one of Britain's most famous female leaders)
*5)* Jung Chang: *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (the true story of three generations of women, including the effects of communism, Mao's government and the Japanese occupation in China)
*6)* John Kampfner, *Freedom for Sale: How We Made Money and Lost Our Liberty* (examines how capitalism and economic success can create an environment that undermines democracy)

## Recommended documentaries/films:

- **Fahrenheit 9/11** (Michael Moore's view on how the Bush administration used the 9/11 event to push its agenda in Afghanistan and Iraq.)
- **Spying on the Home Front** (a PBS online documentary about national security measures vs. privacy: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/homefront/view/)
- **Good Night, and Good Luck** (on McCarthy's anti-Communist witch hunts in 1950s USA and some journalists' uncompromising response to it.)
- **Syriana** (a geopolitical thriller that focuses on petroleum politics.)
- **Game Change** (movie about the 2008 US Presidential campaign when Sarah Palin ran for Vice President and the problems with the democratic process of elections)
- **Trumping Democracy** (documentary tracing Trump's election win, questioning the process and relevance of the Electoral College and highlighting disturbing factors brought on by the digital age)

# 4. Related Cambridge and RI Essay Questions

### A. Cambridge Exam Questions

1. 'Too many historical figures are famous for the wrong reasons.' Discuss. (Cambridge 2022)
2. 'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true? (Cambridge 2021)
3. 'What an individual eats or drinks should not be the concern of the state.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2021)
4. Should politicians pursue the popular viewpoint or their own convictions, if they conflict? (Cambridge 2020)
5. Is modern technology a benefit or threat to democracy? (Cambridge 2020)
6. 'In a free society, there should be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss. (Cambridge 2020)
7. To what extent is human life in general about the survival of the fittest? (Cambridge 2020)
8. To what extent can any society claim to be great? (Cambridge 2020)
9. How far should countries have relations with others whose human rights record is poor? (Cambridge 2019)
10. To what extent should income inequality be a goal in your society? (Cambridge 2019)
11. Consider the view that social media has more influence than politicians. (Cambridge 2019)
12. A leader's responsibility should always be to his or her own country, not other nations. (Cambridge 2019)
13. To what extent is the pursuit of continuous economic growth a desirable goal? (Cambridge 2018)
14. 'In the global village in which we inhabit, there is no justification for national boundaries.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2018)
15. Discuss the view that all countries have an equal responsibility to counter terrorism. (Cambridge 2018)
16. 'Foreign aid does not solve long-term problems.' To what extent is this a fair viewpoint? (Cambridge 2018)
17. Consider the view that we do not take enough responsibility for our own well-being. (Cambridge 2018)
18. Do events, rather than politicians, shape the future? (Cambridge 2017)
19. 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2016)
20. Considering the money involved, should developing countries be allowed to host major sporting events? (Cambridge 2016)
21. 'Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone's opinion is of equal value.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2016)
22. When a government's finances for social welfare are limited, should they be directed towards the young or the old? (Cambridge 2015)
23. In times of economic hardship, should a country still be expected to provide financial and material aid to others? (Cambridge 2014)
24. 'The world would be a better place if more political leaders were women.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2013)
25. To what extent is it possible 'to make the punishment fit the crime'? (Cambridge 2013)
26. How far is increased prosperity for all a realistic goal in your society? (Cambridge 2013)
27. How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion? (Cambridge 2013)
28. 'The key criterion for good government is how well the economy is managed.' Is this a fair assessment? (Cambridge 2012)
29. Consider the view that efficient government is more important than democracy. (Cambridge 2011)

**B. RI Exam Questions**

1. 'Small countries are helpless in shaping global politics.' Do you agree? (RI 2022 Prelims)
2. To what extent are the young truly concerned about politics? (RI 2022 Y6 Common Test)
3. 'The key to good governance is in staying accountable to the people.' How far do you agree? (RI 2022 Y6 Common Test)
4. To what extent is meritocracy in your society still desirable? (RI 2022 Y6 Common Test)
5. 'State censorship of the media is no longer necessary today.' What is your view? (RI 2022 Y6 Timed Practice)
6. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
7. Should the state intervene in matters relating to one's body? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
8. When faced with limited resources, how far should a country invest in sport? (RI 2021 Y6 Common Test)
9. To what extent should politicians have a say in scientific research? (RI 2021 Y6 Common Test)
10. 'It is harder than ever for voters to make the right choices in elections today.' Discuss. (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
11. 'We are less free than before.' How far do you agree with this view of modern society? (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
12. Is patriotism always desirable? (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
13. 'People, rather than the government, should be responsible for their own well-being.' Comment. (RI2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
14. To what extent is health seen as a personal responsibility in your society? (RI 2021 Y5 Promo)
15. 'Race has no place in politics today.' How far do you agree? (RI 2020 Y6 Prelim)
16. To what extent do young people have a significant voice in political affairs? (RI 2020 Y6 Timed Practice)
17. 'Freedom of speech is key to building a strong democracy.' To what extent is this true? (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
18. Do those who challenge the status quo have a place in your society? (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
19. Consider the view that individuals, not the state, are in the best position to determine their overall well-being. (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
20. Assess the view that your society is not doing enough to eradicate prejudice. (RI 2019 Y6 Prelim)
21. To what extent is poverty the fault of the individual? (RI 2019 Y6 Prelim)
22. To what extent is progress achieved at the expense of our welfare? (RI 2019 Y6 Prelim)
23. Consider the argument that it is impossible to solve climate change in today's world. (RI 2019 Y6 Prelim)
24. How far should governments interfere in the way individuals organise their lives? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
25. How far is punishment an effective solution to crime? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
26. 'Politics is often more concerned with power than with people.' Is this a fair statement? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
27. In the light of increasing security threats, should countries still embrace the notion of a borderless world? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
28. Consider the notion that reaching a consensus is an ideal way to govern. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
29. Assess the view that government regulation is the best way to achieve a trustworthy media. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
30. Should the responsibility of taking care of the elderly fall solely on the government? (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
31. 'Now more than ever, the arts should be subject to government censorship.' Comment. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)

32. Should politicians be expected to always tell the truth? (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
33. 'Surveillance of the people is a necessary evil.' Discuss. (RI 2018 Y6 Prelim)
34. Assess the view that international organisations are mostly ineffective. (RI 2018 Y6 Prelim)
35. Should a government always listen to its people? (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)
36. 'The provision of financial or material aid to countries in need does more harm than good.' Discuss. (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)
37. Is it ever justifiable for people in society to make decisions for those who are unable to do so? (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)
38. Do you agree that efforts by the government to ensure greater inclusion in your society have done more harm than good? (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
39. In times of economic hardship, should a government be expected to provide financial support to the arts? (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
40. Should young people take a more active interest in politics, even when it is not directly relevant to their lives? (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
41. Discuss the claim that the digital age has made it more challenging for political leaders to govern today. (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
42. To what extent should the state have a right to intervene in the decisions of individuals when it comes to matters of health? Discuss this with regard to your society. (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
43. Do monarchies still serve any purpose in today's society? (RI 2018 Y5 Promo)
44. Should refugees be viewed as a burden in modern society? (RI 2018 Y5 Promo)
45. Consider the effectiveness of social activism in your society. (RI 2018 Y5 Promo)
46. 'Political leaders have no right to impose their own values and beliefs on the people they govern.' Do you agree? (RI 2018 Y5 CT)
47. 'A nation that simply complains.' Is this a fair comment about your society? (RI 2018 Y5 CT)
48. 'A country should take care of its own interests before others.' What is your view? (RI 2018 Y5 CT)
49. 'Business should have no place in politics.' Do you agree? (RI 2017 Y6 Prelim)
50. Is it ever justified to sacrifice human rights for a country's progress? (RI 2017 Y6 CT2)
51. In times of economic hardship, is it acceptable for a government to spend on weapons and its armed forces? (RI 2017 Y6 CT2)
52. 'At a time when the world needs capable leadership, many politicians do not seem to be up to the job.' Do you agree? (RI 2017 Y6 CT2)
53. How far should the State be allowed to restrict individual rights when security is at stake? (RI 2017 Y5 CT1)
54. Is it reasonable to expect politicians to be completely honest? (RI 2016 Y6 CT2)
55. In the world today, a nation's economic success is nothing more than a case of luck.' Is this a fair assessment? (RI 2016 Y6 CT2)
56. 'A good government should always put the interests of the majority first'. Discuss. (RI 2016 Y6 CT1)
57. How far do you agree that freedom has been destructive for society? (RI 2016 Y5 Promo)
58. Should your government do less for its people? (RI 2016 Y5 Promo)
59. 'The State has no place in the private lives of its citizens.' Do you agree? (RI 2015 Y6 Prelim)
60. Is it ever justifiable to execute criminals? (RI 2015 Y6 CT2)
61. 'Democracy is essential for a country to become a developed nation.' Do you agree? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)
62. 'Laws are the most effective way to combat prejudice and discrimination.' How far would you accept this view? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)
63. 'Freedom of speech should be a privilege, not an entitlement.' How far would you agree with this statement? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)
64. 'It is better to be an entertainment celebrity than a politician today.' What is your view? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)

65. 'The key to a nation's success lies in economic growth.' Discuss. (RI 2015 Y5 Promo)
66. 'Personal privacy and national security cannot co-exist.' Comment. (RI 2015 Y5 CT1)
67. Should society pay more attention to the needs of criminals? (RI 2015 Y5 CT1)
68. 'Censorship is both harmful and futile in today's society.' Comment. (RI 2014 Y6 Prelim)
69. 'Pragmatism is more important than morality.' Discuss this with reference to politics. (RI 2014 Y6 Prelim)
70. To what extent have people given up their freedom for comfort? (RI 2014 Y6 Prelim)
71. 'The environment should be the responsibility of the individual, not the government.' Comment. (RI 2014 Y6 Prelim)
72. Should governments prioritise social welfare above overall economic growth? (RI 2014 Y6 CT1)
73. How far is the media responsible for promoting democracy in your society? (RI 2014 Y6 CT1)
74. 'For the sake of security, a nation has every right to monitor its citizens.' Discuss. (RI 2014 Y6 CT1)
75. Consider the view that people in your society have unrealistic expectations of their government. (RI 2014 Y5 Promo)
76. To what extent is healthy debate encouraged in your society? (RI 2014 Y5 Promo)
77. Should the state involve itself in matters relating to the family? (RI 2013 Y5 Promo)
78. 'Democracy means more than having the right to vote.' Discuss. (RI 2013 Y6 CT 2)
79. What priorities would you set for government expenditure in your country and why? (RI 2013 Y6 CT 2)
80. 'An educated people can be easily governed.' Is this a valid statement? (RI 2012 Y6 Prelim)
81. 'Women are not suited for politics.' To what extent is this true? (RI 2012 Y6 Prelim)
82. Is it ever justified to spend large amounts of public money on national defence? Discuss this with reference to your country. (RI 2011 Y6 Prelim)
83. 'Governments have a right to censor undesirable elements of their nations' history.' Do you agree? (RI 2011 Y6 Prelim)
84. Do you agree that the tools of social media have reinvented social activism? (RI 2012 Y6 CT2)
85. Do you think that your society will benefit from more freedom? (RI 2012 Y6 CT1)
86. 'Fine in principle but failure in practice.' How far do you agree with this assessment of democracy? (RI 2012 Y6 CT1)
87. 'The government always acts in the interest of the people.' Discuss. (RI 2011 Y6 CT1)
88. 'Democracy is not for everyone.' Comment. (RI 2011 Y6 CT1)
89. Is it always the responsibility of the state to help the poor? (RI 2011 Y5 Promo)
90. 'Restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions.' Discuss this with reference to your society. (RI 2010 Y6 CT2)
91. 'At the end of the day, government is all about teamwork and partnership.' Comment. (RI 2010 Y6 CT2)
92. Should nation-building be on the media's agenda? Discuss this with reference to your country. (RI 2010 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION A: GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE*

### Reading 5: Primer - A Glossary of Basic Political Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **authoritarianism** | • a belief in, or practice of, government 'from above', in which authority is exercised regardless of popular consent. Authoritarianism thus differs from authority, as the latter rests on legitimacy, and so arises 'from below'. Authoritarian regimes emphasize the claims of authority over those of individual liberty. |
| **capitalism** | • an economic system in which trade & industry are controlled by private owners for profit |
| **centre** | • a political party or group holding moderate opinions between two extremes |
| **checks and balances** | • the system of dividing power among the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) to prevent any one from having too much power. Each branch has some authority to check the power of the others, thereby maintaining a balance among the three |
| **communism** | • a social system in which property is owned by the community and each member works for the common benefit<br>• a political doctrine or movement seeking to overthrow capitalism and establish a form of communism; such a system established in the former USSR and elsewhere |
| **constitution** | • the principles according to which a country is organised |
| **demagogue** | • a leader whose impassioned rhetoric appeals to greed, fear, and hatred |
| **democracy** | • government by the whole people of a country, especially through representatives whom they elect<br>• a country governed in this way [from Greek *demos* = people, + *-cracy*] |
| **dictator** | • a ruler who has unrestricted authority, especially one who has taken control by force |
| **failed state** | • A failed state is a state that is unable to perform its key role of ensuring domestic order by monopolising the use of force within its territory. Failed states are no longer able to operate as viable political units, in that they lack a credible system of law and order. They are no longer able to operate as viable economic units, in that they are incapable of providing for their citizens and have no functioning infrastructure. Although relatively few states collapse altogether, a much larger number barely function and are dangerously close to collapse. |
| **governance** | • governing, control |
| **government** | • governing, the system of method of governing<br>• the group or organisation governing a country<br>• the State as an agent |
| **left wing** | • those who support a more extreme form of socialism than others in their group |
| **liberal** | • tolerant, open-minded, especially in religion and politics |
| **mandate** *(noun)* | • authority given to someone to perform a certain task or to apply certain policies |
| **meritocracy** | • government or control by people of high ability, selected by some form of competition |

| | |
|---|---|
| **nation** | • a large community of people of mainly common descent, language, history, etc., usually inhabiting a particular territory and under one government |
| **nationalism** | • a patriotic feeling or principles or efforts<br>• a movement favouring independence for a country that is controlled by or forms part of another |
| **partisan** (parti-**zan**) | • a strong and often uncritical supporter of a person, group, or cause |
| **parliament** | • an assembly that makes the laws of a country |
| **patriarchy** | • Patriarchy literally means 'rule by the father', the domination of the husband–father within the family, and the subordination of his wife and his children. However, the term is usually used in the more general sense of 'rule by men', drawing attention to the totality of oppression and exploitation to which women are subject. |
| **policy** | • the course or general plan of action adopted by a government, party, or person |
| **politician** | • a person who is engaged in politics, an MP |
| **politics** | • the science and art of governing a country<br>• political principles or affairs or tactics |
| **populism** | • used to describe both distinctive political movements and a particular tradition of political thought. Movements or parties described as populist have been characterised by their claim to support the common people in the face of 'corrupt' economic or political elites. As a political tradition, populism reflects the belief that the instincts and wishes of the people provide the principal legitimate guide to political action. Populist politicians, therefore, make a direct appeal to the people, and claim to give expression to their deepest hopes and fears. |
| **redistribution** | • a narrowing of material inequalities brought about through a combination of progressive taxation and welfare provision. |
| **regime** | • a method or system of government or administration |
| **republic** | • a country in which the supreme power is held by the people or their elected representatives, or by an elected or nominated president |
| **right wing** | • those who support more conservative or traditional policies than others in their group |
| **socialism** | • a political and economic theory advocating that land, transport, natural resources, and the chief industries should be owned & managed by the State<br>• a policy/practice based on this |
| **state** (often State) | • an organised community under one government *(the State of Israel)* or forming part of a federal republic *(States of the USA)*<br>• civil government with established boundaries and jurisdiction |
| **statesman/stateswoman** | • a person who is skilled or prominent in the management of State affairs |
| **technocracy** | • a government or social system that is controlled or influenced by experts in science or technology |
| **totalitarianism** | • a form of government in which no rival parties or loyalties are permitted, usually demanding total submission of the individual to the requirements of the State |

## *SECTION A: GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE*

**Reading 6: Politics and the State** **EU 2-4**

**These readings will help you to:**
- Get a definition of "politics" that can serve as the basis of further discussion
- Understand what typically defines a "state"
- Compare 3 classic notions of "citizens", "the state" & "politics", and reflect on their relevance today

**a. "Politics"**

The origins and evolution of a word – its etymology – can tell us much about its essential meaning(s). The etymology of the word "politics" is provided by two sources as follows:

- Late Middle English: from Old French *politique* 'political', via Latin from Greek *politikos*, from *politēs* 'citizen', from *polis* 'city' *[from Google search @ "politics meaning"]*
- 1520s, "science of government", from *politic* (adj.), modelled on Aristotle's *ta politika* 'affairs of state', the name of his book on governing and governments *[from Online Etymology Dictionary]*

From this, we can draw a basic meaning of "politics" as *management ("governance") of a group of people ("citizens") who live and function within a specified geographical boundary ("city")*. We can then reasonably extend the meaning to describe ***the governance of a group of people within specific shared geographical, socio-cultural & economic "boundaries" – i.e. running a "state".***

---

**b. The "State"**

*[http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles/risefall-state.htm]*

We can define a "state" according to two key criteria suggested by political scientist Daniel J Elazar:

- **Centralized power and authority of some over others/all.** The first recognizable nation-states were monarchies, which advocated the divine right of kings to protect central power and authority. After a series of revolutions, kings were stripped of their exclusive power and this was replaced by a system in which new centers of power formed. The latter were ostensibly based on popular consent of citizens, but often, ***power was still centralized***, now vested in "representative assemblies" and "executive officers" speaking in the name of the state (i.e. a group chosen to make decisions on behalf of everyone else)

- **Striving for homogeneity.** For a nation-state to function optimally, people within the shared geographical boundaries ("nation") need to subscribe to the same set of rules ("state"). This was/is done either *internally* (e.g. exerting pressure on citizens to comply with specific rules and laws; denying minority groups certain rights, to mark them as "non-citizens" who do not "belong" – e.g. denying identification documents to certain ethnic groups) or *externally* (e.g. invading neighboring territory where people similar to one's citizens live, to exterminate or expel those not of the same nationality – e.g. via conquest & wars).

If we synthesise these two criteria, we can define a "state" as follows: *a geographical, socio-cultural, economic entity whose citizens strive for and accept specific ways of life defined according to parameters set by a smaller group with centralized power & authority (whether willingly given by the former or forcefully seized by the latter).* ***How this "state" is managed*** *would then be considered the* ***"politics" of that state****.*

---

## *SECTION A: GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE*

**Reading 7: Classic notions of "Citizens", "State" and "Politics"** **EU 2-4**

"What is the best way to manage a state and its citizens?" This is a central question in politics. The table below provides the views of three prominent philosophers, with each one's notion of *ideal* politics shaped by his belief in what the *essential nature* of human beings is.

| ***ISSUE*** | **PLATO** *[Greek, 428-348 B.C.E.]* | **THOMAS HOBBES** *[English, 1588-1679]* | **JOHN LOCKE** *[English, 1632-1704]* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Human nature (i.e. what defines a typical citizen") | Man must be "true" to his "natural calling/purpose". | Man is ruled by selfish, aggressive impulses, yet has an element of rationality. | Man is by nature a good & social creature, and can learn from his experiences. |
| Man in relation to others | People are divided into 3 groups, according to their "natural purpose": workers (who do manual labour for society); soldiers (who look after society); and guardians (who govern society). A "just" state is where each person does what is "natural", contributing in a way consistent with his "natural" talents and inclinations. | Each person is vulnerable to all others; no one is safe. Reason tells us that (1) protecting ourselves from all others improves our chances of a better life; (2) it is in our self-interest to join with others to create a power over all of us that will have the function of deterring each individual's natural aggressiveness. | People mostly keep their promises and honour their obligations, and, though this "state of nature" is insecure, it is mostly peaceful, good, and pleasant. Violent conflicts, if they occur, are often ended by the forcible imposition of a just peace on evil doers, and peace is normal. |
| How best to co-exist & keep the peace in the "state" (a.k.a. ***the social contract*** - an implicit agreement among the members of a society to cooperate for social benefits) | Plato warns against ambition, upward or downward mobility, and doing something simply because it is popular or simply because you have the power to do it. Each of these actions can lead us away from our "nature" and bring unhappiness to ourselves and "injustice" to the state. | We can only live in peace together by subjection to the absolute power of a common master, who will leave us alone unless we act aggressively toward another. Knowing this, we will be able to live full, active, productive lives unencumbered by any unnecessary intrusions from this power. | We can and do live together in peace by refraining from molesting each other's property and persons. We give up our right to ourselves exact retribution for crimes in return for impartial justice backed by overwhelming force. We retain the right to life and liberty, and gain the right to just, impartial protection of our property. |
| Where power is centered | The "guardians" are most "naturally" suited to lead. And philosophers are "naturally" suited to comprise the guardian group, as they most fully pursue the life of reason and would therefore be good with policy making. | A powerful non-nonsense "state" watches over us and provides security through deterrence of each person's "natural" aggressiveness, and one which will enact swift and severe punishment. | People can be trusted to govern themselves, able to make the right decisions given the right information. The purpose of a government is to protect individual liberties and rights, and people can revolt against an abusive government. |

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Which of the three philosophers do you agree (more) with, and why?
- Can the people really be trusted to govern themselves, as Locke believes, or is the government always best placed to decide on their behalf, according to Plato?
- Which philosopher's conception of 'human nature' fits in best with your own view of what people are inherently like?
- Reflect on the nature of the 'social contract' between Singaporeans and the government. Which philosopher's ideas are most aligned and why?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. To what extent is human life in general about the survival of the fittest? (Cambridge 2020)
2. To what extent can any society claim to be great? (Cambridge 2020)
3. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
4. 'We are less free than before.' How far do you agree with this view of modern society? (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
5. Do you think that your society will benefit from more freedom? (RI 2012 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION A: GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE*

**Reading 8: Functions of the government** **EU 1-7**

**This will help you to:**
- Have a better sense of a government's many areas of responsibility
- Recognise that a state has many competing needs & consider how this may affect government policy
- Think about which area(s) may warrant more / less government involvement – and why

In all modern states, governmental functions have greatly expanded with the emergence of government as an active force in guiding social and economic development. In countries favouring social democracy, the government owns or regulates business and industry. Even in the free-market economy of the United States, some level of government regulation, such as the use of credit controls to prevent economic fluctuations, is now accepted with relatively little question. Government has thus become the major or even the dominant organizing power in all contemporary societies.

### *Self-preservation*

The first right of individuals and countries is self-preservation. The task of maintaining the country, however, is more complex than the individual's duty of self-preservation, for **the country must seek to command the attachment of a community of citizens** as well as to **preserve itself from external violence**. Governments neglect at their peril the task of strengthening the ideological attachment of their citizens to the regime. Every government strives to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of the people. It may identify itself with ancient traditions, with hope for the future, or with fear of a common enemy.

Governments tend to foster widespread ideological commitment to the nation through patriotic ceremonies, propaganda, and civic education. The last should be counted among the essential functions of the state, for it is primarily through systems of education that citizens learn their duties. Indeed, the process of political socialization that transforms people into citizens begins in kindergarten and grade school. Even more than this, education is the instrument by which governments further the cohesion of their societies and build the fundamental kinds of consensus that support their authority. In France public education was traditionally mixed with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church; in Great Britain a private system of education supported the class divisions of society; and in the United States a primarily secular form of public education traditionally used constitutional documents as the starting point of children's training in patriotism.

The preservation of the authority of the state also requires a governmental organization capable of **imposing its jurisdiction on every part of the national territory**. This involves the maintenance of means of communication, the use of administrative systems, and the employment of police forces capable of controlling domestic violence. The police function, like education, is often a key to the character of a regime. In Nazi Germany, Hitler's Brownshirts took over the operation of local and regional police systems and often supervised the administration of law in the streets. In the Soviet Union the security police acted to check any deviation from the policy of the party or state.

Governments must **preserve themselves against external as well as domestic threats**. For this purpose they maintain armed forces and carry on intelligence activities. They also try to prevent the entry of aliens who may be spies or terrorists, imprison or expel the agents of foreign powers, and embargo the export of materials that may aid a potential enemy. The ultimate means of preserving

the state against external threats, of course, is war. In war, governments usually enlarge the scope of their domestic authority including raising conscript forces, imposing extraordinary controls on the economy, even censoring the press.

Many forces generate clashes between countries, including economic rivalry and disputes over trade, the desire to dominate strategic land or sea areas, religious or ideological conflict, and imperialistic ambition. All national governments develop organizations to **help manage conflicts with other countries**. They have foreign ministries for the conduct of diplomatic relations with other countries, for representing them in international organizations, and for negotiating treaties. Some governments conduct programs such as foreign aid, cultural exchange, and other activities designed to win goodwill abroad.

***Supervision and resolution of conflicts***

The conflict of private interest is the leading characteristic of the political process in constitutional democracies, and the **supervision, mediation, and adjudication of such conflicts are among the key functions** of their governments. Representative institutions are themselves a device for the resolution of conflict. Elections in constitutional democracies provide opportunities for mass participation in a process of open debate and public decision; assemblies, congresses, and other parliamentary institutions provide for formal deliberative procedures at different stages of the legislative process; and political parties integrate a variety of interests on policy that win acceptance from many different groups.

If the interests that compete in the political process are too narrow or restricted, efforts may be made to control or change the rules of competition. Thus, laws have been enacted that seek to prevent discrimination from locking women and minority groups out of the democratic process; the franchise has been extended to all groups, including women, minorities, and 18-year-olds; and government bodies such as courts and administrative agencies enforce legislation against groups considered to be too large or monopolistic.

Judicial processes offer a means by which some disputes in society are settled according to rule and legal authority, rather than by political struggle.

**Regulation of the economy**

The extent of the c**ontrols imposed on the economy** was one of the principal distinctions between capitalist, socialist, and communist systems. In 20th-century communist countries it was a matter of doctrine that the means of production should be owned and therefore controlled by the state. In Britain the Labour governments nationalized some major industries, including coal, steel, and the railroads, prompted partly by socialist doctrine and partly by the failure of British industry to remain competitive in international markets. This process was then reversed when the Conservative Party became ascendent. In the United States the government involved itself in the economy primarily through its regulatory powers.

The regulation of industrial conditions and of labour-management relations has been a major concern of most Western governments. In the United States the first regulatory efforts in this field were made during the Progressive era at the turn of the 20th century, when the wages, hours, and working conditions of women and children in industry became a matter of public scandal. With the Great Depression in the 1930s, minimum wages were introduced for workers in many industries, hours of work were set, and the right to collective bargaining was given legal sanction.

Regulation of transportation has been another major activity in most Western political systems, beginning with the railroads. Other modes of land and air transportation have since been brought under regulatory controls implemented by government agencies.

In many European countries, major facilities of communication—telephone, radio, and television—are owned and operated by the government. In the United States, most of these facilities have remained in private ownership, although they are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. The **regulation by government of important instruments of public opinion** such as radio, television, and newspapers has important implications for the freedoms of speech and press and other individual rights. In the United States and Great Britain, government censorship of the press and other media has been restricted to matters of national security. In many of the less-developed countries with authoritarian governments, very extensive controls are imposed on the press, and government-owned newspapers are often the principal sources of political news.

Other forms of government regulation of the economy involve the use of taxes and tariffs, the regulation of weights and measures, and the issuance of money.

***Protection of political and social rights***

To some extent, all modern governments assume **responsibility for protecting the political and social rights of their citizens**. The protection of individual rights has taken two principal forms: first, the **protection of liberty in the face of governmental oppression**; second, the **protection of individual rights against hostile majorities and minorities**.

In the second half of the 20th century in the United States, Congress established protections of the voting rights of African Americans and other minority groups in the Voting Rights Act (1965), and the Supreme Court expanded the rights of the criminally accused, which specified a code of conduct for police interrogations of criminal suspects held in custody. Indeed, beginning in the second half of the 20th century, many (but not all) freedoms detailed in the Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments to the Constitution) were extended. In 2015, for instance, in *Obergefell* v. *Hodges*, the Court recognized the right of same-sex couples to marry.

***Provision of goods and services***

All modern governments participate directly in the economy, purchasing goods, operating industries, providing services, and promoting various economic activities. One of the indispensable functions of government—national defense—has made governments the most important consumers of goods, and they have not hesitated to use their resulting pricing, purchasing, and contracting powers to achieve various economic aims. In wartime, governments have assumed control over entire industries and have subjected the workforce to military direction in addition to rationing goods and regulating prices.

In nearly all political systems, **certain functions are recognized as primarily public, or belonging to the government**, although some aspects of these services may be handled by the private sector. In addition to national defense, public functions include the maintenance of domestic peace, public education, fire protection, traffic control, conservation of natural resources, flood control, and postal services.

Other miscellaneous enterprises in which governments are involved include the provision of health care, the operation of public transport facilities, the development of public works, airport and port maintenance, and water-supply systems. In Great Britain the government operates hospitals and provides medical care under the National Health Service. In the United States many state and local governments operate hospitals on a commercial basis, although providing some charity care. At the local level in the United States, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey constructs and operates bridges, terminals, and airports. The states in the Delaware Basin joined in a compact to establish an agency to control the use of water from the basin, institute programs to prevent pollution, provide recreation facilities, transmit and sell hydroelectric power, and provide watershed management.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Reflect on the functions and areas of responsibilities outlined in the reading. How may one or more of these functions intersect, reinforce, or perhaps even conflict with each other?
- A government has many roles and duties to fulfil. Given the reality of limited financial resources, which of these roles do you think are the most important for a government?
- Identify what, to you, are three top priorities of a good government. Why do these roles outweigh the rest?
- Should different countries those in different stages of development prioritise different areas? Why or why not?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. To what extent should income inequality be a goal in your society? (Cambridge 2019)
2. A leader's responsibility should always be to his or her own country, not other nations. (Cambridge 2019)
3. Considering the money involved, should developing countries be allowed to host major sporting events? (Cambridge 2016)
4. When a government's finances for social welfare are limited, should they be directed towards the young or the old? (Cambridge 2015)
5. 'The key criterion for good government is how well the economy is managed.' Is this a fair assessment? (Cambridge 2012)
6. Should the state intervene in matters relating to one's body? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
7. When faced with limited resources, how far should a country invest in sport? (RI 2021 Y6 Common Test)
8. Should governments prioritise social welfare above overall economic growth? (RI 2014 Y6 CT 1)
9. Should the state involve itself in matters relating to the family? (RI 2013 Y5 Promo)

## *SECTION A: GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE*

**Reading 9: Personal Freedom & the Harm Principle**
**(Cambridge 2006 P2 Passage)** **EU 1-4**

**This reading will help you to:**
- Understand that, for a state to function well, "freedom" cannot mean unfettered liberty
- Recognise the tension between "freedom" and "harm" that underpins governance of a state

*Geoffrey Cobley argues that traditional notions of personal freedom need to be re-thought in the twenty-first century.*

"Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!" The great rallying call of the French Revolution has rung down the centuries and been echoed in any number of other national declarations and constitutions up to the International Charter of the United Nations. Leaving aside the last two aspirations for the moment, I want you to think about the first – freedom! We all desire freedom to do what we want, to achieve what we are capable of, to think, say and believe whatever we wish. But if my freedom interferes with or prevents yours, then either mine or yours has to go. Obviously, freedom of the powerful to kill or exploit the weak results in no freedom for their victims; my desire to smoke tobacco pollutes the air you wish to keep pure; your belief that all things belong equally to everyone will not allow me to amass wealth for my heirs. There is no such thing as a totally free society.

In all civilized societies – by which I mean groups of people living together comparatively harmoniously – individuals have recognized that personal freedom is only possible if the state is strong enough to guarantee it for everyone.They must therefore surrender some, or all, of their own freedom to the state, the governing power. In societies where the rulers have chosen themselves by force of arms, or have inherited their kingdoms, there is often little or no freedom for the individual. On the other hand, in democracies, where rulers are chosen by and are answerable to those they govern, the members of the society who forego some of their freedom to the state do so willingly in return for the security which the state affords them. By its laws it protects them from dangers within and by its military strength, exercised on their behalf, from dangers without. To obey laws made *by* us, and not *for* us, is an increase rather than a dimunition of our freedom.

However, many believe that even these acceptable laws must not override certain basic freedoms – or rights – which, they say, all humans are born with: the rights to life, to freedom of expression, to worship, to freedom of assembly, to ownership of property, to ownership of your own body and the products of its labour… The longer the list, the more self-evident are its inherent problems. On what 'rights' can everyone agree, and are they still supreme over law in all circumstances? In the most liberal of democracies, there may be censorship of views which threaten the very existence of those democracies, and the need to maintain order may result in the banning of demonstrations. Even the right to life – especially in times of war – may be denied to those who betray the state. But there is an even more fundamental problem about rights. Where do they come from? Who confers them? Who says you have a 'right'? The religious, of course, can talk of rights as God-given, and there can be no rational argument for or against such a statement of faith. Non-believers may argue that mutual agreement leads to a common acceptance of – say – the right to life, but such agreement will rarely be found to survive in desperate 'you or me' situations.

A widely-held solution to the problem of an acceptable limitation on personal freedom is what might be called the 'harm principle'. We say to the state: "Leave me alone to live my life in private so long as I am not harming anyone else." "We will," says the state, "as long as you know what is good for

you." Many people are handicapped in various ways – physically or mentally – and clearly need to be taken care of and live in controlled, supervised conditions. But what of those of us who choose to harm ourselves by consuming too much alcohol, by inhaling nicotine or using drugs, by driving without seat-belts, by guzzling ourselves into obesity, by failing to provide for our old age or …whatever? The types of inadequacies deemed unacceptable will vary from society to society. We pass laws to make ourselves behave responsibly because our collective wisdom knows what is in our best interest, even if, as individuals, we choose to ignore it. Parents know what is best for their children when they insist on their schooling, and are giving their children what they really need and want despite the transient needs and desires of their immature youngsters. If you see the government as fulfilling the same role as parents, you will understand the basis of what is sometimes sneeringly dismissed as the 'Nanny' or 'Paternalistic' State. And, in any case, judged against the harm principle, these 'deviants' are harming society by using up its medical and support services and failing to make their proper contributions to the common good.

It is time now to look at the other two watchwords of that clarion call of the French Revolution. 'Equality' may seem to contradict 'Liberty' if we allow unrestricted freedom to the clever or the strong to secure unequal gains for themselves. But all human beings have the same needs and desires. It is only the inequalities arising from ill-health, ignorance, poverty and other remediable factors that prevent those desires from being universally met. 'Fraternity' is the third call which, if understood properly, solves the contradiction of the other two. If people have a proper concern for one another – a 'brotherly'(or sisterly!) relationship in fact – the rich and powerful will want to share their gains more equally with the less fortunate and will vote for a government which taxes their wealth to provide more equal opportunities for others.

"So what do I want with freedom?" I ask myself. Believing that a democratically chosen state represents its citizens at their wisest and best, I am willing to surrender all my so-called liberty – which can so often be merely whim or caprice or ill-informed prejudice – to its laws and restrictions. In fact, I think that any division into public and private is fundamentally wrong (apart, of course, from those human intimacies which are no concern of anyone else) for it assumes we wish to do in private what others may not like or that we have to be protected from those others. We should be knocking down partitions, not erecting barriers. The desire to do what we want without needing to account for it to some tribunal such as an employer or government – indeed, to society itself – is a symptom of maladjustment. To ask for freedom from society is to ask for freedom from oneself.

In the twenty-first century we have an unprecedented opportunity to develop this ideal, fraternal society. In John Wyndham's science fiction novel *The Chrysalids*, a new generation of children is born who, as a result of radiation following a nuclear war, have undergone a mutation that gives them extra-sensory perception, the ability to think each other's thoughts. I am reminded of these children when I look at the generation born into the age of the Internet, email and mobile phone, giving them the means to interact and blend into a cohesive, whole society to a degree undreamt of in earlier times. Other new technologies – from the protective all-seeing Closed Circuit TV to the birth-to-death records of personal details stored in databases – also further this development of a society which is truly one, in which claims to individual freedom will be seen at best as irrelevant and at worst as anti-social. Of course there will be those who cry out in protest that we are becoming like ants in an anthill, mere cogs in a well-oiled machine, slaves of an all-powerful state from which we can have no secrets. But I believe that by giving up all claims to individual freedom, we will discover the best way to achieve it.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Is there such a thing as a fundamental human right?
- Which rights, to you, are inalienable, and why?
- The central argument of Cobley is that we achieve freedom only by giving up all claims to rights to the State, for the sake of collective good. Do you find his argument convincing? Why or why not?
- Explain in your own words why Cobley argues that Equality may come into conflict with Liberty (line 50), and why Fraternity (line 53-54) can help temper this conflict.
- What distinction does Cobley assume exists between individual conceptions of liberty and a state's 'laws and restrictions' (line 60)?
- Cobley believes that the technological tools modern societies have at our disposal can help develop a 'fraternal society' (line 67-68). How convincing do you find his claim? Why or why not?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Is modern technology a benefit or threat to democracy? (Cambridge 2020)
2. 'In a free society, there should be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss. (Cambridge 2020)
3. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
4. Consider the view that individuals, not the state, are in the best position to determine their overall well-being. (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
5. How far should governments interfere in the way individuals organise their lives? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
6. Is it ever justified to sacrifice human rights for a country's progress? (RI 2017 Y6 CT2)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

**Reading 10: Central Concepts of Democracy** **EU 1**

*In this section, we examine the central concepts of democracy and how equality is pursued in a democracy through political participation.*

**This section will prompt you to consider:**
- What is the good life?
- What sort of political order is necessary to enable people to achieve the good life?
- What is the common good?
- What is the nature of public reason?

- Good government requires that we establish and maintain a system of political authority. Democracy in theory assumes that no person is naturally superior to another, i.e. each person should enjoy equal political rights unless it could be shown that everyone gained from having inequality.
- Second, it assumes that the interests of the people are best safeguarded by making them the final repository of political authority – anyone entrusted with special powers must be accountable to the people as a whole.
- No democratic state allows ***all*** those who live within its control to vote: that would include numerous people who would be incapable of understanding what they were doing, such as young children and the severely mentally ill. However, a state which denies a large proportion of its people political participation would not today merit the name democracy.

**What role should the people as a whole play in government?**
- Should they be directly involved in legislating, as Rousseau argued in his *Social Contract*, and if so, how?
- Or should they only be involved at one remove, by choosing representatives who would wield authority on their behalf?

| **DEMOCRACY I** | |
|---|---|
| **What is democracy?** | |
| Democracy is government by the people, which may either be direct, when citizens participate directly in ruling, or representative when citizens delegate power to elect representatives in a congress or parliament. | |
| ***Direct Democracy (ancient Athens, Switzerland)*** | ***Representative Democracy*** |
| Early democratic states were direct democracies; that is, those who were eligible to vote discussed and voted on each issue rather than electing representatives. | In a representative democracy elections are held in which voters select their favoured representatives.<br>These representatives then take part in the day-to-day decision-making process, which may itself be organised on some sort of democratic principles. |
| Direct democracies are only feasible with a small number of participants or when relatively few decisions have to be made. | There are several different ways in which such elections are conducted: some demand a majority decision; others operate a first-past-the-post system which allows representatives to be elected even if a majority of the electorate do |

| | |
|---|---|
| | not vote for them, provided that no one else receives more votes than them (e.g. Britain). |
| The practical difficulties of a large number of people voting on a wide variety of issues are immense, though it is possible that electronic communication will eventually permit this. | Representative democracies achieve government by the people in some ways but not in others.<br>They achieve government by the people in so far as those elected have been chosen by the people.<br>Once elected, however, the representatives are not usually bound on particular issues by the wishes of the people. |
| But even if this were achieved, for such a democracy to arrive at reasonable decisions, voters would have to have a good grasp of the issues on which they were voting, something which would require time and a programme of education. It would probably be expecting too much for all citizens to keep abreast of the relevant issues. | Having frequent elections is a safeguard against abuse of office: those representatives who do not respect the wishes of the electorate are unlikely to be re-elected. |
| | Today's democracies are representative democracies. |

| **DEMOCRACY II** | |
|---|---|
| **Justifications for Democracy** | **Criticisms of Democracy** |
| ***Freedom and equality***<br>Democracy is expressive of two values we hold dear: freedom and equality. Freedom is a matter of giving people a say in political decision-making, particularly those decisions that affect them. Equality lies in this freedom being given to all.<br><br>Consider the effects of these two values:<br>• Fulfilling this basic human need for control over their lives can help to release an individual's ability to create conducive social, political, economic conditions for human thriving.<br>• Suppressing this need for control creates dissatisfaction that possibly brings social disruptions and outright rebellion | ***Inner workings of democracy may undermine true freedom and equality***<br>Freedom and equality (via democracy) are basic human needs that are difficult to manage in a macro setting:<br>• Often, the need to control becomes a way of wrangling power that suppresses weaker segments of society by using majority power to deny true equality for all segments of society.<br>• More participants in the democratic process means more opinions, making agreement harder to achieve. Debate also increases disagreements.<br>• People believe in totally different ideas of "the good life" and are therefore too different. In modern multicultural societies, there are people from very different cultures who are unlikely to reach a consensus. |
| ***Political participation***<br>Democracy creates the necessary conditions for political participation that brings personal investment into how a country fares through:<br>i. The power of the vote pressures political leaders to pass policies conducive to the welfare of the people. | ***Illusory sense of participation in political decision-making***<br><br>i. Voting, as a tool of democracy, is limited by time as terms of office means necessary changes to negligent leaders do not come in time until significant (social, economic) damage is done. |

| | |
|---|---|
| ii. Parliamentary processes (debates of motions, voting for legislation) ensures that policies fostering well-being of society are passed. | ii. Parliamentary processes are often hampered by vested interests (of [political/social] identity or profit) or ignorance of political representatives who may pass detrimental laws and policies. |
| iii. Growth of civic participation by special interest groups who advance the needs and deficits of neglected groups in society. | iii. Civic participation can often advance causes of identity groups that may pressure political leaders to pass policies favouring one group to the detriment of larger society OR creating polarised groups to pressure political leaders to favour their position with little regard to larger concerns |
| iv. Institutions of information (official & social media channels) are strengthened in democracies to bring sufficient & balanced information to the public to aid in wise political participation | iv. Media institutions are often driven by vested interests (political, identity or commercial) that advance information that may be biased or lack sufficient information |
| ***Educated into citizenship***<br>Democracy compels citizens to understand policies and welfare of the larger society through participating in political and social institutions.<br><br>There may be values involved in political decision-making which are different from the value of achieving given objectives; there is something valuable about the democratic process even if it involves voters who are not experts. | ***Voters aren't experts - The captain, not the passengers, should steer the ship.***<br>• Voters are often not sufficiently aware or educated about issues and often swayed by populist ideas or charismatic politicians.<br>• Critics of democracy, most notably Plato, have pointed out that sound political decision-making requires a great deal of expertise, expertise which many voters do not have.<br>• Thus *direct democracy* would very likely result in a very poor political system, since the state would be in the hands of people who had little skill or knowledge of what they were doing.<br>• Similarly in a *representative democracy*, many voters aren't in a position to assess the suitability of a particular candidate. Since they aren't in a position to assess political policy, they choose their representatives on the basis of non-relevant attributes such as how good-looking they are, or whether they have a nice smile. Or else their voting is determined by unexamined prejudices about political parties.<br>• As a result, many excellent potential representatives remain unelected, and many unsuitable ones get chosen on the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | basis of inappropriate qualities they happen to have. |
| ***Protects minorities***<br>• Design a constitution that limits the scope of majority rule in such a way as to protect minorities<br>• For instance, the constitution may contain a list of rights every citizen must enjoy: a proposed law or policy decision that would infringe one of these rights will be thrown out as unconstitutional. Any minority then has the assurance that whatever the majority decides cannot violate one of their basic rights as laid down in the constitution. | ***Tyranny of the majority***<br>• Dominant social and economic groups are at an advantage because they can put forward their preferences and opinions as 'authoritative knowledge' and in the process devalue those with alternative beliefs, preferences and interests. |
| Ultimately, any functioning and progressive country functions on the following:<br>a. Political trade-offs between groups to ensure a balance of interests between differing groups to ensure the welfare of as much of that society as possible and to prevent abuses of power.<br>b. The ability of a society, through its political, legislative, economic and social institutions to cultivate a set of principles that can be abided by all as it represents its best values conducive for human thriving. | |

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Select any two justifications and criticisms – for each, think about (or research on) how you might either refute each, or highlight some concerns
- Do you agree, as many have suggested, that despite its flaws, democracy remains the best system of government? Why or why not?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. 'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true? (Cambridge 2021)
2. Should politicians pursue the popular viewpoint or their own convictions, if they conflict? (Cambridge 2020)
3. 'It is harder than ever for voters to make the right choices in elections today.' Discuss. (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
4. 'Freedom of speech is key to building a strong democracy.' To what extent is this true? (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
5. Do monarchies still serve any purpose in today's society? (RI 2018 Y5 Promo)
6. 'Democracy is essential for a country to become a developed nation.' Do you agree? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)
7. 'Democracy means more than having the right to vote.' Discuss. (RI 2013 Y6 CT 2)
8. 'Fine in principle but failure in practice.' How far do you agree with this assessment of democracy? (RI 2012 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

### Reading 11: The Problem with Majority Rule

**EU1 & 4**

*Adapted from Introduction to Politics 2nd ed., Ch. 3 |Garner, Ferdinand & Lawson | 2012*

**This article will help you to:**

- Understand one key problem with democracy, which is the tyranny of the majority.
- Think about the extent to which the minority should be expected to follow the will of the majority.
- Think about the protection of minority interests and rights in the context of a democracy.

Democracy, as we saw, is regarded as the primary modern ground for political obligation (the duty to obey the laws), because if we participate in making the laws, these laws are likely to be in our interests and in accordance with our choice. However, in practice, democracy will very rarely result in unanimous decisions. As a result, democratic government means, in practice, following the view of the majority.

What this implies is that in every decision *some* people will be in a minority. Why should *these* people obey laws or accept policies that they did not support then? The philosopher Rousseau's solution was to say: provided the laws are in accord with the 'general will', everyone unanimously will ('really') want to accept them, because this is the right or moral thing to do; if they apparently do not accept them, then they can legitimately be forced to, as this is merely 'forcing them to be free'. But most of us are not so sure that everyone either would or should always accept the 'general will' – and anyway, what if the majority preference does not actually conduce to the common good, and so does not count as the 'general will' according to Rousseau?

Fortunately, minorities are usually shifting or fluid; everyone can be expected to be in a minority from time to time. As a result, the majority in any particular instance is less likely to harm the minority's interests *fundamentally*, because those in a majority know that at some point in future, they may find themselves in the minority. However, the persecution of a minority is much more likely where there is a permanent majority and a permanent minority. The classic case is Northern Ireland where traditionally most issues were decided along ethno-nationalist lines, with Protestants in the majority and Catholics in the minority. The resulting persistent discrimination led to severe inter-ethnic violence, especially in the 1960s.

The obvious solution to the problem of minorities is to introduce some device protecting their interests. Many political systems, including the USA, do just this by including a bill of rights protecting individuals against the majority. In the USA, this was included precisely because the Founding Fathers were concerned about the potential dangers of majority rule or 'tyranny of the majority', as they called it. However, it must be questioned how democratic is such a bill of rights. For example, the Supreme Court in the USA is charged with interpreting and upholding constitutional rights. It therefore can and often does strike down laws passed by democratically elected legislatures as unconstitutional. Yet the Justices of the Supreme Court are not elected and it is almost impossible to remove them from office. Again, the protection of some rights is arguably essential for democracy to function. However, as discussed earlier, it is not clear that all rights, such as the rights to free speech are consistent with democracy, particularly if the rights of some endanger the safety and lives of others. Maybe our conclusion should be that democracy is not as special as we previously thought. Perhaps democracy does not provide us with an adequate theory of political obligation after all, because of the problem of minorities, and maybe we should regard other principles, such as the protection of individual rights, as more important.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Is it right that the minority should accept the 'general will' of the majority, and be 'forced to be free'?
- To what extent can, and should, minority rights be protected in a democracy? Recall or research into the provisions Singapore has made to ensure that the rights of the minority are protected.

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Should politicians pursue the popular viewpoint or their own convictions, if they conflict? (Cambridge 2020)
2. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
3. 'It is harder than ever for voters to make the right choices in elections today.' Discuss. (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
4. Consider the notion that reaching a consensus is an ideal way to govern. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
5. 'A good government should always put the interests of the majority first'. Discuss. (RI 2016 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

**Reading 12: Is the epistocracy superior to democracy?** **EU 1 -3**

*Adapted from Democracy vs Epistocracy | Ilya Somin | Washington Post | 3 September 2016*

**This article will help you to:**
- Understand the reasons why voters are often too ignorant or irrational for democracies to function properly
- Understand the case and the precedence for allowing only those who are sufficiently knowledgeable or mature to vote in elections.
- Reflect on the potential issues of allowing only the 'knowledge elite' to vote.

Georgetown political philosopher Jason Brennan's important new book *Against Democracy* challenges a basic precept that most people take for granted: the morality of democracy. Dominant conventional wisdom on both right and left holds that all, or nearly all, adults should have a right to vote, and that the electorate has a right to rule. Brennan contends otherwise.

**Hobbits, Hooligans, and Vulcans**

Brennan begins his analysis by showing that most citizens do a very poor job of considering political issues. He divides citizens into three categories, which he creatively labels hobbits, hooligans, and Vulcans. Hobbits have little or no interest in politics, and have very low levels of political knowledge. Hooligans tend to know more than hobbits do. But they are highly biased in their evaluation of information, tending to dismiss opposing arguments out of hand. They also lack any kind of social scientific sophistication. Vulcans, by contrast, combine extensive knowledge and analytical sophistication with open-mindedness. They also don't let emotion and bias cloud their judgment. But very few of us even come close to being Vulcans.

Sadly, the vast majority of voters are some combination of hobbit and hooligan. They often lack even basic political knowledge; and what they do know, they analyze in a highly biased way. Instead of acting as truth-seekers, they function as "political fans" cheering on Team Red or Team Blue. The root of the problem is rational ignorance: because there is so little chance that an individual vote will make a difference, voters have little incentive to either acquire relevant knowledge or keep their biases under control. Voters' ignorance and bias leave them easy pray for unscrupulous politicians, ideologues, and interest groups – rarely more so than during the current election.

Much of this part of Brennan's book simply builds on the conventional wisdom of public opinion experts across the political spectrum. But most of us still believe that the voters have a right to rule, no matter how ignorant and biased they might be. As political scientists Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels put it in another important new book on political ignorance, "the ideal of popular sovereignty plays the same role in contemporary democratic ideology that the divine right of kings played in the monarchical era." Much like the kings and emperors of an earlier age, the people are seen as having an inherent right to wield political power, whether or not they do it well. Unlike Achen and Bartels, Brennan is willing to knock our multiheaded king off his pedestal.

In most situations, he points out, we readily assume that people should not be allowed to make important decisions for others unless they have at least a reasonable degree of competence to do so. Brennan calls this idea the "Competence Principle." We don't allow quacks to make medical decisions, for example. This is especially true when the medical decisions in question are extremely important, and the "patients" have no choice but to obey the doctor's orders.

Voting, of course, often literally involves matters of life and death, and the politicians who get elected rule over the entire society, including those who voted against them or chose to abstain. Ignorant or illogical decisions by voters can easily lead to ill-advised wars, economic recessions, abusive law enforcement, environmental disasters, and other catastrophes that imperil the lives, freedom, and welfare of large numbers of people. If we refuse to tolerate ignorant medical practice or ignorant plumbing, we should take an equally dim view of ignorant voting.

Brennan does not argue that knowledgeable "Vulcans" are morally superior to others and have some sort of right to rule. He merely claims that the hobbits and hooligans do *not* have such a right. Like John Stuart Mill, he contends that voting is not merely an individual choice, but the exercise of "power over others." Such power must be used responsibly, if at all.

**The Epistocratic Alternative**

Even if democracy is flawed, many would argue – following Churchill – that it is the worst form of government, except for all the others. As Brennan recognizes, mounds of evidence show that democracy generally performs better than dictatorship or oligarchy. But he argues that these are not the only possible alternatives to democracy. There is also "epistocracy" – the "rule of the knowers." The electorate might make better decisions if it were restricted to make it more knowledgeable and less biased. For most people, ideas like epistocracy sound like advocacy of government by a small elite, which could easily abuse its powers. But Brennan presents a variety of strategies by which the quality of the electorate could be improved, while still keeping it large, and demographically representative. For example, the franchise could be limited to those who can pass a basic test of political knowledge. Those with greater knowledge could instead be given extra votes (as first advocated by John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century). If the resulting more knowledgeable electorate is unrepresentative (e.g. – on the basis of race, sex, age, or wealth), the votes of knowledgeable members of these "underrepresented" groups could be given greater weight. Alternatively, we could potentially make the electorate both more knowledgeable and more representative than it is now, by using an "enfranchisement lottery."

Such ideas may seem very radical. In some ways they are. But in many respects they are just modest extensions of the status quo. We *already* exclude over 20% of our population from the franchise because we think they are ignorant and have poor judgment. We call those people "children," and we feel no guilt over systematically excluding them from political power. It strikes most of us as just simple common sense. The idea of letting some of them vote if they can prove they are more knowledgeable than the average adult is considered radical and dangerous. We don't let legal immigrants get the vote unless they can pass a civics test that most native-born Americans would likely fail. Many states also exclude convicted felons and many of the mentally ill from the franchise.

If it is perfectly fine to categorically exclude all 17 year olds from the franchise, why not a 19 year old or a 40 year old, whose understanding of the issues is as bad or worse than that of the average child? If we can exclude ignorant immigrants, why not ignorant natives? Under current US law, there is virtually nothing a person under 18 can do to get the vote. By contrast adults (and perhaps even children) denied the franchise under epistocracy could potentially remedy their situation simply by studying for and passing a test.

These and other similar questions posed by Brennan's book should, at the very least, make us uncomfortable. Even if – like me – you are skeptical of Brennan's proposals for epistocracy, he makes a strong case that the current electorate's right to rule is not nearly as defensible as we might want to assume. It has more in common with the divine right of kings than we like to think.

Ultimately, however, while I agree with most of Brennan's diagnosis of the problem, I am skeptical of his proposed solutions. As he recognizes, there is a substantial likelihood that real-world governments cannot be trusted to implement epistocracy in any kind of unbiased way. Instead of limiting the franchise to the knowledgeable, they are likely to structure tests, lotteries, or other similar mechanisms, in ways that overrepresent supporters of the party in power and exclude opponents. Such mechanisms also have a variety of other practical flaws.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- In your own words, explain what the author means by the 'morality of democracy' (line 2)
- Summarise what Jason Brennan says are the different kinds of voters (lines 5-12). How far do what you have read and observed cohere with his analysis?
- Brennan also highlights the problem of 'rational ignorance' (line 16) to contrast with general ignorance. Which do you think is the bigger problem when it comes to modern democracies?
- Reflect on other scenarios where the 'Competence Principle' (line 30) seems to hold. Do you think that these scenarios are fully analogous to voting, or are there important difference(s)?
- The author distinguishes between a democracy and an 'epistocracy' (lines 48-50) and makes a case for the latter's superiority. How far do you agree with his ideas?
- Reflect on the proposed strategies to improve the quality of the electorate while keeping it 'large, and democratically representative' (line 52), as well as an 'enfranchisement lottery' (line 59). How feasible and desirable do you think such proposals are?
- What do you think about the author's broad argument for allowing only the people who are sufficiently knowledgeable and informed to vote?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Should politicians pursue the popular viewpoint or their own convictions, if they conflict? (Cambridge 2020)
2. 'Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone's opinion is of equal value.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2016)
3. Should a government always listen to its people? (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)
4. Should young people take a more active interest in politics, even when it is not directly relevant to their lives? (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
5. 'Democracy is not for everyone.' Comment. (RI 2011 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

**Reading 13: Why no vote is deplorable** **EU 1 -3**

*Michael Hannon | The New Statesman | 15 September 2020*

**This article will help you to understand:**

- That political ignorance is a particularly salient issue with modern democracy
- Why it might not be fully realistic or reasonable to expect a high level of political knowledge in the average voter
- Conflicting claims concerning the necessity for voters to be politically well-informed
- That the main driver of the average voter's thinking might not always centre on what is considered true
- That political ignorance has harmful consequences that are significant and real, but that alone is insufficient justification for necessitating that every voter is knowledgeable
- That the essence of the democratic ideal is that every vote is equal, regardless of how informed it is

After the political earthquakes of recent years – and with another US election just over six weeks away – the question of how well informed voters are is once again a concern. That most people have a low level of political knowledge is widely known and confirmed by decades of research in political science. Is a vote cast in ignorance as valuable as a vote cast in the full knowledge of what's at stake?

It would be hard to argue that some citizens aren't ignorant, closed-minded or biased. Many commentators are troubled by the broad lack of public political knowledge. The renowned psychologist David Dunning says "we are all confident idiots"; Vox Editor Ezra Klein claims "politics makes us stupid"; and the Emmy award-winning reporter Rick Shenkman says most voters are "foolish" about politics. These indictments rest fundamentally on the assumption that ordinary citizens should know more about politics. But is this expectation reasonable?

There are many important topics about which each of us knows nothing, or almost nothing. I know next to nothing about the search for a vaccine for Covid-19. While I very much hope this search succeeds, I nevertheless devote zero effort to learning about the relevant science. I also know little about molecular biology, art history, the Amazon rainforest, Buddhism, and many other subjects – and yet I have little doubt these things are all very important. This is not unusual. We expect people to have large gaps in their knowledge of various issues, because the act of learning has an opportunity cost. It takes time and effort that we could otherwise spend in our jobs, taking care of our kids, going to church or watching a movie. As Tony Blair wrote in his account of his time as prime minister: "[T]he single hardest thing for a practising politician to understand is that most people, most of the time, don't give politics a first thought all day long […] For most normal people, politics is a distant, occasionally irritating fog."

But does this mean, as the indictments of public ignorance cited above imply, that voters ought to know more about political issues, policies and candidates? Does our conception of democracy invoke a duty for voters to become adequately informed about politics? As Robert Talisse writes in his new book, *Overdoing Democracy,* we "take voting to be a duty that is responsibly exercised only after having taken steps to become adequately informed". Similarly, author Michael P Lynch says we have a democratic obligation to form our political beliefs in responsible ways in accordance with the truth.

Others say voters are not only morally obliged to vote in a knowledgeable way, but that without knowledgeable voters, democracy does not function well. In the most authoritative study of voter knowledge, Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter write that "factual knowledge about politics is a

critical component of citizenship". Does the ideal of the well-informed citizen create a duty for each individual to be informed? And if so, how strong is this duty? Is it enough just to know a few basic facts? Or must voters know much more than that?

When considering how much voters should know, it is important to remember that humans often reason for purposes other than finding the truth. As psychologists have observed for decades, social attachments and a sense of group belonging are among the most fundamental human needs. Loneliness, isolation and a lack of belonging have negative effects on health, development and overall well-being. A sense of belonging has strong effects on cognitive processing.

This explains why people can seem "irrational" about politics. When forming beliefs, we can have at least two goals. One is accuracy, the other is to feel good about ourselves. In daily life, it often pays to have accurate views about the world. If you have the wrong theory of how to drive a car, you will crash; if you have false beliefs about how to cook a roast, it will burn.

In politics, however, the formation of belief is often not about truth. People care instead about loyalty to their group, increasing their standing in the community, and self-interest. Voters may hold political beliefs that are similar to the people they like and want to associate with, or they may support proposals that would benefit themselves or their group – but not everyone else. Is this a contemptible way to reason?

Not necessarily. In fact, it's not even necessarily irrational; the ordinary voter has little, if any, influence on public-choice outcomes, such as who gets elected or what policy is implemented. There are infinitesimally small odds that your vote will decide the outcome of an election. And even if your vote does make a difference, there is no guarantee that your elected politician will stick to their campaign promises. This is assuming you know what you want in the first place: the size and complexity of modern government makes it virtually impossible for most ordinary citizens to have informed opinions about what the government does.

Political beliefs differ, then, from our beliefs about how to drive a car or cook a meal. If we get these ordinary beliefs wrong, they negatively affect our goals. In contrast, false political beliefs are inconsequential or may even positively affect us. As Paul Bloom writes in *Against Empathy:* "Suppose I think that the leader of the opposing party has sex with pigs, or has thoroughly botched the arms deal with Iran. Unless I'm a member of a tiny powerful community, my beliefs have no effect on the world. This is certainly true as well for my views about the flat tax, global warming, and evolution."

We therefore have little incentive to carefully consider the consequences of our beliefs for social policy, and a much greater incentive to adopt beliefs that maximise personal happiness. Those who criticise voters for knowing too little about politics assume that political beliefs ought to aim at truth. They miss the point that, for many citizens, this is not the sole aim of political thinking. Our failure to gather evidence, attend to data, and consider counter-arguments does not necessarily reflect stupidity, laziness, or irrationality. It reflects how many of us make sense of politics: we care more about strengthening social bonds with our neighbours, reducing psychological discomfort and enjoying the benefits of being a political "fan". Our poorly formed political beliefs play valuable roles in daily life.

None of this is to deny the problem public ignorance poses for democracy. When voters ignore facts and logic to indulge their emotions or gratify their egos, they are sometimes led to racist, sexist and xenophobic beliefs. Identity politics may also explain why the US president is peddling conspiracy theories as a form of political propaganda: some voters will readily believe conspiracies with little or no evidence if these theories align with a political outlook that makes them feel included or that they feel might benefit them.

To say that we cannot reasonably expect citizens to be well informed about politics is not to say it is reasonable for them to hold racist or sexist beliefs, or to believe in conspiracy theories. We can criticize these beliefs on other grounds. Racist and sexist beliefs clearly have direct consequences and an immediate negative effect on other people. Coronavirus myths are dangerous because they prevent individuals from protecting themselves and others. But a voter's opinion about the flat tax is, at an individual level, unlikely to have much effect on the world.

However, policies and decisions that are founded on collective ignorance tend to blow up in our faces. These collective harms may suffice to generate a democratic duty to vote well. Jason Brennan takes this to mean that voters have a moral duty to learn *a lot* about politics – and infers, because this is more than we can reasonably expect from most citizens, that citizens have a moral obligation not to vote.

But there is no squaring this with the most basic premise of democracy. If voters are equal, it doesn't matter how much you know; you still get a say, because you have to live with the consequences of what you choose.

As Michelle Obama said, at a "get out the vote event" in Las Vegas in 2018: "Voting does not require any kind of special expertise […] You don't need to have some fancy degree to be qualified to vote. You don't have to read every news article to be qualified to vote. You know what you need to be qualified to vote? You need to be a citizen […] You need to have opinions about the issues in your community. That's what qualifies you to vote […] I've been voting since I was 18 years old. And trust me, I didn't know nothing about nothing."

Indictments of voter ignorance rest on elitist, anti-democratic assumptions that voters themselves resist. Concerns about voter ignorance lead inevitably to an unjustified attack on our democratic rights. By making information the currency of democratic citizenship, those citizens who lack the required funds are excluded from participation.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- It is claimed by some that 'factual knowledge about politics is a critical component of citizenship' (lines 30-31). Do you agree with such a view? Why or why not?
- What do you think was Hannon's purpose in ending the paragraph (from lines 28-34) with a series of questions: '… if so, how strong is this duty? Is it enough just to know a few basic facts? Or must voters know much more than that?'
- How convincing do you find Hannon's argument that reasoning based on factors other than truth is not 'necessarily irrational' (line 48)?
- Hannon argues that even uninformed voters should still vote, because they 'have to live with the consequences of what [they] choose' (lines 87-88). How far do you agree?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. 'Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone's opinion is of equal value.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2016)
2. Should young people take a more active interest in politics, even when it is not directly relevant to their lives? (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
3. 'Democracy is not for everyone.' Comment. (RI 2011 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

**Reading 14: The political effects of social media platforms on political regimes** **EU 1 & 7**

*Adapted from The Political Effects of Social Media Platforms on Different Regime Types | Texas National Security Review | Guy Schleffer & Benjamin Miller | 1 July 2021*

**This article will introduce you to:**

- Views concerning the potential of social media to enhance liberty and freedom
- The complex relationship between social media and democracy
- How social media can both weaken and strengthen democracy
- Why the sheer amount of data social media has captured represents a form of 'knowledge power'
- How social media and other players make use of 'knowledge power' to consolidate money and power, which in terms causes social division due to 'filter bubbles' and the amplification of 'fake news'

**The Promise of Social Media**

Of the seven most popular social media platforms, Facebook owns four: Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Together with YouTube, which is owned by Google, these are the five leading social media platforms not based in China. The most successful social media platform in "grabbing, holding, and processing human attention" is WeChat, a China-based application that "encompasses almost every aspect of human life." It is a "one-stop-shop" model that led Facebook to try to consolidate its sub-companies (Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram) into one giant application.

Optimists have seen social media platforms as an expression of the liberalizing ethos of the internet: tools for empowering citizens, enabling economic opportunities, increasing freedom of expression, spreading liberal ideas, and providing an alternative communication platform for dissidents. This positive view was espoused by some of the founders of U.S. social media platforms. Although these corporations started out politically neutral, some have moved in recent years toward publicly challenging governments. For example, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has talked about replacing the "old" social infrastructure of the state, "which opposes the flow of knowledge, trade and immigration," with a new global community. Google's Jared Cohen and Eric Schmidt wrote about the game-changing implications of the internet for politics. They predicted that governments "will be caught off-guard when large numbers of their citizens, armed with virtually nothing but cell phones, take part in mini-rebellions that challenge their authority."

Social media platforms have the power to strengthen democracies by echoing public opinion. Social media can help to increase freedom and change people's political views by exposing them to other opinions echoed by friends, family members, and colleagues. Social media platforms have been credited with shifting power from authoritarian regimes to ordinary people seeking freedom and social justice. Peter Singer and Emerson Brooking wrote in 2018 that social media platforms "illuminated the shadowy crimes through which dictators had long clung to power and offered up a powerful new means of grassroots mobilization." Manuel Castells describes social media as "a mobilizing force" that can "topple an entrenched regime if everybody would come together." These platforms can compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing coordination costs while increasing shared awareness. Indeed, social media platforms played a role in the 2009 civil revolt in Moldova, dubbed "the first Facebook revolution"; the 2009 unrest in Iran, called "the first Twitter revolution"; the 2011 Russian "almost-revolution"; and the first wave of Arab social unrest in 2011, when "the Facebook-armed youth of Tunisia and Egypt" demonstrated "the liberating power of social media."

The use of social media has no single preordained outcome. These platforms cannot "bring the world closer together," as Facebook's mission states, and help connect only democracy-loving people. As Zeynep Tufekci notes, they are also "connecting white supremacists, who can now assemble far more effectively or radical Buddhist monks in Myanmar, who now have much more potent tools for spreading incitement to ethnic cleansing." Social media can be used to support incumbent politicians within a country or to help external authoritarian powers to disseminate propaganda and disrupt the democratic transfer of power through elections in other countries. It is also used by populists who pose a fundamental challenge to neoliberal ideology, spreading untruth and stirring outrage that affects voters' judgment and fuels partisanship. The different actors using social media platforms, whether for good purposes or bad, are exploiting the unprecedented concentration of knowledge power that these platforms have amassed over the past few years.

**The Knowledge Power of Social Media**

In recent years, social media platforms have gained "knowledge power" derived from the vast amounts of data that they have collected and marshaled. According to Susan Strange, such power includes "what is believed or known and the channels by which these beliefs, ideas and knowledge are communicated, or confined." This kind of power lies as much in the capacity to deny knowledge as in the power to convey it.

The knowledge power of social media platforms may take many forms. Facebook, for example, knows more about a person than the government does. In 2002, Google discovered it could use the collateral data that it collects to profile users based on their characteristics and interests and then match advertisements to individual users. Over the years, Google and Facebook have sold more ads by reducing user privacy and gaining more access to a person's data. In the competition for what Shoshana Zuboff called "surveillance capitalism" revenue, the advantage goes to firms that can acquire vast and varied data streams. Therefore, social media platforms are expanding both the scope of surveillance and the depth of the surveillance (accumulating data on individuals' personalities, moods, and emotions).

In addition to using knowledge power to profile and micro-target their users to sell more ads, Facebook also uses its algorithms to anticipate human behavior and create "prediction products" that make people easier to manipulate. This power was allegedly harnessed to reshape popular perceptions of the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the United Kingdom's referendum on membership of the European Union.

Another aspect of social media's knowledge power is reflected in its significant role in today's media industry. The perceived trustworthiness of the news media in democratic states has given these states advantages over non-democratic ones. Lucie Greene calls Facebook, Twitter, and Google "the Fifth Estate" because they have replaced the traditional news outlets as the main places where people go to get their news. They now have the power to shape public life, including what content is produced, where audiences go, and what news and information citizens see.

In 2012, Facebook declared that its mission is to expand and strengthen relationships between people and to help expose people to a greater number of diverse perspectives. Instead, only a few years later, the opposite has happened. Facebook has became one of the sources for divisions among people. This can be attributed to two main factors: the "filter bubble phenomenon" and the rise of fake news.

Facebook's algorithms tend to reinforce a "filter bubble" that shields people from dissenting information and only delivers content that confirms their views. Social media platforms are part of the digital "attention economy," which focuses on the interplay between money and attention. The more people are engaged with the content on social media and are exposed to commercial ads, the more it generates income for these platforms. In order to keep people engaged, Facebook tends to expose

them to the most popular posts and to confrontational and inflammatory news items that tend to make people more extreme in their views. Facebook encourages society to self-segregate into like-minded communities, which increases the distance between groups with opposing views, causing more polarization. YouTube's recommendation algorithm typically recommends videos that echo the political bias of its viewers and what they choose to view, and feeds them videos containing viewpoints that are more extreme than the ones they currently hold.

Fake news has gained prevalence in recent years due to the rising role of social media platforms as news outlets, where content can be produced and relayed among users with no significant third-party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgment. This type of news is widespread because it is cheaper to produce than precise reporting and because consumers enjoy partisan news. The most inflammatory materials will travel the farthest and fastest. False stories on Twitter, for example, spread significantly faster and more broadly than true ones, and wider distribution of false stories also makes them more profitable for social media platforms.

Fake news finds fertile ground in a divided electorate that has clear in-groups and out-groups, where people are ready to accept any statement as long it is consistent with what they already believe. Extreme examples of fake news spread by social media platforms can be found in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, where the dissemination of hate speech contributed to the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims and anti-Muslim riots, respectively.

In the last several years, political actors have begun to use the knowledge power of social media to their advantage. A 2016 Rand study discusses the "firehose of falsehood" — a high-intensity stream of lies, partial truths, and complete fictions that impacted several democratic elections, including in Ukraine, Italy, France, Germany, and the United States. The "firehosing" that took place in America, for example, included attempts to influence public opinion and promote political protests. Authoritarian and illiberal regimes also use social media knowledge power, together with artificial intelligence, as a monitoring tool, allowing them to collect and analyze vast amounts of data on entire populations. Such regimes also undercut the credibility of valid information sources by using "bot-fueled campaigns of trolling and distraction, or piecemeal leaks of hacked materials, meant to swamp the attention of traditional media." Once citizens learn to assume that the regime's fake information is true, they alter their behavior without the regime having to resort to physical repression.

But political polarization due to social media's power also occurs in democracies. Some democratic countries are experiencing a rise in populist leaders, fueling a drift toward national-populism, illiberalism, and even autocracy. According to Adrian Shahbaz and Allie Funk, populists and far-right extremists exploit social media platforms to "build large audiences around similar interests, lace their political messaging with false or inflammatory content, and coordinate its dissemination across multiple platforms." The unregulated social media platforms are thus converted into instruments for political distortion and societal control.

In conclusion, social media can play a positive or a negative role: It can be a liberalizing tool, used to spread information and knowledge, but it can also be a tool of suppression, used to disseminate distorted information and fake news. Grassroots movements and freedom fighters can make use of social media platforms, but so can authoritarian regimes.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Based on lines 8-18, summarise the ways in which social media can serve as a 'liberalizing' force.
- In your own words, explain what Schleffer and Miller mean when they claim that social media 'can compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing coordination costs' (lines 27-28).
- Which do you think is a more accurate characterization – social media as instruments for spreading democracy or as weapons for undermining it?
- Reflect on why 'a divided electorate' (line 92) can exacerbate the phenomenon of 'fake news'.
- Apart from being unregulated and presenting the means to access 'large audiences' (line 110), why else might populists/right-wing extremists find social media appealing or useful?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Is modern technology a benefit or threat to democracy? (Cambridge 2020)
2. Consider the view that social media has more influence than politicians. (Cambridge 2019)
3. 'It is harder than ever for voters to make the right choices in elections today.' Discuss. (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
4. Assess the view that government regulation is the best way to achieve a trustworthy media. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
5. Discuss the claim that the digital age has made it more challenging for political leaders to govern today. (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)
6. How far is the media responsible for promoting democracy in your society? (RI 2014 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION B: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE: DEMOCRACY*

**Reading 15: Managing freedom of choice in an age of 'hyperdemocracy'** **EU 1-3**

*Adapted from It's a Terrible Idea to Deny Medical Care to Unvaccinated People | Ed Yong | Atlantic | 20 January 2022*

**This article will introduce you to:**

- Views concerning why people who are unvaccinated by choice or Covid vaccine refusers should not benefit from medical treatment like others, which primarily focuses on the lack of responsibility shown
- The historical precedence in terms of the correlation between lack of privilege and access to medical care
- The ethical and practical arguments against a policy that denies medical care to those who are unvaccinated (even if some are so by choice)

More Americans are now hospitalized with COVID-19 than ever before. Their sheer numbers are overwhelming health-care workers, whose ranks have been diminished by resignations and breakthrough infections. In many parts of the country, patients with all kinds of medical emergencies now face long waits and worse care. The solution seems obvious: *Deny medical care to unvaccinated adults*. Such arguments were aired last year, as the Delta variant crested, and they're emerging again as Omicron spreads. Their rationale often goes something like this:

*Every adult in the U.S. has been eligible for vaccines since April. At this point, the unvaccinated have made their choice. That choice is hurting everyone else, by perpetuating the pandemic and, now, by crushing the health-care system. Most of the people hospitalized with COVID are unvaccinated. It's unethical that health-care workers should sacrifice for people who won't take care of themselves. And it's especially unethical that even vaccinated people, who did everything right, might be unable to get care for heart attacks or strokes because emergency rooms are choked with unvaccinated COVID patients.*

To be clear, this debate is theoretical: Health-care workers are not denying care to unvaccinated patients, even though, ironically, many told me they've been accused of doing so by not prescribing ivermectin or hydroxychloroquine, which are ineffective against COVID but are often wrongly billed as lifesavers. Still, I ran this argument past several ethicists, clinicians, and public-health practitioners. Many of them sympathized with the exasperation and fear behind the sentiment. But all of them said that it was an awful idea—unethical, impractical, and founded on a shallow understanding of why some people remain unvaccinated.

"It's an understandable response out of frustration and anger, and it is completely contrary to the tenets of medical ethics, which have stood pretty firm since the Second World War," Matt Wynia, a doctor and ethicist at the University of Colorado, told me. "We don't use the medical-care system as a way of meting out justice. We don't use it to punish people for their social choices."

Unlike vaccine mandates, which limit the jobs unvaccinated people can hold or the spaces they can enter, withholding medical care would be a matter of life or death. And in such matters, medical care should be offered according to the urgency of a patient's need, not the circumstances leading up to that need. "We are all sinners," Carla Keirns, a professor of medical ethics and palliative medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center, told me. "No one has made all the perfect decisions, and any of us could find ourselves in a situation where we are sick." It is a fundamental principle of modern medicine that "everyone has an equal claim to relief from suffering, no matter what they've done or

haven't done," Daniel Goldberg, a medical historian and public-health ethicist at the University of Colorado, told me.

Historical examples show the most privileged people usually benefit when care is allocated. In the 1960s, when dialysis machines were still rare, a group of seven laypeople were tasked with deciding which patients should receive the lifesaving treatment. Among factors such as age, sex, marital status, wealth, and education, the so-called God Committee also considered which people had "the highest potential of service to society" and were "active in church work." Unsurprisingly, as later analyses showed, the committee favored middle-aged, middle-class white men. "When it became public, Americans were outraged," Keirns told me. "They recognized that when you try to make moral distinctions, you end up holding against people circumstances beyond their control."

A person's choices are always constrained by their circumstances. Even now, unvaccinated people are not all refusers. Using recent survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the health-policy researcher Julia Raifman and the economist Aaron Sojourner have shown that unvaccinated Americans are disproportionately poor—and within the lowest income brackets, people who want or would consider a vaccine *outnumber those who would never get one*. That they still haven't gotten the shots might seem inexplicable to people who can just pop into their local CVS. But people who live in poor neighborhoods might not have a local pharmacy, or public transport that would take them to one, or internet access that would allow them to book an appointment. People who earn hourly wages might not have time for a vaccination appointment, or paid sick leave for weathering any side effects.

Compared to vaccinated people, unvaccinated people are more likely to live in red states—a correlation that's commonly seen as a reflection of political choice. But they are also more likely to have other pressing concerns, such as child-care demands, food insecurity, and eviction risk. "Even in Vermont, the most vaccinated state, differences in vaccination closely mirror other social disparities, like household income," Anne Sosin, a health-equity researcher at Dartmouth, told me. Unvaccinated people are twice as likely to lack health insurance as their vaccinated counterparts, so to a degree, the U.S. is already denying them care. To lean into that denial "would compound the unjust disparities that they already face," Keirns said.

Die-hard anti-vaxxers obviously exist, and they tend to be loud and antagonistic. Many health-care workers have told me that they've been harangued, threatened, or assaulted by such patients, frequently enough to erode their compassion. Others have said that such patients make themselves harder to treat by resisting medical care and demanding ineffective drugs. But even the most trenchant anti-vaccine attitudes can reflect deeper social problems. Vaccine skeptics might broadly distrust a health-care system that they struggle to access. They might not have regular physicians whom they trust for medical guidance. They might be immersed in right-wing sources who have sown misinformation about vaccines, or communities for whom hesitancy is the norm.

Moral arguments aside, withholding care from unvaccinated people is also *logistically* unfeasible. No one I talked with could imagine a patient arriving in need and having to wait while a health-care worker checks their vaccine card. But if the hospital crisis gets worse, the urge to conserve resources may force health-care workers to make tough choices. Vaccinated patients are more likely to survive a coronavirus infection than unvaccinated ones, and health-care workers might give them more attention as a medical judgment rather than a moral one.

As health-care workers become more exhausted, demoralized, and furious, they might also unconsciously put less effort into treating unvaccinated patients. After all, implicit biases mean that many groups of people already receive poorer care despite the ethical principles that medicine is meant to uphold. Complex illnesses that disproportionately affect women, such as myalgic encephalomyelitis, dysautonomia, and now long COVID, are often dismissed because of stereotypes

of women as hysterical and overly emotional. Black people are undertreated for pain because of persistent racist beliefs that they are less sensitive to it or have thicker skin. Disabled people often receive worse care because of ingrained beliefs that their lives are less meaningful. These biases exist—but they should be resisted. "Stigma and discrimination as a prism for allocating health-care services is already embedded in our society," Goldberg told me. "The last thing we should do is to celebrate it."

Many hospitals are also full of other patients who deferred their care for a year or more, and now can't delay any more. Several institutions mistreated their staff throughout the pandemic, cutting salaries, reducing benefits, and denying time off until many employees decided to quit. Breakthrough infections have forced a record number of the remaining health-care workers away from bedsides. "Even if you said we're going to downgrade the care we give to [unvaccinated COVID patients], it wouldn't necessarily upgrade the care for everyone else," Wynia said.

Most important, unvaccinated people are not the only ones *transmitting* the coronavirus. They're more likely to do so than vaccinated people, but the latter are still contributing to the virus's spread—and perhaps substantially so, given Omicron's ability to partially evade immune defenses. Vaccinated people might have low personal risk of severe illness, but they can still slingshot the virus to vulnerable people who then end up in hospitals. They might not be occupying emergency rooms with their bodies, but they can still help fill those rooms through their actions.

As President Joe Biden has continued to talk about a "pandemic of the unvaccinated," COVID remains a collective crisis—and one driven more by political inaction than personal irresponsibility. It's the result of an earlier administration that downplayed the pandemic; the current one that went all in on vaccines at the expense of the layered interventions necessary to control the virus; news sources that seeded misinformation; and social-media platforms that allowed it to proliferate. Blaming or neglecting unvaccinated people will just be the latest manifestation of America's instinct to punish individuals for societal failures.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Reflect on other scenarios involving the potential conflict between a state's duty of care and an individual's arguably irresponsible choices. List these other scenarios, and reflect on the similarities and differences in terms of the considerations and challenges when compared with this issue of withholding treatment from people who are unvaccinated against the Covid virus.
- Yong argues that even vaccine refusers or skeptics might be victims of 'deeper social problems' (line 63). How convincing do you find his justifications?
- Yong puts forth a detailed argument for why a broad policy that denies treatment to the unvaccinated is unrealistic and undesirable. Can you think of possible exceptions, where refusing treatment to unvaccinated individuals might be justified?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. What an individual eats or drinks should not be the concern of the state. (Cambridge 2021)
2. Consider the view that we do not take enough responsibility for our own well-being. (Cambridge 2018)
3. When a government's finances for social welfare are limited, should they be directed towards the young or the old? (Cambridge 2015)
4. To what extent is it possible 'to make the punishment fit the crime'? (Cambridge 2013)
5. Consider the view that individuals, not the state, are in the best position to determine their overall well-being. (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)

## *SECTION C: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING RESOURCES FOR THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM*

**Reading 16: Why we need to reinvent democracy to focus on the long-term** **EU 1 & 5**

*Roman Krznaric | BBC Future | 19 March 2019*

**This reading will help you understand:**

- That the failure of democracy to look beyond the next election leads to the rights of future generations being neglected
- Why the 'short-termism' of democracy is a function of both societies' selfish tendencies as well as the system's inherent flaws
- The dangers of adopting authoritarianism as a way to overcome short-termism in democracies
- The nascent movement to overcome short-termism and reinvent democratic processes to focus on the long-term instead

"The origin of civil government," wrote David Hume in 1739, is that "men are not able radically to cure, either in themselves or others, that narrowness of soul, which makes them prefer the present to the remote." The Scottish philosopher was convinced that the institutions of government – such as political representatives and parliamentary debates – would serve to temper our impulsive and selfish desires, and foster society's long-term interests and welfare.

Today Hume's view appears little more than wishful thinking, since it is so startlingly clear that our political systems have become a cause of rampant short-termism rather than a cure for it. Many politicians can barely see beyond the next election, and dance to the tune of the latest opinion poll or tweet. Governments typically prefer quick fixes, such as putting more criminals behind bars rather than dealing with the deeper social and economic causes of crime. Nations bicker around international conference tables, focused on their near-term interests, while the planet burns and species disappear. As the 24/7 news media pumps out the latest twist in the Brexit negotiations or obsesses over a throwaway comment from the US president, the myopia of modern democratic politics is all too obvious. So is there an antidote to this political presentism that pushes the interests of future generations permanently beyond the horizon?

Let's start with the nature of the problem. It's common to claim that today's short-termism is simply a product of social media and other digital technologies that have ratcheted up the pace of political life. But the fixation on the now has far deeper roots. One problem is the electoral cycle, an inherent design flaw of democratic systems that produces short political time horizons. Politicians might offer enticing tax breaks to woo voters at the next electoral contest, while ignoring long-term issues out of which they can make little immediate political capital, such as dealing with ecological breakdown, pension reform or investing in early childhood education. Back in the 1970s, this form of myopic policy-making was dubbed the "political business cycle".

Add to this the ability of special interest groups – especially corporations – to use the political system to secure near-term benefits for themselves while passing the longer-term costs onto the rest of society. Whether through the funding of electoral campaigns or big-budget lobbying, the corporate hacking of politics is a global phenomenon that pushes long-term policy making off the agenda.

The third and deepest cause of political presentism is that representative democracy systematically ignores the interests of future people. The citizens of tomorrow are granted no rights, nor – in the vast majority of countries – are there any bodies to represent their concerns or potential views on decisions today that will undoubtedly affect their lives. It's a blind spot so enormous that we barely notice it: in the decade I spent as a political scientist specialising in democratic governance, it simply never

occurred to me that future generations are disenfranchised in the same way that slaves or women were in the past. But that is the reality. And that's why hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren worldwide, inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, have been striking and marching to get rich nations to reduce their carbon emissions: they have had enough of democratic systems that render them voiceless and airbrush their futures out of the political picture.

The time has come to face an inconvenient reality: that modern democracy – especially in wealthy countries – has enabled us to colonise the future. We treat the future like a distant colonial outpost devoid of people, where we can freely dump ecological degradation, technological risk, nuclear waste and public debt, and that we feel at liberty to plunder as we please. When Britain colonised Australia in the 18th and 19th Century, it drew on the legal doctrine now known as *terra nullius* – nobody's land – to justify its conquest and treat the indigenous population as if they didn't exist or have any claims on the land. Today our attitude is one of *tempus nullius*. The future is an "empty time", an unclaimed territory that is similarly devoid of inhabitants. Like the distant realms of empire, it is ours for the taking.

The daunting challenge we face is to reinvent democracy itself to overcome its inherent short-termism and to address the intergenerational theft that underlies our colonial domination of the future. How to do so is, I believe, the most urgent political challenge of our times.

Some suggest that democracy is so fundamentally short-sighted that we might be better off with "benign dictators", who can take the long view on the multiple crises facing humanity on behalf of us all. Amongst them is the eminent British astronomer Martin Rees, who has written that on critical long-term challenges such as climate change and the spread of bioweapons, "only an enlightened despot could push through the measures needed to navigate the 21st Century safely". When I recently asked him in a public forum whether he was offering dictatorship as a serious policy prescription to deal with short-termism, and suggested that perhaps he had been joking, he replied, "actually, I was semi-serious". He then gave the example of China as an authoritarian regime that was incredibly successful at long-term planning, evident in its huge ongoing investment in solar power.

A surprisingly large number of heads were nodding in the audience, but mine was not amongst them. History has few, if any, examples of dictators who remain benign and enlightened for very long. Moreover, there is little evidence that authoritarian regimes have a better record on long-term thinking and planning than democratic ones: Sweden, for instance, manages to generate almost 60% of its electricity through renewables without having a despot in charge (compared to only 26% in China).

A more fundamental point is that there may be ways to reinvent representative democracy to overcome its current bias towards the here and now. In fact, several countries have already embarked on pioneering experiments to empower the citizens of the future. Finland, for instance, has a parliamentary Committee for the Future that scrutinises legislation for its impact on future generations. Perhaps the best-known contemporary example is in Wales, which established a Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe, as part of the 2015 Well-being for Future Generations Act. The role of the commissioner is to ensure that public bodies in Wales working in areas ranging from environmental protection to employment schemes, make policy decisions looking at least 30 years into the future. There are now growing calls for a similar Future Generations Act to cover the whole UK.

Such initiatives have been criticised, however, for being too reformist and doing little to alter the structure of democratic government at a fundamental level. A more radical alternative has been suggested by the veteran Canadian ecological campaigner David Suzuki, who wants to replace the

country's elected politicians with a randomly selected citizens' assembly, which would contain everyday Canadians with no party affiliation who would each spend six years in office. In his view, such an assembly, resembling a form of political jury service, would deal more effectively with long-term issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and solve the problem of politicians obsessed with the next election.

But could an assembly of today's citizens really be able to step into the shoes of future generations and effectively represent their interests? A new movement in Japan called Future Design is attempting to answer this very question. Led by economist Tatsuyoshi Saijo of the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature in Kyoto, the movement has been conducting citizen assemblies in municipalities across the country. One group of participants takes the position of current residents, and the other group imagines themselves to be "future residents" from the year 2060. Multiple studies have shown that the future residents devise far more radical and progressive city plans compared to current ones. Ultimately the movement aims to establish a Ministry of the Future as part of central government, and a Department of the Future within all local government authorities, which would use the future citizens' assembly model for policy-making.

What do all these initiatives add up to? We are in the midst of an historic political shift. It is clear that a movement for the rights and interests of future generations is beginning to emerge on a global scale, and is set to gain momentum over coming decades as the twin threats of ecological collapse and technological risk loom ever larger. The dream of a benign dictator is not the only option to deal with our long-term crises. Democracy has taken many forms and been reinvented many times, from the direct democracy of the Ancient Greeks to the rise of representative democracy in the 18th Century. The next democratic revolution – one that empowers future generations and decolonises the future – may well be on the political horizon.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- In principle, how may 'political representatives and parliamentary debates' (line 4) serve to 'foster society's long-term interests and welfare' (line 5)?
- Based on lines 16-31, summarise/articulate the key reasons why our democratic systems have worsened the issue of 'short-termism' (line 7).
- Identify the metaphor (lines 38 – 46) and explain how Krznaric uses it to criticize our treatment of future generations.
- On paper, how might turning to 'benign dictators' (line 51) be a way to overcome the short-termism inherent in democracy? Do you find Krznaric's objections to this 'solution' convincing? Why or why not?
- Reflect on the proposal to 'reinvent representative democracy' (line 65). What challenges to you foresee? How optimistic are you that the proposed initiatives would be effective in getting democracies to focus on the long-term?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Should politicians pursue the popular viewpoint or their own convictions, if they conflict? (Cambridge 2020)
2. Consider the view that efficient government is more important than democracy. (Cambridge 2011)
3. Consider the view that it is impossible to solve climate change in today's world. (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
4. 'Democracy is essential for a country to become a developed nation.' Do you agree? (RI 2015 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION C: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING RESOURCES FOR THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM*

### Reading 17: Indian Ministry Seen to Favour Ease of Business over Climate Goals EU 5 & 6

*Rohini Mohan, Indian Correspondent in Bangalore | The Straits Times | 3 February 2020*

**This reading will help you to:**

- Recognise the contradiction between what a government might globally profess concerning its environmental conservation aspirations and targets and the reality on the ground.
- Acknowledge the reality that governments might often choose to prioritise pragmatic business interests at the expense of/while opting to sacrifice longer-term environmental goals.
- Recognise that the reluctance of governments and related stakeholders in sincerely curbing harmful environmental practices often stems from (self-serving) economic motives, and that achieving a compromise between how resources are managed in the long term and short term is by no means an easy task.

India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been hailed globally as a climate action leader from the developing world but some of the country's recent decisions belie its international stance, analysts say. The contradictions became sharply visible in India's choice of chief guest for its Republic Day parade on Jan 26: Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who has often called scientific reports on climate change "lies". He has also been globally criticised for a 248 per cent rise in fires in the Amazon forest.

In a telling image, Mr Bolsonaro and Mr Modi sat next to each other watching the parade in New Delhi, surrounded by grey smog that has choked Delhi's air for months. While Brazil has lost its reputation as a climate action leader, India continues to be hailed internationally for its ambitious focus on solar energy and financial incentives for the electric vehicles sector. But India figured in the bottom five of 180 countries in 2019's Environmental Performance Index.

"India's international persona of being a green leader is completely opposed to what the government is doing domestically," said Ms Shibani Ghosh, a Delhi-based environmental lawyer and legal scholar. Analysts attribute much of this to the government's attention on "ease of doing business" at the cost of the ecology. "In the United States, Brazil or India, we see the leaders moving towards technological solutions rather than bigger action like conserving forests, common land, air and water," said Ms Kanchi Kohii, senior researcher at the Centre for Policy Research in Delhi.

Mr Bolsonaro's arrival in India coincided with the Indian environmental ministry's decision to exempt oil and gas companies from seeking environmental clearances for conducting on-shore and off-shore exploratory drilling. Environmentalists said the repercussions could be grave – damage to fish breeding grounds and migratory routes, water contamination and risk of oil spills and disorientation for whales and other marine life that depend on sonar for navigation.

India's minister of environment Prakash Javadekar told a major industry lobby in June last year that he did not want his ministry to be known as a "roadblock ministry" any more. "The government has reduced the number of days taken to give environmental clearances from 640 to 108 days," he said. He promised to speed it up further, to 70 to 80 days. Faster clearances have emerged from a streamlined process. But a 2017 report by India's independent auditor found that environmental impact assessment reports, based on which project clearances are given, did not measure cumulative impact. Clearances were given without checking for compliance, public concerns were not redressed, public hearings with affected communities inadequately conducted and there was no penalty for violating norms.

Since 2014, the government has granted 2,155 clearances – 85 per cent of the proposals submitted. The World Health Organisation noted that 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities are in India. Yet the government has systematically eased restrictions on 70 per cent of the industries under polluting categories. Between early 2015 and late 2017, state pollution control boards have exempted 146 of 206 classes of polluting industries from routine inspections. High risk "red" polluting projects like fly-ash export, transport and disposal and oil and gas pipelines have been reclassified as "green" sectors while 36 green and red category projects were moved to a new "white" category, which requires little oversight. Executive orders – which do not require discussion in Parliament – have now allowed companies to "self-regulate" (submit reports of their own compliance) or use third-party inspections.

"These changes dilute regulation significantly. Third-party verification and self regulation can succeed only when pollution control boards can undertake surprise inspections and monitor their work," said Ms Ghosh. "Self regulation is a Western model but in India, this is a bad idea, because companies have a terrible record of even submitting their six-monthly compliance reports." The government has claimed that pollution control boards have no capacity to do the scale of inspections needed but Ms Ghosh said there were 30 to 40 per cent vacancies in sanctioned posts in these institutions. "It's a complete cop-out to not set your house in order," she added.

India monitors individual projects to assess the impact on the environment. To truly combat pollution, analysts suggest measuring the cumulative impact of all projects over time on a region. A report on regulatory reforms to address environmental non-compliance says approvals for new projects and expansions be given only to compliant companies. The report, co-authored by Ms Kohli, also suggests community-based monitoring as an alternative, involving genuine stakeholders like locals who have the greatest interest in remedying damages.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- In paragraph 4, Rohini Mohan notes how the Indian environmental ministry's decision might potentially exacerbate the growing pollution crisis confronting India today. What similar instances of such controversial governmental policies that potentially hurt ecosystems and our environment at large might be found in other countries?
- In your view, what might be some plausible ways to effectively tighten lax environmental impact assessment reports or clearance procedures which the Indian government has been accused of? Justify your recommendations with additional reading and research on your part.
- How effective do you think "community-based monitoring" as cited in the final paragraph would be in mitigating the existing pollution problem confronting cities in India presently? Justify your views with additional reading and research on your own.

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. To what extent is the pursuit of continuous economic growth a desirable goal? (Cambridge 2018)
2. In your society, how well are the demands of the economy and the environment balanced? (Cambridge 2015)
3. Should there be any controls over the production of energy when the need for it is so great? (Cambridge 2015)

## *SECTION C: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING RESOURCES FOR THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM*

**Reading 18: Economic Growth and Environment Sustainability – A False Dichotomy** **EU 5 & 6**

*Steve Cohen | Earth Institute, Columbia University | 27 January 2020*

**This reading will help you to:**

- Recognise that the supposed tension between a country's economic imperatives and environmental sustainability might involve a false dichotomy at work.
- Re-evaluate the assumption that economic growth and environmental sustainability are mutually exclusive aspirations, like what some individuals are wont to assume.
- Acknowledge that a concurrent pursuit of economic growth and environmental conservation is what Los Angeles and New York City, in particular, have successfully achieved as a viable developmental model for themselves.

There are political and business leaders who do not care if economic growth causes environmental damage and there are environmental advocates who do not believe you can have economic growth without causing environmental damage. In a *New York Times* piece on the climate and economics discussions at Davos, Mark Landler and Somini Sengupta reported that:

*"Critics pointed to a contradiction that they said the corporate world had been unable to resolve: how to assuage the appetite for economic growth, based on gross domestic product, with the urgent need to check carbon emissions. "It's truly a contradiction," said Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. "It's difficult to see if the current G.D.P.-based model of economic growth can go hand-in-hand with rapid cutting of emissions," he said."*

I find this dialogue a little amazing since it completely ignores the history of America's success in decoupling the growth of GDP and the growth of environmental pollution. This fact of American environmental and economic life began around 1980, a decade after the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and continues today. It's really quite simple: with public policies ranging from command-and-control regulations to direct and indirect government subsidies, businesses and governments developed and applied technologies that reduced pollution while allowing continued economic growth. This is not a fantasy, it is history. In the 1960s you could not see the mountains from downtown Los Angeles; today you can. In the 1960s you could not ride a bike on a path next to the Hudson River; today you can. Until 1985, we New Yorkers dumped raw sewage into the Hudson River. Today, with rare exceptions, we treat our sewage waste. And both Los Angeles and New York City have larger economies in 2020 than they had in 1980. In case you believe this progress was due to deindustrialization, the two largest sources of air pollution are power plants and motor vehicles and we have many more of them today than we had in 1980. Both utilize pollution control technology required by regulation under the law.

Environmental protection itself contributes to economic growth. Somebody makes and sells the air pollution control technologies we put on power plants and motor vehicles. Somebody builds the sewage and water treatment facilities. Just as someone makes money off of solar cells and windmills and whoever invents the 1,000-mile high capacity battery that will power electric cars someday will become very, very rich. And environmental amenities are worth money. The cleaner Hudson made the waterfront more suitable for housing development. And the building boom on New York's west side followed the clean-up of the Hudson River. An apartment across the street from a park will bring a higher price than the same apartment a block away. The revival of New York's Central Park raised the value of the already high-end real estate bordering the park. Clean air and water, healthy food and preserved nature all benefit human health and result in far more economic benefit than economic cost.

The climate problem is not caused by economic growth, but by the absence of effective public policy designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is nothing incompatible with capitalism and environmental protection as long as rules are in place that control the environmental impacts of the products and services we make and use. With those rules in place, a concern for environmental sustainability can and will permeate everyday decision-making in the private, non-profit and governmental organizations we all benefit from.

I've written often about the evolution of the field of management over the past century or so and that a concern for sustainability is the newest trend in the development of more sophisticated organizational management. In the 20th century, we saw the field of management absorb the development of mass production, social psychology, accounting, information management, satellite and cellular communications, globalization and now a concern for the physical dimensions of environmental sustainability. Sustainability managers continue to lead an organization's marketing, strategy, finance and work processes but they also seek to assess their use of energy, water and other materials and work to reduce waste and environmental impacts. Just as finance staff, reinforced by the Security and Exchange Commission rules learned to identify and reduce self-dealing, conflict of interest and fraud, sustainability staff reinforced by EPA rules look to identify and reduce organizational practices that damage the environment.

On the production side, organizational managers work to increase environmental sustainability, but on the consumption side, consumers are not only buying green but changing patterns of consumption that also help reduce environmental damage. Going to a gym, riding a bike or eating a salad are all activities that add to the GDP. But so does taking your private jet to your ski lodge, driving in your SUV to the ski slopes, and eating a steak. All consumption behaviors are not created equal and do not have the same impact on environmental sustainability. More sustainable lifestyles are emerging and they can be detected in consumption patterns. For example, young Americans seem less interested in owning cars than their older siblings and parents did. Ride-sharing, bike sharing and other transit options have become feasible due to the development of the smartphone. But sitting in an Uber or driving your own car are both economic activities that are counted in the GDP.

These consumption trends are more influenced by changing cultural norms than by public policy, and typically should not be subjects of policymaking. Exceptions might include consumption that has a direct negative impact on others such as driving while intoxicated or smoking in a public space. The environmental impact of consumption can also be reduced by new technologies. For example, streaming music and video has far less environmental impact than videos and discs that used to be manufactured, packaged and shipped before they were used.

It is ironic that some environmentalists along with some climate deniers share the belief that we must trade off economic growth and environmental protection. We can and must accomplish both. A reason that we cannot abandon economic development is that most people in the developed world like the way they live and will not give up their way of life. Asking them to do so dooms environmental advocates to political marginalization and failure. Due to the internet, even very poor people in the developing world see the way we live here, want it, and are demanding that their political regimes help them achieve their dreams. The absence of economic development leads to political instability and the potential for violence. Climate scientists often mention the impact of climate change on political instability and the phenomenon of climate refugees is well documented. But the path to climate mitigation is not through slower economic growth, but through economic growth that is steered toward environmental sustainability and away from gratuitous environmental destruction.

One of the first sustainability books I ever read was Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature.* McHarg developed cluster development as an alternative to suburban sprawl. The idea was that rather than

providing every home with a quarter acre of land and their own large yard, you would build the housing in the one area of the building site that would cause the least damage to natural drainage and eco-systems and preserve the rest of the land as a parkland for hiking and viewing. It turned out that most of the outdoor access people used in their homes was on their patios, and that suburban yards were not simply ecological disasters, but a burdensome waste for most homeowners. (This past June a wonderful piece summarizing McHarg's ideas and influence appeared on the City Lab website and it is well worth reading.) McHarg demonstrated that with care, humans could build urban developments that might minimize rather than maximize environmental damage.

Sloppy management, the hunger for easy money and short-term profits, and ideological rigidity lead some to believe the environment must be sacrificed for economic growth. The belief that capitalism is evil and inevitably causes environmental destruction leads others to believe that sustainable economic development is not feasible. My view is that with enlightened design, sustainability management and cutting-edge technology we can harness human ingenuity to the practical problems of environmentally sustainable economic development. We can build and live in sustainable cities and end the climate and ecological crises that seem so overwhelming today.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Cohen, for one, notes "the absence of effective public policy designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions" as a core cause of our current climate crisis. In your view, what might this "absence of effective public policy" involve, specifically?
- How far, in your opinion, might Cohen's arguments apply to developing countries and their governments while aspiring to achieve a judicious balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability? Justify your views via additional reading and research on your own.

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

2. In your society, how well are the demands of the economy and the environment balanced? (Cambridge 2015)
3. Should there be any controls over the production of energy when the need for it is so great? (Cambridge 2015)
4. Consider the view that it is impossible to solve climate change in today's world. (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
5. 'The environment should be the responsibility of the individual, not the government.' Comment. (RI Y6 Prelims 2014)

## *SECTION D: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM & SOCIAL GOOD*

**Reading 19: Why "Security" Keeps Winning Out Over Privacy** **EU 2 & 3**

Daniel J. Solove | Salon | 31 May 2011

**This reading will help you to:**
- Identify five false arguments that erode personal freedom
- Reflect on what is a reasonable balance between privacy and security today.

Far too often, debates about privacy and security begin with privacy proponents pointing to invasive government surveillance, such as GPS tracking, the National Security Agency surveillance program, data mining, and public video camera systems. Security proponents then chime in with a cadre of arguments about how these security measures are essential to law enforcement and national security. When the balancing is done, the security side often wins, and security measures go forward with little to no privacy protections.

But the victory for security is one often achieved unfairly. The debate is being skewed by several flawed pro-security arguments. These arguments improperly tip the scales to the security side of the balance. Let's analyze some of these arguments, the reasons they are flawed, and the pernicious effects they have.

**The All-or-Nothing Fallacy**

Many people contend that "we must give up some of our privacy in order to be more secure." In polls, people are asked whether the government should conduct surveillance if it will help in catching terrorists. Many people readily say yes.

But this is the wrong question and the wrong way to balance privacy against security. Rarely does protecting privacy involve totally banning a security measure. It's not all or nothing. Instead, protecting privacy typically means that government surveillance must be subjected to judicial oversight and that the government must justify the need to engage in surveillance. Even a search of our homes is permitted if law enforcement officials obtain a warrant and probable cause. We shouldn't ask: "Do you want the government to engage in surveillance?" Instead, we should ask: "Do you want the government to engage in surveillance without a warrant or probable cause?"

We shouldn't be balancing the costs of completely forgoing surveillance against privacy. Instead, the security interest should only be the extent to which oversight and justification will make surveillance less effective. In many cases, privacy protection will not diminish the effectiveness of government security measures all that much. Privacy is losing out in the balance because it is being weighed against completely banning a security measure rather than being balanced against merely making it a little less convenient for the government.

***The Deference Argument***

Many security proponents argue that courts should defer to the executive branch when it comes to evaluating security measures. In cases where Fourth Amendment rights are pitted against government searches and surveillance, courts often refuse to second-guess the judgment of the government officials. The problem with doing this is that, unless the effectiveness of the security measures is explored, they will win out every time. All the government has to do is mention "terrorism," and whatever it proposes to do in response -- whether wise or not -- remains unquestioned.

But it is the job of the courts to balance privacy against security, and they can't do this job if they refuse to evaluate whether the security measure is really worth the tradeoff. Deference is an abdication of the court's role in ensuring that the government respects constitutional rights. The deference argument is one that impedes any effective balancing of interests.

***The Pendulum Argument***

In times of crisis, many security proponents claim that we must swing the pendulum toward greater security. "Don't be alarmed," they say. "In peacetime, the pendulum will swing back to privacy and liberty." The problem with this argument is that it has things exactly backward. During times of crisis, the temptation to make unnecessary sacrifices of privacy and liberty in the name of security is exceedingly high. History has shown that many curtailments of rights were in vain, such as the Japanese American internment during World War II and the McCarthy-era hysteria about communists. During times of peace, the need to protect privacy is not as strong because we're less likely to make such needless sacrifices. The greatest need for safeguarding liberty comes during times when we are least inclined to protect it.

**The War-Powers Argument**

After Sept. 11, the Bush administration authorized the National Security Agency to engage in warrantless wiretapping of the phone calls of Americans. Headquartered in Maryland, the NSA is the world's largest topsecret spy organization. The NSA surveillance program violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), a federal law that required courts to authorize the kind of wiretapping the NSA engaged in. The Bush administration didn't justify its actions on an argument that it was acting legally under FISA. Instead, it argued that the president had the right to break the law because of the "inherent constitutional authority" of the president to wage war wage war. The war-powers argument is so broad that it fails of its own weight. If the president's power to wage war encompasses breaking any law that stands in the way, then the president has virtually unlimited power. A hallmark feature of our legal system is the rule of law. We repudiated a monarchy in the American Revolution, and we established a nation where laws would rule, not a lone dictator. The problem with the war-powers argument is that it eviscerates the rule of law. The most unfortunate thing is that Congress responded with a mere grumble, nothing with teeth—and not even teeth were bared. The message is now clear—in times of crisis, the rule of law can be ignored with impunity. That's a terrifying precedent.

***The Luddite Argument***

Government officials love new technology, especially new security technologies like biometric identification and the "naked scanners" at the airport. The security industry lobbies nervous government officials by showing them a dazzling new technology and gets them to buy it. Often, these technologies are not fully mature. Security proponents defend the use of these technologies by arguing that privacy proponents are Luddites who are afraid of new technology. But this argument is grossly unfair.

To see the problems with the Luddite argument, let's look at biometrics. Biometric identification allows people to be identified by their physical characteristics—fingerprint, eye pattern, voice and so on. The technology has a lot of promise, but there is a problem, one I call the "Titanic phenomenon." The Titanic was thought to be unsinkable, so it lacked adequate lifeboats. If biometric data ever got lost, we could be in a Titanic-like situation—people's permanent physical characteristics could be in the hands of criminals, and people could never reclaim their identities. Biometric identification depends on information about people's characteristics being stored in a database. And we hear case after case of businesses and government agencies that suffer data security breaches.

One virtue of our current clunky system of identification is that if data gets leaked, a person can clean up the mess. If your Social Security number is seized by an identity thief, you can get a new one. For sure, it's a hassle, but you can restore your identity. But what happens if your eye pattern gets into the hands of an identity thief? You can't get new eyes. Given the government's existing track record for data security, I'm not sure I'm ready to risk the government having such critical information about me that could cause such lasting and unfixable harm if lost. This isn't Luddism—it's caution. It is heeding the lessons of the Titanic. Security proponents just focus on the benefits of these technologies, but we also must think about what happens if they fail. This doesn't mean not adopting the technologies, but it means we should be cautious.

These are just a few of the flawed arguments that have shaped the privacy/security debate. There are many others, such as the argument made by people who say they have "nothing to hide." We can't have a meaningful balance between privacy and security unless we improve the way we debate the issue. We must confront and weed out the flawed arguments that have been improperly skewing the conversation.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Which side of the security vs. privacy issue does the writer favour? Refer to two of the arguments the writer analyses to support your answer.
- What examples does the writer pull from our history to debunk the "Pendulum Argument"?
- Describe the "Titanic phenomenon" and how the writer applies it to his position.
- Is the dichotomy between security and privacy a misleading one?
- When liberty is lost, is security lost as well?
- How does a country balance collective security with individual liberty in an age of high-tech communications and international terrorism?
- Do tech companies have a responsibility from a business ethics point of view, to actually take a position on what is the right thing to do? Or is it about a higher principle?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI2021 Y6 Prelim)
2. 'Surveillance of the people is a necessary evil.' Discuss. (RI 2018 Y6 Prelim)
3. How far should the State be allowed to restrict individual rights when security is at stake? (RI 2017 Y5 CT1)
4. Is it ever justified to sacrifice human rights for a country's progress? (RI 2017 Y6 CT2)
5. 'The State has no place in the private lives of its citizens.' Do you agree? (RI 2015 Y6 Prelim)
6. 'Personal privacy and national security cannot co-exist.' Comment. (RI 2015 Y5 CT1)
7. 'For the sake of security, a nation has every right to monitor its citizens.' Discuss. (RI 2014 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION D: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM & SOCIAL GOOD*

**Reading 20: At what point should personal freedom yield to the common good?** **EU 2 & 3**

*Adapted from The COVID culture war | Dennis Wagner | USA Today | 2 August 2021*

**This reading will help you to:**

- Understand the political divide in America concerning the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Consider the age-old conflict between societies' ability to simultaneously uphold individual freedom and maximize public safety and health
- Reflect on the appropriate balance between protecting individual rights from coercive governments and safeguarding society's interests

After more than 18 months of a pandemic, with 1 of every 545 Americans killed by COVID-19, a substantial chunk of the population continues to assert their own individual liberties over the common good. This great divide – spilling into workplaces, schools, supermarkets and voting booths – has split the nation at a historic juncture when partisan factionalism and social media already are achieving similar ends. It is a phenomenon that perplexes sociologists, legal scholars, public health experts and philosophers, causing them to wonder: At what point should individual rights yield to the public interest? If coronavirus kills 1 in 100, will that be enough to change some minds? Or 1 in 10?

Today, millions of U.S. residents shun vaccines that have proven highly effective and resist masks that ward off infection, fiercely opposing government restrictions. Others clamor for regulation, arguing that those who take no precautions are violating *their* rights – threatening the freedom to live of everyone they expose.

Clare Palmer, a philosophy professor at Texas A&M University, agreed that exercising a freedom to go maskless creates "catastrophic threats to the well-being of others." "How much should government constrain citizens' otherwise rightful activities to lower the risk?" she asked. "We may be entering a period… when countries will need to reassess their willingness to use the law to protect the most vulnerable and to advance the common good." No matter where one stands, it puts a new spin on the famous line delivered at America's founding by Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death."

**'An act of defiance'**

Seldom in the nation's past has a culture boundary been so clear-cut, or the clash between personal rights and public welfare been so polarized. COVID-19 is now killing more than 2,000 Americans each week, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, with new infections topping 60,000 a day for the first time in more than three months. Nearly two-thirds of the nation's counties are reeling from substantial or high transmission rates as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Against that backdrop, a striking paradox has evolved: About 99% of America's COVID-19 deaths today are people who did not get shots. Yet, the unvaccinated – who are more susceptible to infection and more likely to spread the disease – also appear to be most resistant to wearing masks. While the scientific research is evolving and medical messaging has been muddled, the vaccine has worked beyond expectations – "a huge celebration of effectiveness," as Johns Hopkins notes – with limited side effects recorded so far. That means getting shots saves lives. It also means vaccines could prevent the mutation of more virulent coronavirus strains while hastening a return to economic and social normalcy. So, why do so many turn down the shots and shun masks? Is it a social syndrome that puts self-interest above the common good? Is it a stand for principle? Is it something else?

Michael Sandel, a Harvard professor of government who teaches a course on ethics in an age of pandemics, noted in the university's gazette that mask-wearing has emerged as "a new front in the

culture wars." While covering one's face is not difficult, mask opponents are driven by another concern: They don't want government dictating their behavior. Put simply, Sandel said, the resistance is not about public health: "It's about politics. Even as the pandemic highlights our mutual dependence, it is striking how little solidarity and shared sacrifice it has called forth," he noted. "The pandemic caught us unprepared – logistically and medically, but also morally… (It) arrived at just the wrong moment – amid toxic politics, incompetent leadership and fraying social bonds."

"It's an act of defiance," said Steven Tipton, a professor of sociology and religion at Emory University. "'You can't make me.' And I will enact my own freedom even if it kills me and others around me who I love.'" He is among many who trace this viral distrust a half-century back to President Ronald Reagan's quote: "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'"

As economic inequities mushroomed and social isolation festered, Tipton said, average Americans came to feel betrayed by government, the marketplace and so-called elites. For them, rejecting science and spurning authorities is a statement of moral outrage rather than an act of selfishness. And that sentiment is encouraged in a social media echo chamber that bonds the disconnected. In the end, however, COVID-19 has no politics or ethical code. The virus, acting on a principle of proliferation, has killed more than 4.2 million people worldwide – especially now those who didn't get shots.

**Mixed messages, lies and confusion**

During World War II, the Greatest Generation forged unity with common goals. Americans tended victory gardens to overcome food shortages, volunteered for national defense and made personal sacrifices for the good of the country. Today, in the face of a pandemic that already has killed more U.S. citizens than the Big War, we block one another's Facebook pages, stage anti-vaccine protests and in some cases attack one another for requiring or wearing masks.

To be sure, public confusion and discord have been abetted by muddled messages from government and science, compounded by lies and disinformation spewed via social media. Early in the pandemic, President Donald Trump declared a premature victory over COVID-19 as his chief medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, warned against opening the country too soon. Fauci and the CDC have issued guidance in favor of masks, then against them, and then for them again – even as the virus itself has morphed.

President Joe Biden last week applied a carrot-and-stick approach, urging local authorities to pay $100 to unvaccinated people who get the shots while announcing that federal employees will face strict testing requirements if they are not vaccinated. But federal leaders have largely deferred to state and local government. The result: a bewildering and inconsistent panoply of policies that vary from one jurisdiction to the next, and may change overnight. "There's just been such tremendous inconsistency in communications about this," said Corey Basch, chair of the public health department at William Paterson University. "I can understand why there are pockets of the population who really don't want this mandated, and (they) feel distrust."

**A tale of two counties**

Consider Los Angeles and Orange counties in California, sibling hotbeds of COVID-19 that form the nation's largest metro area. Jeanine Robbins, 60, of Anaheim, noticed that nearly all the people opposed to vaccination were also maskless. "I think they're just taking advantage, and they're putting other people at risk," Robbins said. "It's selfishness."

By contrast, Michael Thomas, a 62-year-old accountant in San Clemente, said he doesn't believe masks work and he won't be getting shots because "a person's immune system will either fight off COVID or

it won't." Asked whether his decisions endanger others, Thomas shook his head. "It's a personal right to do what you want," he said. "A God-given right."

**'Typhoid Mary'**

In the early 1900s, a domestic cook for wealthy families named Mary Mallon unwittingly infected hundreds of people in New York with the Salmonella typhi bacteria before medical investigators identified her as a superspreader. Mallon, nicknamed "Typhoid Mary," refused to be tested and fled from authorities, only to be captured and quarantined. During two years of confinement, she sued the health department. Upon release, she violated an agreement not to resume cooking and worked at a maternity hospital in Manhattan where more people were infected and died.

COVID-19 may be caused by a novel coronavirus, but the legal-ethical issues are not new. And just what constitutes the common good has always been a matter of disagreement. Plato advocated conduct that promotes social harmony. His student, Aristotle, promoted action allowing individuals to fulfill their human purpose. Thus, the debate proceeded.

When the United States was founded, a Bill of Rights got locked into the Constitution to ensure that personal liberties were protected from a coercive government. But those freedoms are not limitless. One person's right to throw a punch stops at another's nose. If you scream "Fire!" in a crowded theater, it could be a ticket to jail. When inoculations for smallpox and polio were first mandated in the past century, backlashes erupted, eventually dying as shots eradicated two of the world's worst scourges. Yet, as Jessica Berg, law school dean and a professor of bioethics at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, noted, some batches of the early polio vaccine had devastating side effects.

The question is not whether government should constrain personal liberties in the public interest, she concluded, but when and how. With face masks and vaccinations, Berg allows that constraints should result in the least possible loss of choices and the most respect for liberty. For example, rather than threats of jail or fines, those who refuse to take precautions might be banned from crowded venues or required to undergo regular testing. The point, Berg said, is to allow for a stand on personal rights by letting people make choices. "I think if we want to accept the benefits of living in a society," Berg added, "we also have to accept there are some constraints on individual liberty."

Pamela Hieronymi, a UCLA professor who specializes in moral philosophy, said COVID-19 has revealed the "trickiness of freedoms." She described various schools of ethical thought, noting that if someone asked four philosophy professors whether vaccines and masks should be mandated, there likely would be four different answers. More than a lack of civility, Hieronymi said, "we've lost sight of the common good."

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Based on the reading, summarise the different reasons behind why so many Americans today are still resistant to wearing masks and taking their vaccines.
- Lines 100-101: "The point…is to allow for a stand on personal rights by letting people make choices." Do you agree with this statement? What constitutes a 'good' choice?
- Professor Hieronymi shared that individuals as a whole have 'lost sight of the common good'. Do you agree with her assessment?

**Related RI essay questions:**

1. Should individual rights and freedom be protected at all costs? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)
2. Is it ever justifiable for people in society to make decisions for those who are unable to do so? (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)
3. Should a government always listen to its people? (RI 2018 Y6 CT2)

## *SECTION D: TENSION BETWEEN MANAGING INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM & SOCIAL GOOD*

**Reading 21: China Eases 'Zero Covid' Restrictions in Victory for Protesters** **EU 1-3, 5**

*Keith Bradsher, Chang Che and Amy Chiang Chien | New York Times | 7 Dec 2022*

**This reading will help you to:**

- Understand the rationale and motivations behind China's zero-Covid strategy
- Understand the underlying tension between individual freedom and national good and how China's move to prioritise the latter completely at the expense of the former has led to social unrest and political anger
- Consider how such an authoritarian style of governance is dependent on the nature of the social compact between a government and its people

Over the past three years, China's top leader, Xi Jinping, staked his legitimacy on "zero Covid," making it an ideological campaign aimed at demonstrating the superiority of centralized control over democratic rule. He declared a "people's war" against the coronavirus that used lockdowns and quarantines to eliminate infections.

In a remarkable pivot, the Chinese government announced a broad rollback of those rules on Wednesday, an implicit concession to public discontent after mass street protests in late November posed the most widespread challenge to the ruling Communist Party in decades.

The party appears to be attempting a tactical, face-saving retreat that would allow Mr. Xi to change tack without acknowledging that widespread opposition and economic pain forced his hand. China's state media depicted Wednesday's move as a planned transition after Mr. Xi's zero-tolerance approach secured a victory over a virus that has now weakened. The move could very well assuage protesters. But the party is expected to confront a surge of infections as lockdowns lift, schools reopen and people try to resume normal life. The government must now place much greater urgency on vaccinations, which had been neglected in recent months, experts say.

The new policy takes aim at some of the most onerous and widely feared pandemic measures that reflect how intrusive the policy had become. Beijing largely did away on Wednesday with rules requiring mass testing, limited the scope of lockdowns and scrapped mandatory hospitalization and mass quarantines. It also ordered pharmacies not to ban or control the sale of cold and flu medication — a policy enforced in some places to prevent residents from using over-the-counter drugs to reduce fevers and avoid detection.

The changes, while not a complete dismantling of "zero Covid," loosen measures that have dragged down the economy by disrupting daily life for hundreds of millions of people, forcing many small businesses to close and driving youth unemployment to a record high. The changes also attempt to alleviate public anger against the system of digital surveillance used to track and limit the movements of practically all people.

Under "zero Covid," dozens of officials have been punished or fired after outbreaks. Cities have imposed lockdowns that confined hundreds of millions of people in their homes for weeks or even months at a time. Citizens and health experts who questioned the extent of controls or problems with lockdowns were punished or silenced.

The controls have become harder to justify as rapidly spreading Omicron variants continued to slip through, and especially as the rest of the world has increasingly adjusted to living with the virus.

"By now, Xi Jinping should also understand that this virus can't be controlled, and if it can't be controlled, then opening up must happen sooner or later," said Deng Yuwen, a former editor at a Communist Party newspaper, the Study Times, who now lives in the United States and writes commentaries about Chinese politics. "But most fundamental of all, the economy can't hold up any longer. If they try tightening up again, the ordinary people would really raise hell."

For many in China, the relief was immediate. People flocked to Chinese social media and video sites to post thumbs-up emojis and comments like: "I'm crying, I've waited for three years." One migrant worker who had protested against a lockdown last month at an iPhone manufacturing complex in central China said he was elated by the news. "Our voices are finally heard," said the worker, who gave only his last name, Zhang, out of fear of retaliation by the authorities. "We workers no longer have to be locked up, starved and suppressed."

Far from indicating defeat in the face of broad opposition, China's state media has depicted Wednesday's turn in policy as the latest in an unbroken succession of wise choices that have resulted in a hard-earned victory for China. "In the past three years, the virus has weakened, and we have become stronger," the official Xinhua news agency wrote in a commentary Wednesday titled "Winning the Strategic Initiative Through Persistence."

For days, the propaganda apparatus has been pushing the idea — long understood elsewhere — that Omicron variants are less lethal than the coronavirus's earlier iterations. Officials and state media reports have quietly dropped the use of "dynamic zero Covid," Beijing's term for the strategy of lockdowns and quarantines to clear infections.

The media blitz showed how the party can shift gears by using its propaganda to obfuscate what were policy mistakes, said Willy Lam, a longtime analyst of Chinese politics in Hong Kong who is a senior fellow at the Jamestown Foundation. Mr. Xi "may still insist that he was right with 'zero Covid' but by force of circumstances he has no choice," said Mr. Lam, referring to the recent protests and the reeling economy. "They're now trying to cover up the mistakes they had made by finally telling the truth to the public that the Omicron variant is not life-threatening," he added.

The protests showed how drastically "zero Covid" had undermined the party's public support. For many, the expansive and often seemingly arbitrary pandemic measures became the clearest example of the excesses of Mr. Xi's authoritarian tendencies, and opposition to the approach unexpectedly resonated with people across the country.

More important, the economic slowdown caused by "zero Covid" undermined a key tenet of the party's rule, that in exchange for going without democratic freedoms, the people would enjoy steady economic growth and the chance at a better life. The heavy reliance on mass testing and quarantines also placed an immense financial burden on local governments.

"Economically speaking, they can't sustain this," Mr. Deng said. "Even if local governments want to lock down like before, they just don't have the money. Then on top of that, there's been the student and public protests, so it's like the donkey has finished working the grindstone and can be slaughtered — it's time to open up."

The central government's announcement came after a series of moves over the last several days by local governments, particularly in major cities, to ease regulations. Shanghai said that it would no longer require residents to show a negative P.C.R. test to ride the subway or buses or to enter outdoor parks. Beijing dropped a similar requirement this week for access to the city's main airport, as well as supermarkets, shopping centers and other public places.

Wednesday's changes will free residents in many parts of the country from what had become a near-daily chore of getting tested just to travel across the country, move around their cities or use public services. The new policy did not immediately change the rules for international arrivals, who are subject to at least five days in government-designated quarantine.

People who have mild or asymptomatic Covid will be allowed to isolate at home and no longer be sent to hospitals, as had been the case since the virus emerged. The government appeared to retain the power to impose lockdowns, but narrowed the scope of such measures to buildings, floors or units rather than neighborhoods, districts or cities — and said that such confinements should be lifted quickly.

At the same time, the policy shift will bring new challenges for the party. Experts have warned that China needs to step up sharply its pace of vaccinations, particularly for older adults, before taking big strides to reopen the country. People over 80, who are among the most vulnerable to serious illness or death during a Covid infection, have the lowest rate of vaccination: only two-thirds have received the initial course of vaccination, usually two shots, and only two-fifths have had the initial course of vaccines plus a booster.

"The timing is clearly because of the economic and social difficulties faced during 'zero Covid,' but it's happening as we head into the cold winter months," said Siddharth Sridhar, a virologist at the University of Hong Kong. Even if China moves at lightning speed to boost its vulnerable populations, it will need a few months to vaccinate the numbers needed for reopening. "If they are considering a pivot, they need to bolster their defenses because a storm is coming," Dr. Sridhar said.

The easing of the rules appeared to unleash pent-up demand for travel after months of being told to forgo sightseeing and family reunions and stay in place. Ctrip, a Chinese travel booking site, said that searches for air tickets had more than doubled on the platform. Demand was especially strong for travel before next month's Lunar New Year holiday.

At the same time, many older people in China have been concerned that opening up too quickly might expose them to dangerous infections, a sign of the public relations challenge lying ahead for Beijing. Du Weilin, a 72-year-old Shanghai resident sitting on a roadside bench on Wednesday, said he was worried about what the new policy might mean for him. "The virus needs to be strictly controlled, and now is not the time to open up," he said, adding that the only time to do so would be if there were zero cases. Mr. Du said that he had not been vaccinated because he did not believe the available vaccines to be effective. "Only your own immune system works," he said. "Everything should be taken one step at a time."

**For discussion/further research:**

- The authors describe China's zero-Covid strategy as an attempt at "demonstrating the superiority of centralized control over democratic rule" (lines 2-3). Explain why specific aspects and measures employed in China's zero-Covid strategy are only possible with a high degree of centralized control.
- These measures that clamped down heavily on individuals' freedom had previously proved quite effective in limiting the domestic spread of the disease. Do you think that the effectiveness of the measures warrant/justify the severe curtailment of personal freedoms? Why?
- According to the authors, what role did the 'economic slowdown' (line 64) play in intensifying opposition to the government strict containment strategy?
- Between China's (now abandoned) zero-Covid strategy and the US's approach towards Covid-management (Reading 20), which is the better model? Why do you say so? Consider the underlying

assumptions and the implicit context that you use/have in mind when forming your response. Which model do you think is lightly to be more effective for Singapore, given the predominant social and political norms here?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. Do events, rather than politicians, shape the future? (Cambridge 2017)
2. Consider the view that efficient government is more important than democracy. (Cambridge 2011)
3. To what extent is progress achieved at the expense of our welfare? (RI 2019 Y6 Prelim)
4. How far should governments interfere in the way individuals organize their lives? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
5. To what extent should the state have a right to intervene in the decisions of individuals when it comes to matters of health? Discuss this with regard to your society. (RI 2018 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION E: TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND THE POWER OF THE STATE*

**Reading 22: The Rise of Populist Authoritarians** **EU2, EU3**

*Martin Wolf | Financial Times | 22 January 2019*

**This reading will help you to understand:**

- Why and how authoritarianism is on the rise in both poor and well-off countries
- How the autocracies of today are different from the fascist regimes of the past
- Why the elites must consider their responsibility for the worldwide resurgence of strongmen in politics

Authoritarianism is on the march. It is not only on the march in relatively poor countries. It is on the march in well-off countries, too — including, most significantly, the US, the country that defended and promoted liberal democracy throughout the 20th century. Donald Trump is a classic example of a populist would-be authoritarian. US institutions may halt his rise to the unbridled power he seeks. But the threat he poses seems clear.

How are we to understand this resurgence of authoritarianism? What form does it now take? What responsibility do elites bear for its success? These are among the most important questions westerners confront. How we answer them will shape the world. If we abandon the cause, for which so much blood has been spilled, how can we expect others to believe in it? We would be handing the world to Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin and others who see the world as they do.

Erica Frantz of Michigan State University sheds a bright light on the ways of contemporary authoritarians in a short book, entitled Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know. This illuminates two main points. First, nowadays, the most common way for authoritarian regimes to emerge is by eating out democracy from within, rather as the larvae of some wasps eat out host spiders. Such processes make up close to 40 per cent of all contemporary collapses of democratic regimes. Second, these new regimes often take what the author calls "the most dangerous form of dictatorship": personal (or "personalist") rule. Between 2000 and 2010, 75 per cent of transformations of democracies into dictatorships ended thus. Examples are Russia under Mr Putin, Venezuela under Hugo Chávez, and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A crucial question is what one means by "authoritarian". The answer is: the absence of democracy. Democracy, in turn, means a system in which free and fair elections determine who holds power. Thus the state must allow free expression of opinion, a free media, impartial execution of election law, a universal adult franchise and the right of political competitors to obtain the resources they need. Today, elections confer legitimacy. For this reason, many authoritarians offer "pseudo-democracy", but not the reality. Elections in such countries are a form of theatre. Everybody knows the leader will not let himself be defeated. Such a regime is not just a bit different from a democracy: it is an entirely different animal.

Historically, the number of authoritarian regimes peaked in 1980 and then fell sharply, reaching a trough in the middle of the last decade. Since then, however, democracy has been in slow retreat. Moreover, notes Prof Frantz, autocracy is no longer just a phenomenon of developing countries, thus "many of the democracies that currently appear to be on the verge of transitioning to dictatorship lie in Europe". There has also been a marked shift over time in the form of authoritarianism. The Chinese party-state is a rarity. The number of military dictatorships has declined sharply. But the number of pseudo-democratic personal dictatorships is on the rise.

Features of these personal dictatorships include: a narrow inner circle of trusted people; installation of loyalists in positions of power; promotion of members of the family; creation of a new political movement; use of referendums as a way of justifying decisions; and the creation of new security services loyal to the leader. A characteristic of these strongmen is that they start out as populists. The latter argue that they alone, once armed with extraordinary powers, can solve the country's problems. They assert that the traditional elite is corrupt and incompetent. They insist that experts, judges and the media are to be distrusted. Voters should trust, instead, in the intuition of the leader, a living embodiment of the people. Such arguments also justify the repression of "enemies of the people", making genuine democracy impossible.

Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines is on the path from populism to dictatorship, as is Viktor Orban of Hungary. His "illiberal democracy" is a euphemism for authoritarianism. I would be surprised if Jair Bolsonaro did not follow this path in Brazil. As for Mr Trump, he, too, is a rightwing populist with authoritarian traits. But he is hemmed in by US institutions. Yet institutions are always only as good as the people who run them. Many of those are enablers.

The autocracies we are seeing today have important differences from those of the fascist parties in Italy or Germany of the early and mid-20th century. They demand acquiescence more than enthusiastic participation. They are manipulative more than incontinently brutal. As Martin Gurri suggests in The Revolt of the Public and the Crisis of Authority in the New Millennium, this shift is partly connected to the fall of the old mass media. The new media are far less good at disseminating a single propaganda message than the old ones were. But they are magnificent at spreading doubt. By destroying the authority of experts, elites and "old media", new media open the way to political entrepreneurs gifted at exploiting resentments and undermining the notion of truth.

The good news is that so far these Pied Pipers have not managed to lead any of the established high-income democracies into autocracy. The machinery of democracy survives, as the midterm elections in the US proved. Nevertheless, in many countries, populists with authoritarian tendencies are on the edge of power. For this, the failures of existing governing and commercial elites — their indifference to the fate of large parts of the population, their greed and incompetence, demonstrated so clearly by the unexpected financial crises in the US and Europe — are heavily to blame. Cynical politicians, able to lie as easily as they breathe, make progress in populations already cynical about those in charge. Their supporters may or may not believe that the new leader has the answers. But they have become convinced that the old ones do not. The difficulties into which Emmanuel Macron has fallen in France suggests this powerful dynamic remains fully in place.

Yet these new autocracies do not offer solutions: Mr Putin has led Russia into continued economic decline. Mr Trump's promise to "Make America Great Again" is a fraud. By undermining independent institutions, such leaders will in the end make their countries poorer and their people less free.

Those lucky enough to live in law-governed democracies must dedicate themselves to making them work better. That is now a challenging task. But it is also the only way to ensure that these political systems are passed on intact — ideally, healthier — to the generations that follow. Davos people, please note: this is your clear responsibility.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Why is angry populism on the rise?
  (Authoritarian populists have been with us now for 20 years, in economically bad times as well as good, in both predominately Catholic and Protestant societies, in Nordic and Mediterranean regions, in liberal Norway and conservative Switzerland, in egalitarian welfare

states as well as unequal societies, in the European Union and in several Anglo-American democracies like New Zealand, Canada, and Australia.)
- Is it necessarily true that in the digital era technology would make it easier to hold political leaders to account?
- How can strong state and institutions counter the new authoritarians?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. 'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true? (Cambridge 2021)
2. How far should countries have relations with others whose human rights record is poor? (Cambridge 2019)
3. 'Politics is more concerned with power than with people.' Is this a fair statement? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)
4. Consider the notion that that reaching a consensus is an ideal way to govern. (RI 2019 Y6 CT1)
5. 'Surveillance of the people is a necessary evil.' Discuss. (RI 2018 Y6 Prelim)
6. 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2016)

**Further reading:**

The 'Strongmen Era' Is Here. Here's What It Means for You by *Ian Bremmer* (May 2018)
https://time.com/5264170/the-strongmen-era-is-here-heres-what-it-means-for-you/

## *SECTION E: TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND THE POWER OF THE STATE*

**Reading 23: Are Dictators Worse than Anarchy?** **EU1, EU2**

*Von Christiane Hoffmann | Spiegel International | Oct 2014*

**This reading will help you to:**
- Understand that successful establishment of a democratic state is contingent on socio-political and cultural conditions
- Recognise that while democracy is desirable, it should not be singularly pursued without due consideration of citizens' pragmatic needs

The last decade has shown that there is something worse than dictatorship, worse than the absence of freedom, worse than oppression: civil war and chaos. The "failing states" that currently stretch from Pakistan to Mali show that the alternative to dictatorship isn't necessarily democracy – all too often, it is anarchy. In the coming years, global politics will not be defined by the polarity between democratic and autocratic states as much as it will by the contrast between functioning and non-functioning states.

**The Role of the State**

For Thomas Hobbes, the intrinsic function of the state was to impose legal order in order to subdue the "state of nature." In 'Leviathan', which he wrote in the 17th century under the shadow of the English Civil War, he argued that the state's monopoly on violence was legitimate when used to protect the lives and possessions of the state's citizens. When the state was no longer able to guarantee order, the threat of "war of every man against every man" loomed. The latter was the state of nature that the state, symbolised by the Leviathan, was tasked with taming.

Hobbes' argument on the need for a dictatorship contrasts with the current Western perspective, which is shaped during the decades of the Cold War, where the threat to Western Europe did not come from weak states, warlords and terrorist organisations but from Communism. The collapse of the socialist dictatorships in Eastern Europe led not to anarchy but to the installation of a new, democratic order. This created the illusion that one merely had to remove obstacles for democracy to appear, almost automatically.

**The Russian Example**

But in Russia, the transition from the Soviet system to democracy failed. After the end of socialism, Russians were able to vote in more-or-less democratic elections and the economy was privatised. But the rule of law did not take hold. Instead, capriciousness and corruption gained the upper hand; power was monopolised by the strong. Chechnya began fighting for independence and the state started to disintegrate.

Such was the situation when Boris Yeltsin named Vladimir Putin prime minister in 1999. To Yeltsin, Putin, the head of domestic intelligence, seemed to be the only person capable of keeping the country together. Putin's task when he took over the Russian presidency a short time later was to return a crumbling state to functionality. He was also asked to lead a vast, sparsely populated country where state control had always been fragile. The spectre of the "Smuta" – a period of chaos and anarchy in the early 17th century – continues to hang over Russian history. The iron-fisted Brezhnev era, by contrast, is considered by many in the country to be among the happiest periods in recent times.

**The Importance of Stability**

All of which raises the question: Is stability a value in and of itself? Those who answer in the affirmative are often seen as cynics who place little importance in freedom and human rights. But the uncomfortable truth is that dictatorship is often preferable to anarchy. Were people given a choice between a functioning dictatorship and a failing or failed state, the dictatorship would often be seen as the lesser evil. And most people believe that a more-or-less secure livelihood and a modicum of justice are more important than individual freedoms and unimpeachable democracy.

Political instability triggers the yearning for order, sometimes at any price – and thus often paves the way for extremists. That was true in Germany at the end of the Weimar Republic; in Russia, Stalinism followed the revolution and civil war; in Afghanistan, the period of unrest following the Soviet withdrawal spurred the rise of the Taliban. And now Islamic State has appeared in Iraq and Syria.

That is why the swath of political instability stretching from Pakistan to Mali is so disconcerting. In Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, central governments have lost control over vast portions of their territory and entire countries are becoming ungovernable. Tribes and clans are fighting with each other while warlords are exerting regional control – at least, until they lose it again.

The failed democratisation of Iraq and the unsuccessful "Arab Spring" in Syria have fed the rise of Islamic State. In neither of these countries does democracy currently have realistic prospects for success. The best solution for Syria – and this is not cynicism speaking – would perhaps be a military putsch against Assad. It would rid the country of its dictator while leaving the country's last centre of power, the Syrian army, intact and able to resist Islamic State.

**Unappealing but Right**

This kind of argument is an admission of the West's impotence – of its limited ability to export its values and lifestyle. It feels like a selling out of ideals. The argument is also often used to justify doing business with dictators and, even worse, provides dictators with justification for their own policies of oppression.

But that doesn't make it wrong. There are an increasing number of failed states in the world. According to the Fragile State Index assembled by the Fund for Peace, the number of states receiving a rating of "very high alert" or "high alert" has increased from nine to 16 since 2006. The spread of democracy and freedom, by contrast, has hardly made any progress. According to Freedom House, following a significant increase in the number of free countries at the beginning of the 1990s, there has been little change since 1998.

Democracy can only function in an environment where there is at least a minimum of stability. And it cannot necessarily establish this stability itself. In Iraq and Egypt, that process has failed, at least for the time being. In Afghanistan, the power of President Hamid Karzai, who made way for his successor at the end of September, never extended much beyond the city limits of the capital, Kabul, despite massive Western support. It is debatable whether the rudimentary rule of law established there after 13 years of Western involvement can survive International Security Assistance Force's departure at the end of this year.

Free countries, as constitutional law expert Ernst-Wolfgang Bockenforde once wrote, flourish in conditions that they themselves are unable to guarantee. Without a cultural learning process – like the one undergone by Europe over the centuries – the toppling of a dictator and the holding of elections are not sufficient to establish democracy. As such, the West should value functioning states to a greater degree in the future.

Even as it longs to see the departure of autocrats in Russia, China, Central Asia and elsewhere, the alternatives must be seriously examined. And the next time an intervention is considered – whether this means military force, sanctions, or the support of opposition powers – the West must consider what will follow the toppling of the dictator. Indeed, that is exactly the argument US President Barack Obama used recently to justify his reticence to use force: "That's a lesson that I now apply every time I ask the questions, 'Should we intervene militarily? Do we have an answer (for) the day after?'"

**For discussion/reflection**:

- What are the author's reasons for arguing that "dictatorship is often preferable to anarchy" (line 35)? State some examples cited by the author to support her stand.
- "Free countries … flourish in conditions that they themselves are unable to guarantee" (lines 71-72). What do you think are these conditions for democracy to flourish?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2016)
2. Do those who challenge the status quo have a place in your society? (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
3. Consider the view that individuals, not the state, are in the best position to determine their overall well-being. (RI 2020 Term 3 Y6 Common Essay Assignment)
4. 'Democracy is not for everyone'. Comment (RI 2011 Y6 CT1)

## *SECTION E: TENSION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND THE POWER OF THE STATE*

**Reading 24: New Zealand's plan to outlaw smoking for the next generation is misguided** **EU3-5**
*The Economist | 17 December 2021*

**This reading will help you to:**
- Understand the concerns and repercussions of banning addictive substances such as alcohol and tobacco
- Be aware of how the tension between individual freedom and power of the state plays out, especially in matters pertaining to health and life

In chess, the endgame begins when most pieces have been taken off the board. With just a handful left, options narrow and moves become more decisive. So it is with smoking. Public-health types use the phrase "tobacco endgame" to mean a happy situation where the proportion of people who smoke has fallen below 5%. For any country to have come close to that, many tactics will probably have been used already: gigantic health warnings, age restrictions, plain packaging, disgusting pictures of cancerous lungs, stiff taxes, public-smoking bans and so on. Yet still, some people keep smoking. The endgame requires creativity and political will.

New Zealand has been a pioneer. It has banned cigarette adverts and smoking in most public places. Now it is going further. On December 9th the government laid out measures "to make New Zealand smokefree". From 2024 it will reduce the number of shops allowed to sell cigarettes. The following year, it will lower the amount of nicotine permissible in cigarettes. And most far-reaching of all, from 2027 it will make it illegal to sell cigarettes to anybody born after 2008. Such people will never be allowed to buy tobacco legally. Only Bhutan, which bans tobacco for everyone, has a stricter policy.

Some 4,500-5,000 New Zealanders are among the 7.7m people who die from smoking-related causes every year, roughly the same proportion as its share of the global population. The country has made progress in reducing smoking rates: 13.4% of adult Kiwis smoked in 2019-20, down from 18.2% in 2011-12, compared with a global average of around 20% in 2019. However, the proportion of Maoris who smoke is much higher, at 31.4%. It is this group at which the new policies are mainly aimed. The government pitches its plan as a way to "eliminate inequities in smoking rates and smoking-related illnesses".

Such aims are laudable, as is the government's admission that pushing tobacco taxes any higher would unfairly penalise the poor, who are likelier to be addicts, and "further punish smokers who are struggling to kick the habit", as the country's associate minister of health put it.

However, the new policies are misguided. Start with cutting the amount of nicotine in cigarettes: the idea is that it will wean smokers off the most addictive substance in the cancer sticks. Yet as any smoker—or European vape user who has sampled the satisfyingly high-nicotine liquids available outside the EU—can attest, lower nicotine levels only make them want to puff more. Nicotine may be the most addictive bit of a smoke, but it is not the most harmful. The main causes of disease are the tar, the toxic chemicals and the inhalation of smoke from a fire two inches away from your nose.

More unwise still is the plan to enforce prohibition for the next generation of potential smokers. Banning popular substances has unintended consequences, as alcohol prohibition once showed in America, and the war on drugs shows nearly everywhere today. The market moves underground. Criminals take over. Supplies are no longer regulated, so quality suffers: all manner of harmful extras may be added. Worse, criminal gangs make so much money from prohibition that they corrupt governments and fight bloody battles with each other over turf.

No doubt a well-run country like New Zealand will suffer less lawlessness from the gradual prohibition of tobacco than Al Capone's Chicago did from the sudden banning of booze, or modern-day Mexico does from America's war on drugs. But it will suffer some. Indeed, it already does. Thanks to cigarette prices twice as high as in Singapore and six times as high as in China, a tenth of the tobacco consumed in 2019 in New Zealand was illicit.

Smoking is a disgusting, expensive and largely pointless habit, as many smokers will cheerfully admit. It imposes costs not only on those who puff but also on those around them. So it is appropriate to restrict smoking, and to tax cigarettes stiffly, as most rich countries do, to discourage consumption and make sure that smokers more than pay for the extra costs they impose on public health-care systems.

But prohibition is a step too far. Liberal societies tolerate all sorts of evils—look no further than alcohol—on the grounds that the state's business is to regulate for safety and to minimise harm, not to tell people how to live their lives. Smoking should be no different.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- What are your thoughts on the New Zealand cigarette ban? Do you agree with the concerns stated from lines 24-35?
- Do you think a society like Singapore will benefit from a cigarette ban? Why or why not?
- What other matters/areas would the state be justified in asserting its power to curtail individual freedom/behaviour? Why do you say so?

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. 'What an individual eats or drinks should not be the concern of the state.' What is your view? (Cambridge 2021)
2. Consider the view that we do not take enough responsibility for our own well-being. (Cambridge 2018)
3. 'People, rather than the government, should be responsible for their own well-being.' Comment. (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
4. Should the state intervene in matters relating to one's body? (RI 2021 Y6 Prelim)

## *SECTION F: TENSION BETWEEN DOMESTIC INTERESTS AND GLOBAL PRESSURES*

**Reading 25: China's Foreign policy driven by internal politics** **EU 6**

*Adapted from We Need to Understand China's Domestic Politics | Michael Cunningham | Asian Studies Centre, The Heritage Foundation | 18 August 2021*

**This reading will help you to:**

- Understand why Chinese foreign policy is strongly linked to internal forces and domestic politics
- Recognise that the domestic interests of an influential country exerted on a contested zone might invariably clash with international demands and pressures.
- Acknowledge that such a conflict of interests involves deep-seated causes, and that the prospect of a compromise forged between the conflicting parties might remain elusive as a goal.

In the past, Chinese foreign policy has often appeared too aggressive to be fully logical. Among other things, China had intensified efforts to defend Huawei by charging Canadians Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor with espionage after a Canadian court refused to stop extradition proceedings against CFO Meng Wanzhou, and warned the United Kingdom it would "bear the consequences" for excluding the telecom giant from its 5G network; cracked down on the once semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong, enacting a far-reaching National Security Law and arresting multiple pro-democracy activists; lashed out at and imposed trade sanctions on Australia for questioning its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic; tightened its grip on the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea by unilaterally setting up new administrative districts; increased maritime militia patrols around the Japanese-controlled Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands; clashed with India at the disputed border in the Himalayas; and deployed a record number of warplanes across the median line in the Taiwan Strait around China's own National Day.

Former U.S. House Speaker Tip O'Neill was referring to American politics when he quipped that "all politics is local." However, his famous observation also applies to China, and can help explain China's foreign policy to a great extent. As U.S. officials develop their strategy for managing China's rise, they would do well to keep O'Neill's words in mind. They will be able to develop more targeted, effective strategies for dealing with an increasingly powerful and assertive China if they account for the domestic political interests driving their Chinese counterparts.

This is not a plea for leniency toward Beijing or for a return to failed engagement policies. Rather, it is a call for U.S. officials to study and understand the full range of interests and concerns driving Beijing's policymaking. They are not all matters of grand strategy, ideology or economic performance. The traditional view of U.S.-China relations as a geopolitical competition between a dominant power and a dissatisfied rising power pursuing their respective rational self-interest is incomplete for two reasons. First, self-interest is not always rational from a foreign policy perspective. Further, the "selves" pursuing these interests are often disparate groups of policy elites, rather than unified state actors.

This is widely acknowledged to be the case in the United States, where competition among elected officials and their appointees is out in the open. Indeed, Beijing studies the competing interests that drive U.S. policymaking and tries to use them to its advantage. It applies pressure and enticements in an effort to persuade U.S. politicians to act in ways that benefit China. Its efforts to turn up the heat on sectors key to a politician's re-election bid and to employ U.S. businesses to lobby the federal government on its behalf are two common examples of this phenomenon.

U.S. policymaking, on the other hand, appears to take little account of China's domestic politics. This is unfortunate. Although competing political interests in China are not out in the open like they are in

the United States, they are integral to the country's political system and its domestic developments. Indeed, Beijing's decades-long policy continuity rests on management of a complex interplay of factors. The Chinese Communist Party and the government it controls consist of huge bureaucracies with overlapping, sometimes conflicting, interests among different government bodies. Beneath the surface, China's political system and culture engender cut-throat competition among government officials and their affiliated relationship networks. The difficulties officials face in trying to advance through this system cause intense competition between government bodies and among officials, who look for every opportunity to promote their achievements and discredit anyone who might stand in their way. Adding to the complication are the nongovernmental stakeholders—such as Chinese businesses and an increasingly vocal nationalistic public. The Communist Party seeks to placate these in order to head off challenges to its authority.

Domestic politics often outranks other considerations in China, and this was the case long before Mao Zedong established the People's Republic in 1949. Mao's reign was characterized by a series of domestic political struggles, ultimately culminating in the infamous Cultural Revolution. While Mao talked big on the international stage and even fought the United States in Korea, his main focus was domestic politics, and China's national interests were shaped far more by internal than external considerations.

The Xi era is not much different in this regard. While Xi is more active on the world stage than his predecessors, the main thrust of his policymaking remains domestic. This is true even of some of the signature foreign policy behaviors of Xi's regime—such as "wolf warrior diplomacy" and harsh retaliation against countries that dare defy Beijing's commands. Such behavior may appear irrational and counterproductive when viewed through the lens of international politics but makes perfect sense from the context of China's domestic politics. Indeed, no Chinese official can afford to look weak in a system where a nationalistic public demands a strong response to perceived international slights, and when opponents within the party will seek to amplify his every mistake. This imperative of looking strong for internal audiences is one of the central motivators of Chinese behavior.

In developing a strategy for confronting China's challenge to the U.S.-led global order, Washington needs to study—in addition to geopolitics—the details of China's domestic politics at the national, local, and individual levels. Much of this information is available to be examined in open-source literature, as well as by careful monitoring of Chinese social media and interactions with Chinese interlocutors. What is needed is a persistent, systematic examination of these sources by policymakers, analysts, business leaders, news media, and citizens in general. An informed public debate among all the American stakeholders will go far in producing a more effective and nuanced strategic approach to the PRC.

In addition to using this information to prevent the blunders that arise when policy drivers are not properly understood, officials should take a page from China's playbook and use this information to assess how various policy options will affect key Chinese decisionmakers. Officials should understand what kinds of pressure and enticements they can use to better manage their counterparts in Beijing. This is an ideal time to start taking this approach. Between now and the party congress expected to occur in fall 2022, domestic politics will occupy the minds of China's policy elite to an extent seen only once every five years. Official turnover will be high in the lead-up to and during the party congress, and due to the cut-throat nature of Chinese politics, even officials slated to retire will be preoccupied with how it turns out.

This is even more so for Xi, who is expected to seek a precedent-breaking third term at the party's helm. While Xi is almost certain to retain power, he does not want to take any chances and will be hyper-focused avoiding mistakes. Xi has faced criticism within the party for his handling of U.S.-China

relations, so avoiding further deterioration in that relationship will probably be a top foreign-policy priority ahead of the party congress. Xi will likely seek some symbolic victories, such as securing a high-level meeting or agreement of some sort. U.S. policymakers should recognize these efforts for what they are and use Xi's vulnerability to make him really work for even the most trivial symbolic achievement.

This does not mean Beijing's overall tone will be softened. Given the emphasis on not looking weak, most of Xi's aggressive international posturing—"wolf warrior diplomacy" and regular intrusions across the Taiwan Strait midline, for example—is likely to continue. There is also a possibility that any pressure to avoid excessive escalation of U.S.-China tensions will be eclipsed by a clash of interests, resulting in an even more aggressive stance against the United States and China's various neighbors. In such a case, American leaders will need to recognize the domestic factors influencing Beijing's actions and seek to defuse tensions in ways that are politically viable in China.

If history is an accurate guide, China will likely become even more aggressive internationally in Xi's third term. This will make it more important than ever that U.S. policymakers understand the domestic political environment and the interests and concerns driving Beijing's decisionmakers.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- Explain, in your own words, why China's behaviour and handling of controversies with global implications appear 'too aggressive to be fully logical' (line 1)
- Based on lines 19-25, explain the limitations of an understanding of US-China relations as simply a clash between two major powers
- In your view, are Chinese interests as shaped by internal politics likely to be intrinsically incompatible with American and international interests or not?
- Explain, in your words, why China's 'wolf warrior diplomacy' (line 54) and combative behaviour on the international stage 'makes perfect sense from the context of China's domestic politics' (lines 56-57)
- How does Cunningham support his view that China is 'likely [to] become even more aggressive internationally in [President] Xi's third term' (lines 93-94)

**Related Cambridge/RI essay questions:**

1. A leader's responsibility should always be to his or her own country, not other nations. (Cambridge 2019)
2. Do events, rather than politicians, shape the future? (Cambridge 2017)
3. 'Politics is often more concerned with power than with people.' Is this a fair statement? (RI 2019 Y6 CT2)

## *SECTION F: TENSION BETWEEN DOMESTIC INTERESTS AND GLOBAL PRESSURES*

**Reading 26: Ukraine – Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia** **EU 6**

*Jonathan Masters | Council on Foreign Relations | Updated 2 December 2021*

**This article will help provide:**

- An understanding of why the conflict in Ukraine is viewed by some as part of a renewed geopolitical rivalry between Western powers and Russia
- An introduction to the deep cultural, economic, and political bonds between Ukraine and Russia
- An analysis of the complex, partly internal pressures that have shaped Russia's role in the conflict, as well as the nature of the Western response

Ukraine has long played an important, yet sometimes overlooked, role in the global security order. Today, the country is on the front lines of a renewed great-power rivalry that many analysts say will dominate international relations in the decades ahead.

In recent elections, Ukrainians have clearly indicated that they see their future in Europe, but the country continues to grapple with extreme corruption and deep regional rifts that could impede its path. Meanwhile, Russia's aggression in Ukraine has triggered the greatest security crisis in Europe since the Cold War. A buildup of Russian military forces along the border with Ukraine in late 2021 stoked fears that Moscow is preparing for a large-scale invasion of its neighbor, although the Kremlin has denied this.

**Why has Ukraine become a geopolitical flash point?**

Ukraine was a cornerstone of the Soviet Union, the archrival of the United States during the Cold War. In its nearly three decades of independence, Ukraine has sought to forge its own path as a sovereign state while looking to align more closely with Western institutions, including the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, Kyiv has struggled to balance its foreign relations and to bridge deep internal divisions. A more nationalist, Ukrainian-speaking population in western parts of the country has generally supported greater integration with Europe, while a mostly Russian-speaking community in the east has favored closer ties with Russia.

Ukraine became a battleground in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and began arming and abetting separatists in the Donbas region in the country's southeast. Russia's seizure of Crimea was the first time since World War II that a European state annexed the territory of another. For many analysts, the conflict marked a clear shift in the global security environment from a unipolar period of U.S. dominance to one defined by renewed competition between great powers.

**What are Russia's interests in Ukraine?**

Russia has deep cultural, economic, and political bonds with Ukraine, and in many ways Ukraine is central to Russia's identity and vision for itself in the world.

Family ties. Russia and Ukraine have strong familial bonds that go back centuries. Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, is sometimes referred to as "the mother of Russian cities," on par in terms of cultural influence with Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Russian diaspora. Among Russia's top concerns is the welfare of the approximately eight million ethnic Russians living in Ukraine, according to a 2001 census, mostly in the south and east. Moscow claimed a duty to protect these people as a pretext for its actions in Ukraine.

Superpower image. Losing a permanent hold on Ukraine, and letting it fall into the Western orbit, was seen by many as a major blow to Russia's international prestige.

Crimea. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 to strengthen the "brotherly ties between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples." However, since the fall of the union, many Russian nationalists in both Russia and Crimea have longed for a return of the peninsula.

Trade. Russia was for a long time Ukraine's largest trading partner, although this link has withered dramatically in recent years. Prior to its invasion of Crimea, Russia had hoped to pull Ukraine into its single market, the Eurasian Economic Union.

Energy. Russia has relied on Ukrainian pipelines to pump its gas to customers in Central and Eastern Europe for decades. However, in mid-2021, Russia completed construction of its Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which runs under the Baltic Sea to Germany. Critics warn that Nord Stream 2 will allow Russia to bypass Ukrainian pipelines if it wants and gain greater geopolitical leverage in the region.

Political sway. Russia has been intent on preserving its political influence in Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet Union, particularly after its preferred candidate for Ukrainian president in 2004, Viktor Yanukovych, lost to a reformist competitor as part of the Orange Revolution popular movement. Yanukovych later became president of Ukraine, in 2010, amid voter discontent with the Orange government.

**What motivated Russia's moves against Ukraine?**

Some emphasize NATO's post–Cold War enlargement, which Russia has viewed with increasing alarm. In 2004, NATO added seven members, its fifth expansion and largest one to date, including the former Soviet Baltic republics Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Four years later, when NATO declared its intent to bring Ukraine and Georgia into the fold at some point in the future, Russia made clear a redline had been crossed. In the weeks leading up to NATO's 2008 summit, President Vladimir Putin warned U.S. diplomats that steps to bring Ukraine into the alliance "would be a hostile act toward Russia." Months later, Russia went to war with Georgia, seemingly showcasing Putin's willingness to use force to secure Russia's interests.

Experts dispute the assertion that Russia's fear of NATO was its primary motive. Rather, they say, the biggest factor behind Russia's intervention was Putin's fear of losing power at home. Putin claimed U.S. actors were sowing unrest in Russia and began casting the United States as an archenemy to rally his political base. It was by looking through this Cold War redux lens that he chose to intervene in Ukraine. Indeed, Russia's intervention in Ukraine proved to be immensely popular at home, pushing Putin's approval ratings above 80 percent following a steady decline.

**What triggered the 2013–14 crisis?**

It was Ukraine's ties with the European Union that brought tensions to a head with Russia. In late 2013, President Yanukovych, acting under pressure from his supporters in Moscow, scrapped plans to formalize a closer economic relationship with the EU. Russia had at the same time been pressing Ukraine to join the not-yet-formed Eurasian Economic Union. Many Ukrainians perceived Yanukovych's decision as a betrayal by a deeply corrupt and incompetent government, and it ignited countrywide protests known as Euromaidan.

Putin framed the ensuing tumult of Euromaidan as a Western-backed "fascist coup" that endangered the ethnic Russian majority in Crimea. Putin ordered a covert invasion of Crimea that he later justified

as a rescue operation. “There is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line,” Putin said, in formalizing the annexation.

Putin employed a similar narrative to justify his support for separatists in southeastern Ukraine, another region home to large numbers of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. He famously referred to the area as Novorossiya (New Russia), a term dating back to eighteenth-century imperial Russia. Armed Russian provocateurs, including some agents of Russian security services, are believed to have played a central role in stirring the anti-Euromaidan secessionist movements in the region into a rebellion.

**What are Russia’s objectives in Ukraine?**

Putin’s Russia has been described as a revanchist power, keen to regain its former power and prestige. “It was always Putin’s goal to restore Russia to the status of a great power in northern Eurasia,” writes Gerard Toal, an international affairs professor at Virginia Tech. “The end goal was not to re-create the Soviet Union but to make Russia great again.”

By seizing Crimea, Russia has solidified its control of a critical foothold on the Black Sea. With a larger and more sophisticated military presence there, Russia can project power deeper into the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa, where it has traditionally had limited influence. Russia’s strategic gains in the Donbas are more fragile. Supporting the separatists has, at least temporarily, increased Russia’s bargaining power vis-à-vis Ukraine, but the region’s future is highly uncertain.

Putin has made clear that he will never allow Ukraine to become “anti-Russian” and will continue to push back against the expansion of Western influence in Ukraine. In July 2021, he penned an article explaining his views of the two countries’ shared history, describing Russians and Ukrainians as “one people” who effectively occupy “the same historical and spiritual space.”

**What are U.S. and EU policy in Ukraine?**

The United States remains committed to the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. It does not recognize Russia’s claims to Crimea, and it encourages Russia and Ukraine to resolve the Donbas conflict via accords calling for a cease-fire, a withdrawal of heavy weapons, Ukrainian control over its border with Russia, and local elections and a special political status for certain areas of the region. The United States and its allies have also taken retaliatory actions against Russia for its actions in Ukraine. Over the years, Washington has imposed sanctions on hundreds of Russian individuals, as well as parts of the Russian economy, including the defense, energy, and financial sectors. The Group of Eight, now known as the Group of Seven, suspended Russia from its ranks indefinitely in 2014.

The United States is officially opposed to Russia’s Nord Stream 2, claiming it will give Moscow greater political leverage over Ukraine and other European gas customers. Since the pipeline’s completion, President Joe Biden’s administration has effectively acknowledged that it aims to work with relevant allies to mitigate any potential negative consequences for Kyiv.

**What do Ukrainians want?**

Russia’s aggression in recent years has galvanized public support for Ukraine’s Westward leanings. In the wake of Euromaidan, the country elected billionaire businessman Petro Poroshenko, a staunch proponent of EU and NATO integration, as president. In 2019, Poroshenko was defeated by Volodymyr Zelensky, an actor and comedian who campaigned on a platform of anticorruption, economic renewal, and peace in the Donbas. Zelensky’s victory as a political outsider was viewed as a strong indicator of

the public's deep dissatisfaction with the political establishment and its halting battle against endemic corruption and an oligarchic economy.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- In your view, what are the political and economic costs incurred upon Russia's invasion of Ukraine? Do you think these costs are worth incurring, compared to what Russia hopes to gain (based on Masters' analysis)?
- Masters outlines a number of measures taken by Western actors in response to Russia's aggression. How effective do you think these measures would be?
- Given that at least some factions of Ukrainian society appear to favour reunification with Russia, how can the Ukrainian and international response take that into consideration when dealing with the conflict?

**Related Cambridge/RI questions:**

1. Small countries are helpless in shaping global politics.' Do you agree? (RI 2022 Prelims)
2. 'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true? (Cambridge 2021)
3. A leader's responsibility should always be to his or her own country, not other nations. (Nov 19)
4. 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2016)
5. Is patriotism always desirable? (RI 2021 Y6 Timed Practice)
6. Assess the view that international organisations are mostly ineffective.' (RI 2018 Y6 Prelim)
7. 'A country should take care of its own interests before others.' What is your view? (RI 2018 Y5 CT)

## *SECTION F: TENSION BETWEEN DOMESTIC INTERESTS AND GLOBAL PRESSURES*

**Reading 27: United States Aid to Ukraine: An Investment Whose Benefits Greatly Exceed its Cost**

*Anthony H. Cordesman | Excerpt from the Centre for Strategic & International Studies | 21 Nov 2022* **EU 5 & 6**

**This article will help to:**

- Provide an insight into why the U.S. should continue to provide monetary aid to support Ukraine's war efforts against Russia.
- Shed light on the possible overlap between domestic and global interests, especially in the case of an international superpower like the U.S.

So far, there has been only limited domestic political resistance in the United States to continuing civil and military aid to Ukraine. A few political figures like the newly reelected Marjorie Taylor Greene have taken a totally negative stance: "Under Republicans, not another penny will go to Ukraine"; "Our country comes first," and more recently, a tweet that said, "We must stop letting Zelensky demand money & weapons from US taxpayers while he is trying to drag us into WW3. No more money to Ukraine. It's time to end this war and demand peace."

There have, however, been more realistic warnings about the possible growth of opposition to such aid like those of House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy: "I think people are gonna be sitting in a recession and they're not going to write a blank check to Ukraine. They just won't do it." A recent poll has also shown that the number of Republicans who feel the U.S. is doing too much for Ukraine rose from 6 percent in March 2023 to 30 percent of all Americas - and 48 percent of all Republicans - at the end of October.

These trends warn that there are no guarantees that the U.S. will continue to provide adequate aid to Ukraine in a future where Ukraine may need major amounts of U.S. humanitarian, civil, and military aid for years to come, and where getting Russia to pay for any major aspect of the Ukraine's recovery after a peace settlement seems to be more of a dream than any credible reality.

Much of this rising U.S. opposition to continuing aid to Ukraine does, however, come from only considering its cost and ignoring the strategic benefits it provides to the U.S. It is developing because far too much of the reporting on the Ukraine war ignores the fact that the U.S. has already obtained major strategic benefits from aiding the Ukraine, and that such aid is one of the best investments the U.S. can make in competing with Putin's Russia and in advancing its own security.

Focusing on the price tag of aid instead of the value of what it buys ignores the fact that the war in Ukraine has become the equivalent of a proxy war with Russia, and a war that can be fought without any U.S. military casualties, that unites most of the world's democracies behind a common cause, that deeply punishes Russia for its act of aggression and strengthens every aspect of deterrence. It ignores the fact that costs of such aid are low in grand strategic terms, and seem likely to be far lower than the cumulative cost of the fighting to save an Afghan government that never began to approach the Ukraine's unity and national commitment to defend itself.

It not only ignores the moral and ethical commitment the U.S. should have to every other free nation, but it also ignores the fact that Russia is far poorer than the U.S. and its allies. It ignores the fact that Russia is already paying far more of its Gross National Product and economy to fight the war in the Ukraine than the U.S. and its partners, and that Russia has suffered massive losses of weapons, war reserves, and military personnel.

As is discussed in detail later in this analysis, U.S. aid has so far enabled Ukraine to do immense damage to Russia's overall capability to threaten Europe and to fight any future conflict.

It ignores the practical benefits of the message that sending such aid to the Ukraine has sent to our strategic partners and allies about American capability and resolve. It ignores the extent to which such aid has put practical limits on Putin's ambitions to restore a greater Russia, and shown other states that they can trust the U.S. to compete with China. It ignores the extent to which such aid helps to rebuild and strengthen the role America plays as the de facto leader of the West and other democratic states. It ignores the degree to which it has revitalized NATO and European defense effort.

It ignores the role that key allies like Britain, France, Germany, Canada, Poland, other NATO and EU states – and nations outside of Europe like Japan – are also playing in providing aid to the Ukraine. It also ignores the relative economic cost to such nations in providing such aid and joining with the U.S. in sanctioning Russia. While the level of aid from other states has been much lower than the levels of U.S. aid, most of our European and partners and allies are suffering far more from the economic consequences of their support for Ukraine and rise in global energy costs than Americans. While inflation in the U.S reached 7.7% in November 2022, it reached 11.1% in the United Kingdom, 11.6% in Germany, and 14.3% in the Netherlands.

**The Challenge of Future Aid Needs**

Ukraine will probably need years of future support, and the U.S. has already budgeted major amounts of money. The Congress authorized some $53 billion in military and civil aid by May 2022, with a $13.6 billion initial vote for in emergency aid for the war, followed by $40 billion in military and civil aid in May 10, 2022.

There is no clear official reporting on the total flow of total aid authorizations and actual spending to date, but the U.S. has stated that it had already came close to spending $20 billion in military assistance alone by mid-November 2030. Secretary of Defense Austin announced that the U.S had spent $18.6 billion in military aid. The State Department reported that it had spent some $10 billion more on civilian aid as of mid-November 2020. It is also clear that America's strategic partners, and other nations, have provided billions of dollars in additional aid.

Billions of dollars do matter – and come at the cost of alternative uses of the money – although one needs to be a little cautious about tying such costs to the overall rate of inflation and the health of the American economy. The U.S. national security budget is well in excess of $800 billion – including nuclear weapons and security assistance. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the total U.S. federal budget will make outlays reaching $5,872 billion in FY2023, of $4,795 billion is on budget.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimated that the U.S. economy was still growing steadily as of October 2022 – along with personal income – and was estimated to have reached $25.66 trillion in current dollars. At least to date, aid to Ukraine had only a negligible impact on both total federal spending and the U.S. economy.

**The Shape of Costs to Come**

The costs to date, however, are only part of the story and Ukraine can only succeed and survive as a functioning state if the U.S. provides continuing military and civil assistance as long as Russia pursues the war. Aid to help Ukraine bear the cost of the fighting must also be followed by U.S. aid to help Ukraine recover.

The cost of such recovery is going to be high and it is steadily rising as Russia launches more and more attacks on Ukrainian civilian facilities and its critical infrastructure. Even in September 2013 – before

the full Russian assault on the civil economy and infrastructure of Ukraine had begun, estimates were being issued that rebuilding the Ukraine's economy, infrastructure, and civil facilities could cost some $349 billion. This figure now seems far too low in light of Russia's steadily escalating attacks on the Ukraine's entire civil and economic infrastructure.

Any estimates of the overall civil and military costs of the war to Ukraine by the time any kind of peace or settlement is reached are highly uncertain. There are no reliable ways to estimate the future cost of the fighting. Worse, Russia's steady escalation of its strikes on civilian targets in Ukraine have already made it clear that the cost of supporting both the war and recovery will steadily rise until there is some form of settlement or ceasefire.

**Bleeding the Ukrainian Economy and Resistance to Death?**

Any argument for continuing aid must recognize the fact that the cost of aid could rise sharply, could exceed the past levels of wartime and other emergency aid, and that the U.S. and all of its strategic partners will find it painful to pay them. It must recognize that the U.S. and its partners do face major internal economic problems with inflation, civil needs, energy supplies, medical needs like COVID, and dealing with climate change.

It must also recognize that the U.S. and its partners also face competing national security needs in dealing with security challenges from China, Iran, North Korea, and terrorism. These challenges include the growth of China's nuclear and conventional forces, the separate threat posed by Russian nuclear modernization, and the need to respond to the near-collapse of many existing arms control agreements and efforts.

At the same time, those who oppose continuing aid must recognize that demanding that Ukraine pay more for its own defense is simply ludicrous. Ukraine has already depleted its financial reserves, exhausted much of its borrowing capacity, and its economy has been steadily more crippled and made it steadily harder for Ukraine to keep funding even the operational costs of the war.

In practice, Ukraine cannot continue to fight and to recover without continuing aid from the U.S. and other powers. Moreover, if the war drags on as it well may do, the total costs of both the war and recovery states could easily rise well over $500 billion. A truly long war could put the total cost of the war and recovery to a trillion dollars or more

**The Strategic Benefits Aid to Ukraine Provides to the U.S.**

This does not mean that there are no limits to what the U.S. can and should do. The U.S. cannot police or heal the world, of provide Ukraine with unlimited support. The U.S. cannot fund every need or allocate funds without regard to its own national interests. It must allocate its limited aid funds and efforts according to their strategic value to the U.S. and how effectively the money will be used. But it must also consider the cost of not providing aid, and the probable end result, and the grand strategic benefits of continuing to provide such aid.

The U.S. must exercise strategic triage. It must spend where this is clearly in its national interest, and Ukraine is a key case in point. U.S. aid to Ukraine is still probably the most cost-effective investment the U.S. and its strategic partners have recently made in national security, and an investment whose benefits will still outweigh its costs.

**Ensuring that Ukraine Could Survive**

The cost of failing to provide continuing aid is brutally clear. To put these benefits into perspective, Ukraine only survived the initial Russian attack because of the past flow of aid, extensive and detailed warnings from U.S., British, and other intelligence sources, and the early aid efforts of the U.S. and its

partner nations. As the relative force numbers in the Russian-Ukrainian military balance in Figure One help illustrate, there is no way that Ukraine could have defeated a force as large as Russia without the aid Ukraine received in the period before the Russian invasion began.

It could not have survived the initial Russian onslaught and then won major victories without the massive flow of U.S. and allied aid that followed as the war progressed. Ukraine certainly emerged as a highly effective force, and one that operated with exceptional skill and courage, but outside aid was critical to sustaining its operations, giving it a decisive edge in intelligence, target, and communications, and allowing it to operate without fear it would exhaust its supplies.

Without such aid through every month of the war to date, and a decisive early U.S. decision to fully support its allies in NATO, and to make its political commitment to support Ukraine so clear, the end result might well have been an initial Russian victory in spite of all the Russian military failings that have now become clear. Without continuing U.S. aid and the same firm political commitment to the Ukraine, it could also have been a war of attrition that Ukraine lost rather than won.

**Maintaining and Increasing Trust in U.S. Leadership and the Confidence of Strategic Partners and Allies**

In contrast, if the U.S. had not provided an initial flood of aid to Ukraine, and then continued to provide additional aid in response to Russian escalation, this would probably have created a Europe that lost much of its confidence in U.S. guarantees and extended deterrence. It would have been a world where economic sanctions against Russia, and cuts in Russian gas exports, would not have been initiated or sustained.

It is doubtful that Sweden and Finland would have applied to join a weak and indecisive NATO. Quite possibly, Russia would have acted on other ambitions like putting new levels of pressure on the Baltic states, exploiting its enclave in Kaliningrad, and taking full military control of Belarus and Moldova. Failing to provide aid would have sent a message to nations in Asia and the Middle East that they could not count on U.S. aid. In short, any U.S. failure to provide massive continuing aid after the Russian invasion began would have been the equivalent of a proxy war that the United States had decisively lost in spite of all its military strength.

**Gaining Immense Strategic Leverage**

In contrast, U.S. and allied military aid was provided and the West mobilized to put intense economic and diplomatic pressure on Russia to end the war. This allowed a far smaller Ukraine to defeat Russian efforts to seize most or all of the Ukraine, then allowed Ukraine to counter a massive Russian shift to artillery and missile attacks on both the Ukrainian forces and its civil infrastructure, and also allowed it to play a key role in helping Ukraine support its population through months of grueling fighting.

Russia did begin the war with far more military and financial resources than Ukraine. The Russian GDP was $1,775 billion in current dollars in 2021, or some nine times larger than $201 billion for Ukraine. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Russia also spent $62.2 billion on defense in 2021, or 14 times the $4.35 billion spent by Ukraine.

In practical terms, however, the aid the U.S. and allied nations have provided to Ukraine – coupled to the sanctions and diplomatic pressure they have put on Russia's economy – have imposed immense costs on a Russia that can scarcely afford the war it now has had to fight. Russia was scarcely an economic or resource-rich military superpower before the war began and the U.S. and its allies could draw upon far larger economic resources.

U.S aid has meant that Russia has had to fight with a prewar GDP that compares with a current U.S. GDP of $22,966 billion in current dollars and is thirteen times larger. And Russia's prewar military development had to compete with a U.S. defense budget of $811 billon, which is 13 times larger than the Russian defense budget. Equally important, U.S. leadership in creating sanctions against Russia's economy and energy exports has forced Russia to fight an open-ended war in the face of major losses of its export income, and critical limits to the imports it needs for its military forces and economy.

Accordingly, while U.S. aid to Ukraine has scarcely been cheap, U.S. spending has been at token levels compared to the economic burden that the cost of the Ukraine war and economic sanctions have placed on Russia. Once aid spending is put in the context of American economic strength and leverage, it allows the U.S. to exert immense strategic leverage on Russia at a minimal cost to the U.S. and in ways that U.S. spending on military forces – vital as it is to U.S. security -- cannot match.

Moreover, these numbers do not take account of the fact that America's strategic partners have played a critical role in aiding Ukraine and putting economic pressure on Russia. NATO Europe added another $361 billion to the total of Western defense spending in 2021. While the comparability of Russian defense spending data to the data on the U.S. and the rest of NATO is uncertain, the data now available from the IISS and NATO indicate that total NATO defense spending is some 19 times larger than Russian spending.

Comparisons of Russian and Western GDPs are equally uncertain, but some estimates of the total GDP of NATO were at least $32 trillion at the end of 2021, or some 45% of the global economy or more than 18 times that of Russia. Some estimates go as high as $37 billion, or 21 times the size of Russia. Providing aid to Ukraine effectively has forced Russia to fight a proxy war in which both the U.S. and Europe could exploit the fact they have a massive strategic advantage in both defense spending and total economic resources.

***Major Military and NATO Alliance Benefits***

The U.S. investment in aid to Ukraine, and Ukrainian military success has had many other grand strategic benefits. Ukraine's military successes have exposed Russia's many military weaknesses, gave the U.S. and NATO a priceless insight into Russia's limits and vulnerabilities, led Sweden and Finland to apply to join NATO, and led many NATO states – including key cases Germany – to announce plans to revitalize their forces in ways where a decade of NATO efforts to persuade them to spend 2% of their GDP on defense failed to accomplish.

Moreover, the U.S. support of Ukraine did more than show NATO and other partners that alliances can really work. It provided priceless practical military and diplomatic experience in improving the structure of the NATO alliance, and in showing the U.S. how to cooperate with partners in modern warfare vs. counterterrorism and wars like Afghanistan. As many of Russia's failures in the Ukraine War show, this kind of practical experience is critical in modernizing combat forces and the entire military structure of U.S. and allied forces, and the Russian lack of such experience was a critical reason for many of its defeats.

Nothing else the U.S. could have done – or spent defense and aid funds upon – could have been as productive in ensuring the security of the United States against one of the two major powers that could threaten the U.S. as well as its partners and allies. Nothing the U.S. can do in the future will be as productive in showing allies and partners that collective efforts to defend can secure Europe and the Atlantic, and help rebuild strategic confidence and trust in the U.S.

**For discussion/reflection:**

- The article states a few strategic benefits (e.g. maintaining trust in U.S. leadership, gaining strategic leverage etc.) which the U.S. may stand to gain should they continue to fund Ukraine's war efforts. In your view, how might these global considerations and strategic concerns undermine domestic interests, specifically areas that pertain to the well-being of the U.S. citizens?
- In the case of the U.S., a global superpower, should their responsibilities to the world outweigh their domestic interests? Why or why not?
- In lines 67-68, it is stated that "aid to Ukraine had only a negligible impact on both total federal spending and the U.S. economy". In your opinion, is this a strong justification to why the U.S. ought to continue its foreign aid efforts in the Ukraine War?

**Related Cambridge/RI questions:**

1. Small countries are helpless in shaping global politics.' Do you agree? (RI 2022 Prelims)
2. 'The key to good governance is in staying accountable to the people.' How far do you agree? (RI 2022 Y6 Common Test)
3. A leader's responsibility should always be to his or her own country, not other nations. (Nov 19)
4. 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far do you agree? (Cambridge 2016)
5. 'A country should take care of its own interests before others.' What is your view? (RI 2018 Y5 CT)
6. In times of economic hardship, should a country still be expected to provide financial and material aid to others? (Cambridge 2014)