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BRAZIL HAS SUFFERED more than most countries in the COVID-19 pandemic, its massive death toll standing as a grim testament to the consequences of erratic leadership in a public health crisis. Meanwhile, Mexico has counted its own heavy losses from another form of insidious violence, though it has been left to citizen groups to raise monuments to the drug war's victims. From Peru to Haiti, the past continues to haunt present-day political struggles. *Current History*'s February issue will cover these trends and more across the region. Topics scheduled to appear include:

- **The Pandemic and State Neglect in Brazil**
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- **Mexico's Memorials of Violence**
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- **An Election Year Roils Peru's Bicentenary**
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"[M]obility and migration interact with other factors in ways that are symptomatic of how states and societies are increasingly connected."

Global Security Entanglement and the Mobility Paradox

FIONA B. ADAMSON AND KELLY M. GREENHILL

We live in a highly interconnected, globally entangled world, but continue to think in national terms. Paradoxically, at a time when many governments are retrenching and attempting to deglobalize, the most significant challenges facing the world are more global and border-busting than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a striking illustration of this trend. No event in recent history more clearly qualifies as a global security event, with over 4.8 million people around the world having died from the virus, and more than 237 million having been infected, as of October 2021. In the United States alone, more people died from COVID-19 in the first 20 months of the pandemic than died fighting in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan combined.

COVID-19 spread so quickly and widely in large part due to the scale, scope, and speed of international mobility today. The virus jumped from Wuhan, China, to the rest of the world via cross-border travel and exchange. Our entangled, interconnected world, with its integrated supply chains and constant cross-border flows of money, goods, people, and services, may proffer a myriad of benefits and virtues, but it is also exceptionally vulnerable to cross-border security threats such as pandemics. As many public health experts have already observed, it is surprising that we have not witnessed a modern global pandemic on this scale before now, and this one is unlikely to be the last.

Despite the staggering human costs associated with COVID-19, levels of international cooperation to combat this global threat have remained relatively low, and responses have been overwhelmingly state-centric. Immediate government responses relied heavily on border closings, export bans, and attempts to reconfigure global supply chains.

At the same time, global vaccination programs have been stalled by the rise of "vaccine nationalism," pharmaceutical protectionism, and the proliferation of international scapegoating—such as the United States and China each casting blame on the other for the outbreak of the virus. Yet public health experts from the Center for Global Development estimate that it would cost just $50–70 billion to vaccinate everyone still unvaccinated globally. This relatively modest investment would likely radically reduce the further spread and mutation of the virus and protect the majority of the vaccinated against the most serious forms of the disease.

MANAGING MOBILITY

The COVID-19 pandemic is emblematic of the larger patterns and dynamics of the global security environment. Whereas the world is increasingly connected by a multiplicity of transportation links, communications technologies, social media, global popular culture, trade, and finance, these complex interconnections exist side by side with structurally driven, national forms of competition and conflict. Moreover, the third wave of globalization that shaped so much of recent history produced not only connections between different

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parts of the planet, but also tighter linkages between an array of disparate issue areas.

These background conditions create hybrid dynamics that can be characterized as a form of *global security entanglement*—in which both national and international security are deeply intertwined, and domestic and international politics can likewise become interconnected and entangled. In this context, interconnectedness can be leveraged by individual state and nonstate actors to their own advantage. But it also creates collective vulnerabilities, trans-local security entanglements, and blowback effects that are often underappreciated or even ignored in traditional state-centric approaches to security. Confronting and managing the challenges of an entangled global security environment will require an enhanced understanding of such complexities.

As evidenced by the pandemic, these dynamics can be seen particularly in the management of migration and mobility, which connect people across borders, but also create vulnerabilities. The political scientist James F. Hollifield has referred to the contradictory effects of migration as the "liberal paradox." On the one hand, liberalism flourishes on the basis of open exchange and the free circulation of goods, ideas, and people. On the other hand, this same mobility and circulation creates challenges and vulnerabilities for political institutions and rights-based frameworks that are still largely closed and territorial, bringing mobility management to the fore as a key issue facing states. The pandemic has placed this contradiction in sharp relief: the need to limit movement in order to protect public health has simultaneously led to disruptions in global supply chains, trade, and transport, creating stark trade-offs between different elements of security that are difficult to reconcile.

Yet the dilemmas governments have faced with regard to mobility during the pandemic are only more visible versions of the everyday challenges of managing mobility in a globally entangled world. Migration and mobility cut through and connect a number of different areas of entangled security—from pandemics to climate change, and from conflict and military engagement to contemporary challenges confronting democracies in the form of internal polarization and external threats. Moreover, migration itself is commonly weaponized or

Complex interconnections exist side by side with competition and conflict.

used as a tool of leverage by states in more classical or coercive forms of interstate bargaining and diplomacy. This brings together the same dual dynamics of global interconnection and interstate competition in ways that make the management of migration a "wicked problem," one that is so complex that it does not have a clear, definitive solution.

The combination of interconnectedness and competition adds another layer of complexity to collective action problems. Attempts at autarkic "national" solutions are insufficient, but so are existing mechanisms of global governance, since they are based on an assumption of a world of discrete, legally defined nation-states, rather than recognition of cross-border security entanglement.

POST-9/11 BLOWBACK

The complex, mobility-related dynamics of security entanglement are also in evidence in the unintended consequences and blowback effects of the post-9/11 wars and conflicts that made up the US-led Global War on Terror. The staggering rise in forced migration and refugee flows since 2001 cannot be separated from the series of military interventions that took place across the Middle East and beyond during this period.

The Costs of War Project estimates that approximately 38 million people (and possibly millions more) have been displaced in the post-9/11 wars fought by the United States and its allies—more than the number displaced by any other war or natural or man-made disaster since the start of the twentieth century, with the exception only of World War II. An estimated 80 percent of the people who arrived in Europe by boat during the height of the 2015–16 migration "crisis" were originally from war-torn Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

Foreign-imposed regime changes have fundamentally altered the countries subject to these interventions as well as other states in the region and beyond. The 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya helped destabilize the country and the broader region. It also hastened Libya's ongoing transformation into a migration transit state and hub for Europe-bound migrant smuggling.

Similarly, the departure of the United States from Afghanistan twenty years after deposing the Taliban has created ongoing migration challenges not only for Afghanistan's immediate neighbors,

but also for states farther afield. One such country is Turkey, which was already the leading refugee host in the world, having taken in some 3.6 million Syrians since the start of the conflict in their neighboring country in 2011. The recent uptick in the number of Afghan refugees has increased domestic tensions over migration and hastened the construction of a wall on Turkey's eastern border with Iran, while further boosting migration anxieties throughout eastern and western Europe.

Rather than treating these NATO-led interventions and the 2015–16 refugee "crisis" as separate events, an entangled security perspective provides a lens for seeing how they are deeply interconnected. Military interventions in the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa not only had devastating effects for populations on the ground, but also had blowback and security effects in Europe. The rapid rise in conflict-induced migration hastened the militarization of Europe's external borders, spurring the further development of the European Union's FRONTEX border agency and intensifying the EU's extension and externalization of migration control beyond its borders. All this deepened Europe's security entanglement with its neighbors.

Demographic trends leading to a greying and shrinking European population mean that most European countries would benefit from a larger supply of skilled and unskilled labor. Yet over the past decade, the politics surrounding migration has been defined by a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and nativist populism within Europe as well as in other parts of the globe. Although the United Kingdom's 2016 vote to leave the EU was spurred by a number of factors, including an aversion to the effects of the EU's freedom of movement policies, anti-EU politicians were quick to instrumentalize the 2015–16 "crisis" in their arguments for Brexit. Though one cannot necessarily draw a straight and solid line between NATO-led military interventions, the European migration "crisis," and the rise of populism in Europe and elsewhere, these events are deeply intertwined and cannot be understood in isolation from one another.

COLD WAR BLOWBACK IN THE AMERICAS

Similar blowback effects can be seen in North America, where migration-related entangled security dynamics are endemic and embedded in both "high" and "low" political issues. Many of these dynamics have their origins in, or were exacerbated by, the long history of US involvement in Latin America. The ongoing emergency on the US southern border, for instance, is in no small part a result of the United States' own policies in the region—particularly the extensive and sustained US involvement in Central America during the Cold War. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—the three countries that make up the so-called Northern Triangle—have been the source of much of the migration to the US southern border since 2014. This is not a coincidence.

The United States was behind a 1954 military coup in Guatemala and strongly backed the government from the 1960s to the 1990s. During this period, the Guatemalan military waged a campaign that killed an estimated 200,000 of the country's indigenous people. Much of the migration from Guatemala comes from the highlands—an area that is inhabited by indigenous groups and has been subject to land grabs by current or former military officers with connections to organized crime.

In Honduras, the Obama administration turned a blind eye to a 2009 coup and even worked to prevent its reversal, while continuing to supply aid to the new government. This further militarized the Honduran police force, leading to even greater internal insecurity.

The United States was also deeply involved in El Salvador's 12-year-long civil war. Throughout the 1980s, widespread human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings by US-backed and -funded government troops, right-wing paramilitaries, and death squads, which were battling left-leaning, Soviet-backed Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front rebel forces, drove tens of thousands of Salvadoran civilians to flee to the United States. Some ended up in Los Angeles and formed gangs, including Barrio 18 and the now-infamous Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), as a means of protecting their kinsman from other gangs in the area. Over time, Barrio 18 and MS-13 grew stronger and more violent, driving up murder rates in parts of Los Angeles and prompting US authorities to deport many gang members back to Central America.

Rather than solve the problem, mass deportations intensified it. Once back in Central America, the gangs were often reconstituted and even increased in size and reach. Barrio 18 and MS-13 now have members—and control territory—not only in Los Angeles and El Salvador, but also in Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and other parts of

the United States and Canada. These and other organizations have formed alliances with some gangs and engaged in violent rivalries with others.

Coming full circle with the civil war that first inspired flight, the combination of poverty, dysfunctional politics, and gang-driven violence directed against civilians—which has produced some of the highest murder rates in the world—has again impelled many civilians to flee north to the United States. They seek refugee status in a bid to protect themselves and their families.

In April 2021, US Vice President Kamala Harris announced $310 million in additional humanitarian aid for Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—part of an estimated $4 billion in assistance for the region under the Biden administration's plan to address migration issues. In this respect, the United States seems to be following the EU's example of using foreign aid to try to stem migration. Over the past two decades, an array of countries in North Africa and the Horn of Africa have collectively and individually received billions of euros of aid in exchange for helping to stanch, reverse, or forestall northward migrations to Europe. Here, too, attempts to prevent migration through tighter border controls, outsourcing, and heightened enforcement can often exacerbate the very security risks that they are intended to address.

Tighter border controls in both the United States and Europe have driven up the costs of irregular migration. This in turn has increased the debts of unsuccessful border-crossers, generating still greater incentives to reach the richer countries of the global North in the hope of securing employment that will provide the means to pay off the human traffickers who arranged their journeys.

Migration-related aid packages designed to improve conditions on the ground in countries of origin can paradoxically make outflows more likely. This is the case if a government receiving aid is illiberal and uses financial assistance to strengthen its grip on power and increase its repressive capabilities. Such counterproductive outcomes can be compounded if these infusions of financial assistance are viewed by their recipients as a kind of carte blanche for domestic oppression and other human rights abuses. This was a common phenomenon among authoritarian regimes during the Cold War.

PERVERSE INCENTIVES AND LEVERAGE

The same entangled dynamics also create perverse incentives that may lead states to use migration as a form of leverage in their diplomatic engagements and interactions with other states. Both states and nonstate actors can take advantage of others' concerns about migration and strategically use migration as an instrument to gain concessions or positive inducements.

The 2016 deal between the EU and Turkey—in which Turkey was able to secure 6 billion euros in aid, promises of visa-free travel, and a resuscitation of its EU accession talks in exchange for tighter migration controls—is one prominent example of this common dynamic. Another came in May 2021, when Morocco opened its border with the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in a bid to punish and coerce the Spanish government over its direct and indirect support for the Polisario Front, an insurgent group locked in a long-term separatist conflict with Morocco. Turkey took a similar action in February 2020 when it permitted thousands of migrants to head to its borders with Greece. Aimed at securing NATO support for Turkey's intervention in Syria, this move came close to provoking a military confrontation with Greece.

In a shared virtual space, liberal and illiberal states are increasingly entangled.

More recently, starting in mid-2021, Belarus opened its borders and attempted to weaponize migration in retaliation for EU-imposed sanctions and Brussels' vocal criticism of Alexander Lukashenko's regime. The migrants that Belarus is allowing to cross into neighboring states come from as far afield as West Africa and southwestern Asia. As of this writing, tensions are heating up along Belarus' borders with its neighbors, especially NATO members Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

Liberal democracies tend to be particularly, but not uniquely, vulnerable to this unconventional brand of coercion, since they can find themselves trapped between conflicting imperatives with regard to displaced people. On the one hand, these states generally have made normative and legal commitments to protect those fleeing violence and persecution. On the other, they often face internal political pressures around migration, with the

control of borders increasingly viewed as a polarizing symbolic issue.

States cannot simultaneously respond to both of these imperatives. Thus they have increasing incentives to concede to demands made by actors using the instrumentalization of migration as a form of coercive diplomacy—be it for political, economic, or military aims. This in turn makes the strategy of weaponizing migration appear more geopolitically efficacious.

The result is that liberal states themselves increasingly resort to more and more illiberal methods and strategies to repel potential migrants and other border-crossers. This further undermines their legitimacy and identity as liberal states, leaving them exposed to charges of hypocrisy at home and abroad. Such charges are often leveled by international rivals and states trying to deflect criticism of their own illiberal actions and policies.

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

The entanglement of liberal and illiberal dynamics with mobility issues can also be seen in how states such as China, Russia, and Turkey have increasingly taken an interest in "their" emigrants and diasporas, attempting to control them through transnational strategies that involve long-distance forms of repression.

International migration has facilitated citizens' mobility into and out of autocratic states. At the same time, new information and communications technologies have led to the globalization of many aspects of domestic politics, and the rise of diaspora politics. Diasporic activism operates largely outside the jurisdiction of the state of origin, and has therefore often been assumed to be a space of opportunity for political opposition movements and groups, where they can operate without interference from homeland state authorities.

Yet the transnationalization of politics has also been accompanied by the transnationalization of family ties, social relations, and social networks, which perversely has provided an additional source of leverage for states to engage in transnational repression. New forms of digital surveillance—such as monitoring of social media accounts and private communications like text messages—allow authoritarian states to quickly identify the ties between activists abroad and family members and acquaintances back home. Whereas actors in the diaspora may be outside the direct reach of a repressive state, friends and

relatives in their home country can still become targets of coercion by proxy. This strategy has been employed by China to harass and intimidate Uighur activists in Europe and North America. It has also been used by states such as Egypt and Turkey against the families of journalists or dissidents whom they wish to silence.

Governments can also "go global" in their use of strategies of repression by directly targeting dissidents, activists, and regime opponents abroad. Harassment, surveillance, enactment of mobility restrictions, or even more serious instances of kidnapping, physical attack, or assassination are all tactics that states have used to target political exiles abroad.

The 2018 assassination of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul stands out, but there are other examples. Russia has attempted to poison numerous political exiles in the UK; Turkey has been accused of assassinating three Kurdish activists in Paris; and Rwanda has targeted diaspora members in several countries across Africa and beyond since 2014. As outlined in two recent Freedom House reports, autocratic states often tap into institutions set up for other purposes, such as INTERPOL's Red Notice—a system that effectively acts as an international arrest warrant for law enforcement agencies—to target political opposition leaders or even personal enemies.

As autocracies develop new means of exercising power over populations abroad, their use of transnational strategies poses a number of complex security challenges for policymakers in democratic states, as well as for human rights actors and international legal understandings of refuge, asylum, and protection. Existing international protection regimes operate according to state-centric assumptions, in which state sovereignty is identified with territoriality, and national borders are assumed to demarcate legal jurisdictions in ways that offer refuge and asylum to persecuted individuals fleeing authoritarian states. Yet the crossing of national borders does not mean that individual dissidents and exiles—or entire groups living outside a state's territorial boundaries, such as international students, labor migrants, or ordinary diaspora members—are necessarily free from the influence of state actors in their homelands.

The use of various techniques of transnational repression presents a more complicated blurring of how authoritarian practices "at home" relate to diaspora politics "abroad." This development comes, moreover, at a time when global norms

of asylum and protection are also under threat and are subject to manipulation and instrumentalization. In a highly interconnected world, it may be necessary to radically rethink the broader implications of the rise of authoritarian practices that transcend state borders. In addition to potentially posing direct and targeted security threats to some exiled populations, the spatial and legal complexities of such practices create long-term challenges for liberal states and liberal institutions. Whereas practices of transnational repression are not entirely new—and were also present during the Cold War—the new global media environment has created a shared virtual space in which liberal and illiberal states do not operate in wholly separate spheres, but rather are increasingly entangled.

COMPOUNDED PRESSURES

The complex ways in which mobility, geopolitics, illiberalism, and security are entangled with other issues create additional challenges in deciding how to address large-scale collective security threats such as pandemics and climate change, which former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan referred to as "problems without passports." Such problems are compounded at a time when migration and mobility are particularly contentious issues subject to increased politicization and instrumentalization. For example, with arrivals at the US southern border at record levels, and immigration remaining a hot-button issue in American politics, the Biden administration has extended the Trump administration's use of Title 42, a rarely employed clause in public health law, to prevent asylum seekers from entering from Mexico during the pandemic.

A similar strategy has been used across the EU: states have invoked public health concerns as a reason for restricting entry, shifting their anti-migration discourses about criminality and terrorism to a focus on controlling the pandemic. Countries such as Italy and Malta declared their ports of entry unsafe for migrant disembarkation, and several countries and regions across Europe have denied COVID-19 vaccinations to irregular migrants lacking documentation. Moreover, as Amnesty International documented in its 2021 Annual Report, governments around the world have been escalating various forms of domestic repression

Perverse incentives may lead states to use migration as a form of leverage.

and mobility restrictions, sometimes instrumentalizing the pandemic as a means of silencing critics.

National-level responses, such as lockdowns, travel bans, and border closures, have been comparatively effective in some places at keeping community transmission rates relatively low. As new variants and breakthrough cases of infection have emerged, however, governments around the world are shifting from trying to fully eliminate the virus with policies of restricted mobility and travel bans to strategies of risk management, living with and adapting to COVID-19. New Zealand, whose geographic position and stringent policies directed at disease eradication shielded it from the worst effects of COVID-19, was long heralded as a pandemic success story. But even its government had to concede in October 2021 that it could not fully vanquish the virus and instead adopted new policies of accelerated vaccination, virus control, and containment.

The challenges of dealing with the mobility paradox highlighted by the pandemic can be seen in the economic effects of national policy responses, such as global supply-chain disruptions leading to inflation, assembly-line shutdowns, and shortages of goods. In October 2021, the *New York Times* reported that 13 percent of world cargo capacity was subject to pandemic-related shipping delays, while US manufacturers needed an unprecedented 92 days on average to assemble the requisite parts and raw materials to produce their wares. Even as COVID-19 case numbers and death tolls ebb and flow, such disruptions continue, adversely affecting economies, health care systems, and food distribution in the world's wealthiest and poorest countries alike, albeit more acutely in the developing world.

Meanwhile, the focus on the pandemic has necessitated sidelining other public health problems, which are also inherently trans-border phenomena. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that disruptions to antiretroviral therapy due to COVID-19 could lead to more than 500,000 additional deaths from HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and the further spread of that disease, both within the region and beyond. In April 2021, the WHO likewise reported that fully 90 percent of countries responding to a survey about the effects of COVID-19 had experienced disruptions to

essential health services and immunization programs, though the magnitude of the disruptions was lower than it had been during the first year of the pandemic. The potential direct and indirect security implications of such disruptions are manifold.

Similar challenges can be seen in efforts to collectively address climate change—which the Biden administration's government-wide Climate Adaptation Plans, released in October 2021, identify as an urgent and rapidly growing threat to national and international security. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has highlighted climate change as a key factor accelerating all other drivers of forced displacement. This is because climate change can arguably act as a "threat multiplier," exacerbating preexisting risks and generating new ones, such as food and water insecurity and competition over resources. These risks in turn can contribute to internal conflicts and compound people's extant vulnerabilities to displacement. Internal conflicts can spill over into neighboring states, which can drive the displaced outside their regions of origin and complicate political, economic, and social dynamics in the regions and states to which they flee.

It has been argued that competition over water and intra-communal grievances made worse by sustained drought and food insecurity helped create "ripe" conditions that made Syria's civil war more likely. In a study published in 2015 in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* researchers claimed that water shortages in the Fertile Crescent (of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey) killed livestock, drove up food prices, and forced some 1.5 million rural residents to the outskirts of Syria's already-packed cities. This happened as Syria was already coping with an influx of refugees from the Iraq war—compounding existing domestic problems such as corruption, repressive leadership, inequality, and high population growth.

Others have disputed these findings, however. In an article in *Political Geography,* researchers said they had found no clear and reliable evidence that climate change was a factor in the onset of Syria's civil war. Less debatable are the following facts: environmental changes are already catalyzing population displacement and migration in some parts of the world; climate change is increasingly viewed as a human, national, and international security issue; and climate change is deeply entangled with other security dynamics.

PROBLEMS WITHOUT PASSPORTS

Reckoning with the dilemmas of global security entanglement is a necessary step in confronting the myriad policy challenges that will threaten human lives and well-being in the coming decades, from pandemics and climate change to violent conflict, state repression, and global authoritarianism. In all these areas, mobility and migration interact with other factors in ways that are symptomatic of how states and societies are increasingly connected.

The implications of these dynamics are several. First, it is clear that states cannot simply go it alone—problems without passports cannot be solved at the national level, and their effects cannot be stopped at borders or by erecting fences and walls. Second, greater understanding is required of the complicated knock-on and blowback effects that global actions taken in one area can have on others—such as the effects of military conflicts and interventions on what have been labeled subsequently as migration "crises."

Finally, it is critical that both states and non-state actors identify effective ways to address entangled security challenges that do not come at the expense of the world's most vulnerable populations, including those whose own security is dependent on the ability to move and cross borders. Failing to do so will in many cases simply backfire and lead to bigger, still more wicked problems.

The complicated, entangled nature of global security suggests that we are genuinely in this together. To paraphrase Cicero, entangled security means that there is no trade-off to be made between what is just and what is expedient—that which is just is also expedient. ∎

> "Relations between states and citizens are now mediated by a form of power whose logic and technologies permeate and penetrate territories, peoples, and the wealth of states from both within and without."

How the Pandemic Made Sensory Power Visible

ENGIN ISIN

There are many power relations: between and among states, corporations, organizations, institutions, and, of course, between and among peoples themselves. But power relations between states and their citizens are probably the most pervasive, given that the contemporary world is structured around some 200 states. Of the almost 8 billion humans who inhabit the world, a vast majority live under the government of states, whether as citizens or noncitizens.

Our lives begin with the throw of the birthright dice, and our fortunes and misfortunes, power and powerlessness play out that throw for the rest of our lives. Dangerous consequences come with being noncitizens, or even worse, nonstate persons; being citizens in occupied or colonized states has tragic consequences; whereas there are privileges of being citizens of powerful states. Moving between these states also brings consequences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made many forms of power visible and articulable. Throughout the pandemic, states have made life-and-death decisions, especially for their citizens, but also for noncitizens. It will be debated for some time how certain deaths could have been avoided, whether peoples could have been better protected, and if a balance between health and economy could have been maintained. We will also debate how powerful states, by protecting "their" citizens, may not only have exacerbated or even entrenched global inequality, but also postponed the end of the pandemic—a tragedy to be named in the future.

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Throughout the pandemic, states awarded, cajoled, cared, charged, confined, counted, cured, detained, encouraged, entertained, deceived, dissuaded, fined, furloughed, imprisoned, informed, killed, misinformed, notified, ordered, pleaded, punished, quarantined, persuaded, searched, stopped, traced, tracked, and vaccinated people. The list includes only a fraction of the ways of exercising power, but it is still quite a range of government actions, and their intensity may have been unprecedented in scope and scale.

Yet most people are not pushovers. During the pandemic, they have resisted differently in different times and places and exercised power in collective ways. There was always a degree of dissent about restrictions on movement, face-coverings, and vaccination. The initial obedience about confinement gave way to increasing dissent. Conversely, the initial dissent about vaccination gave way to submission once some European countries introduced health passes for access to public spaces. It would be difficult to list all the ways in which power has been exercised by states during the pandemic, and how people have obeyed or disobeyed them.

Is there a way to make sense of the power relations between states and peoples (citizens and noncitizens) that the pandemic made visible and articulable without creating an exhaustive (and exhausting) list? We can group all these ways of exercising power into forms, reflect on their historical development, and then ask whether a lesson can be drawn from this exercise. This may help us better understand the birth of a new form of power.

EVOLUTIONS OF POWER

With the help of a twentieth-century philosopher, Michel Foucault, who took his inspiration from the earlier thinkers Friedrich Nietzsche and

Max Weber, we can name three older forms of power by virtue of their distinct logics and historical development. These are the sovereign, disciplinary, and regulatory forms of power. They developed from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries in Europe, but can also be found beyond Europe.

The logic of sovereign power is that it demands obedience. It is an asymmetrical form of power with often deadly consequences. Although the birth of sovereign power occurred in the seventeenth century, it has a deeper history. But it still performs its interdictions in modern institutions.

The logic of disciplinary power, whose origins could be witnessed in the eighteenth century, involves governing people by compelling submission to public health rules. When it becomes imperative to the state that its people be healthy, the exercise of disciplinary power will involve pressure, persuasion, and, if necessary, punishment.

The logic of regulatory power, born in the nineteenth century, made things a bit more complicated. Its logic functions by developing performance indicators to measure the health of a people as a whole. It invents technologies for governing each person in order to enhance these indicators.

There are two important things to bear in mind about these three forms of power. First, we speak of the "birth" of a form of power in the sense of its technologies coming together in an effective manner at a certain time and place. The technologies that constitute a form of power may take a long time (and many places) to develop. The "birth" refers to the time and place of their effective assemblage so that we can see, observe, name, and speak about it.

Second, the birth of one form of power does not mean the death of another. What complicates modern life is that all three forms became overlapping ways of governing people. And now the same has occurred with the fourth form of power, which the pandemic made visible and articulable—though its technologies have been developing since the 1980s, if not longer.

Since all forms of power govern people through technologies, some historical examples may help to elucidate them. Sovereign power governs through colonies, dominions, empires, and states, and it invents armies, borders, cadastres,

The birth of one form of power does not mean the death of another.

cartography, and partitions. Disciplinary power governs through camps, cities, hospitals, factories, prisons, schools, and workhouses; it designs buildings, policing, walls, fences, guards, and gates. Regulatory power governs through counting, recording, enumeration, metrics, tabulation, and attributes such as class, gender, and race.

Such long lists of government actions can only be accomplished by technologies of power. Consider how these three forms of power have required specific technologies during the pandemic: sovereign power demands obedience (lockdown, curfew, confinement); disciplinary power exacts submission by rewarding behavioral change (sacrifice, distancing, isolation, quarantine, hygiene); and regulatory power tracks the relation between individual conduct and collective health (infection, transmission, mortality, recovery, and immunity, all expressed in rates). Before turning to the birth of sensory power, let us examine each of these three prior forms of power more closely, with further examples of how they have operated in the pandemic.

RETURN OF SOVEREIGN POWER?

Sovereign power has a deep history that goes back to the development of the first states in history, five or six thousand years ago. But its birth was marked by the development of early modern states through the consolidation of wealth, territory, and people in novel ways. Straddling the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the emergence of sovereign power was associated with the rise of modern empires and the state apparatuses with which they were governed.

In this period, European empires were built by accumulating peoples through slavery, colonizing indigenous peoples, and settling colonies. If each of these apparatuses required extracting obedience from subject peoples, they also precipitated searching for more effective and efficient ways of governing them. While the key objects of government were territories governed through technologies of settlement, deportation, and dispossession, key forms of knowledge, called political arithmetic, also developed to assess the wealth and health of subject peoples.

The accumulation of mercantile capital would have been inconceivable without the transatlantic slave trade that brought African peoples to

colonial settlements, the subjugation of indigenous peoples, and the deportations of convicts and other people deemed dangerous by the state and forced to become settler colonists. Whereas governing metropoles meant subjugating "dangerous" populations with cruelty, governing colonies involved mass occupation, displacement, and dispossession.

With the effective closing of state borders and the imposition of mobility restrictions during the pandemic, some imagined that sovereign power had returned. Yet it has always been present. Lockdown, curfew, confinement, regulation of movement, border controls, and overall restrictions on the mobility of subject peoples are the most common technologies of rule that sovereign power developed over a long period. But its exercise now involves a different assemblage of technologies.

Some states were praised for acting swiftly in shutting borders, others for introducing internal borders by enclosing entire neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Both external and internal borders were subjected to immediate controls on all continents, though with varying intensities across different states. That many reacted with surprise to these measures reveals how technologies of sovereign power have become entrenched in our lives over time. It also illustrates how the privileged citizens of powerful states normally do not experience the brutal and cruel effects of sovereign power, unlike noncitizens and nonstate persons such as refugees or indigenous peoples.

We thus ought not to conflate power's invisibility with its inexistence. Nor should we be surprised by the widespread obedience that sovereign power has exacted, despite occasional and scattered protests in both the United States and Europe against restrictions on movement. A key lesson from the pandemic is that sovereign power is entangled with other forms of power from which it draws strength, but from which it must be analytically separated. Unlike the seventeenth-, eighteenth-, or nineteenth-century variants, sovereign power in the twenty-first century could not function without relying on disciplinary and regulatory forms of power.

DISCIPLINING THE BODY

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed the emergence of a new form of power: the discipline of capacities and desires. Its key object is the human body. It is true that sovereign power is also exercised on the human body: widespread

technologies included cruelties that ranged from branding black bodies to spectacles of torture and fatal deportations. It was thought that governing people required exercising sovereign power as the right to decide over the life and death of bodies.

By contrast, the logic of disciplinary power is submission that makes the body useful and healthy. It may have started with soldiers in barracks and slaves on ships, but it invented technologies of power and forms of knowledge that combined to create optimized bodies. Over the next three centuries, disciplinary power produced clinics, prisons, hospitals, schools, workhouses, camps, and eventually gyms, malls, studios, and other assemblages where this knowledge was brought to bear on people governing their bodies themselves.

How have we experienced disciplinary power during the pandemic? Just consider how we have collectively become experts in protecting our bodies and the bodies of others. We not only have followed daily what sciences have discovered about the virus and its modes of infection, but also have internalized injunctions and admonishments about how to conduct ourselves safely for the sake of others. We have been advised to sacrifice everyday activities and go into isolation to save ourselves, others, and public health care systems. We have developed, in an astonishingly short period, new forms of conduct to protect ourselves and others—physical distancing, covering our faces, and regulating our contacts. We have developed ritualized hygiene practices of disinfecting ourselves.

If we followed the rules of confinement imposed by sovereign power obediently, we followed the rules of safety called for by disciplinary power submissively. What the pandemic has rendered visible and articulable is that we experience these two forms of power simultaneously. We, namely our bodies, recognized how sovereign and disciplinary power depend on each other and work together. Without a hint of irony, for those who needed help, practical guidance was offered on how to relearn socializing after the confinement.

The confinement of people by partial or total lockdown was governed by punishment: fines, charges, attestations, permissions, and identity cards were mobilized to separate those who successfully responded to sovereign power by exercising self-discipline from those who did not. The logic behind this obedience is that submission to discipline is good not only for us and others, but

also for a collective yet invisible body whose health depended on us all. But what is this collective body that we have been protecting, and that has been presented to us via strange metrics that we had heard so little about before, such as herd immunity and infection rates?

REGULATING COLLECTIVE HEALTH

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the emergence of a form of power that is at once collectivizing and individualizing. This is regulatory power, which is exercised on a people, a collective body whose health is measured by fertility, mortality, and longevity. Such power functions by simultaneously individualizing and specifying—it is directed toward the performances of individual bodies, with attention to the processes of life.

Regulatory power bridged sovereign and disciplinary power by effectively linking individual behavior to the behavior of people as a whole. Each form of power depends on the other, but now regulatory power functions most effectively as a positive rather than a negative force. It mobilizes the prescription of appropriate forms of conduct for bodies that are necessary for, or conducive to, the functioning of a people's health and wealth.

More importantly, regulatory power regulates a people not by admonishing or punishing noncompliance, but by persuading, guiding, nudging, and cajoling. Bodies conduct themselves as responsible subjects for their own good and for the common good—for the health of a people.

There is no better illustration of regulatory power during the pandemic than a singular metric that has become a symbol: the reproduction or R number. As explained by authorities, R is the rate by which each body infects other bodies, thus reproducing the virus. If a given body infects three bodies, the reproduction rate is three times higher than if it infects only one. According to the logic of regulatory power, if the body in question is identified, sequestered, and isolated, its harm to the people is neutralized.

One British government advertisement showed the R number with a speedometer-like graphic indicating the current rate of infection and admonishing people to "stay alert to keep R down." Much was made of the concept of herd immunity,

States and corporations have developed technologies of power to cajole.

which would be attained by large numbers of people contracting and then recovering from the coronavirus. What is herd immunity if not the exercise of the sovereign right to decide the life and death of peoples—especially when it eventually became clear that the elderly, the vulnerable, the poor, and black and brown people disproportionately lost their lives? Yet sovereign power is rendered invisible when it is exercised through regulatory power, as when reducing R becomes a nudge, or through disciplinary power, as when vaccine or health passports regulate "freedom of movement."

Above all, the pandemic made us recognize that playing with power requires engaging all three of these forms, with their entanglements. And the pandemic has also unveiled a fourth form of power, which makes things really challenging.

APPETITE FOR DATA

We are now aware that we are living on a planet where surveillance (of children, citizens, clients, consumers, criminals, customers, friends, inmates, lovers, noncitizens, patients, spouses, students, terrorists, workers) has become ubiquitous and pervasive. Devices from wearables to appliances and from computers to cars are being traced, and everybody's activities are tracked with them. The insatiable appetite of states, corporations, and organizations for data collected from tracking and tracing activities constitutes a planetary ecosystem for governing people.

Whether this results in digital dictatorships or digital democracies arguably depends on the form of power that now joins the others. Three technologies of power in particular have brought sensory power to the fore during the pandemic: clusters, dashboards, and tracking.

Clusters

The pandemic has prompted numerous references to entities such as hotspots, epicenters, and bubbles. They are meant to indicate how bodies, either infected or healthy, relate to each other. What makes them bubbles, hotspots, or epicenters is that the condition of these bodies is of interest to governments. This interest is not about capturing, punishing, disciplining, or even regulating these bodies, but about cajoling them to achieve desirable outcomes.

Governments introduced the "live" tracking of these clusters to facilitate rapid-response interventions. Gatherings such as raves, parties, and protests elicited new policing concerns about discipline and punishment. But this is different from governing clusters, which do not exist as physical gatherings of bodies—they are relations among "infectious" or "healthy" bodies.

The devices that identify clusters may not be entirely digital (yet)—contact-tracing programs involve public health personnel and analog practices. But tracking, testing, and tracing bodies requires frequent gathering, storage, and transmission of data by various agents and authorities. Along with lockdown, distancing, and isolation, tracking subjects who have been infected, tracing other subjects who may have had physical contact with them, and alerting both clusters to isolate themselves requires exercising technologies of power appropriate to these objectives.

Where did all this knowledge come from? Throughout the twenty-first century, both states and corporations have been developing technologies of power to cajole people as users of apps, devices, and platforms. The collection, storage, and analysis of data from the movement and activities of people as digital technology users resulted in competitive struggles between and among states, international organizations, and multinational corporations. But competition for control also developed among various professions, such as epidemiologists, statisticians, data scientists, programmers, app developers, security experts, methodologists, and so on, who are transnational and whose expertise traverses national borders.

Although sensory assemblages may not be entirely digital yet, they nonetheless involve various combinations of digital technologies such as satellites, data centers, transmitters, receivers, and mobile devices. They also include analytics such as algorithms, machine learning, and cloud computing. Consider, for example, the mobility reports produced by Apple, Google, and Facebook during the pandemic. Through global relations between human actors such as technicians and programmers and nonhuman devices, these corporations accumulated data about infections and deaths, which in turn came to inform their development of a tracking and tracing app toolkit.

The monitoring performed by these corporations predates the pandemic: for more than a decade they enabled tracking and tracing people's online behavior, such as communicating, listening, reading, and watching, for diverse purposes. The development of coronavirus apps has made visible a form of power whose object is governing people through clusters, though maintaining the health and wealth of a people through this type of governance has proved an elusive objective.

Dashboards

Each form of power has produced its regime of visualization, from cartography to anatomical diagrams and statistical charts. The visualizations of sensory power have precipitated entirely novel imaginaries and techniques of representation. Intended to identify unseen patterns, these visualizations include interactive elements in "dashboards" that enable users to see the effects of combining different data on features of a cluster.

The dashboard has become a primary technology of government, like cartography, anatomy, and charts. Initially, all the seemingly accurate representations that dominated publicly available visualizations of the pandemic, such as those showcased on the Johns Hopkins University dashboard, offered basic data and statistics mapped onto national borders. Later we began seeing much more sophisticated dashboards, resembling those used for financial systems, transportation systems, military operations, and managing football games. There are also rapidly developing dashboards in fields such as migration or policing.

Pandemic dashboards were initially basic, but they rapidly became technologies of power funded by governments and developed by corporations and universities, evolving into more sophisticated forms. This brings us to the most important aspect of clusters: they are not merely real-time, but live. What is the difference?

Tracking and Tracing

Whereas real-time data may be presented in dashboards, sensory power organizes algorithms so that measurement, identification, action, and intervention can occur live. In other words, forms of data are mobilized with immediacy and with varying intensities and temporalities. Rather than the periodic "stocktaking" of conventional statistics, people are divided into live clusters with pulses, flows, and patterns. Sensory power involves modulating the performance of bodies and people through interventions that rely on such technologies.

The data serves three functions: identifying features that characterize clusters (such as the infected, contacted, protected, vaccinated); monitoring and evaluating those features live (daily changes in R-metric hotspots, epicenters, bubbles); and provoking changes in conduct (cajoling), or, if that fails, resorting to sovereign or disciplinary interventions (easing or tightening lockdowns). Identifying features produces data in much the same way as classical data regimes: people are periodically measured with indices, rates, metrics, and indicators. Governing clusters, however, means live-governing their pulses and signals.

This logic can be illustrated both by the development of apps to track and trace the reproduction of the virus and by the designing of interventions such as immunity or vaccine passports to govern clusters. Although so far these apps have failed spectacularly, it is worth briefly dwelling on their logic, which will remain and resurface in other fields.

The apps aim to track the locations of bodies infected with the virus and to notify, test, and isolate them (if necessary); to trace all bodies that have encountered infected bodies and to notify, test, and isolate them as well, all in order to slow the reproduction (R-value) of the virus. Essentially this creates live clusters of bodies infected or potentially infected by the coronavirus.

Each form of power has produced its regime of visualization.

Governing people in clusters requires interventions at the stages of notifying, testing, and isolating to be effective. This involves a relation between regulatory power and disciplinary power: to achieve the desired infection rate R requires individuals to consent to be notified and to act in accordance with the results, whether that involves getting tested or (if necessary) self-isolating.

This is a costly and inefficient exercise of power. Yet there is still palpable enthusiasm about a potential app with the promise to deliver a game-changer: to minimize disciplinary power in order to instead maximize sensory power. In other words, to reformulate the problem of government as a relation between regulatory power and sensory power. For if solutions were found to automate the testing and isolating stages of the cycle, essentially clusters could be *governing themselves*.

There are, of course, technological limits to such a scenario. There are also severe legal, political, and cultural limits. But they may become surmountable, if not during the coronavirus pandemic then soon enough. Tracking and tracing technologies could be adapted to other fields of application where such limits seem less respected, as in finance or migration.

Indeed, we could not imagine such scenarios if technologies of power for tracking and tracing were not already being used in fields other than epidemiology. The accumulation of capital in finance, manufacturing, retail, transportation, hospitality, entertainment, and other industries has been accompanied by the accumulation of peoples through tracking and tracing their movements and the modulation of sentiments, needs, and desires. Similarly, fields of government such as policing, migration and border control, and education already utilize technologies of sensory power.

The live data produced from sensory assemblages pervades these sectors and fields. What we are observing through the coronavirus pandemic is the accelerated evolution of technologies of sensory power that have been developed and deployed in these fields over the past four decades.

PLAYING WITH POWER?

Each form of power almost always betrays its governing intentions. With sensory power, code errs, algorithms misfire, data is lacking, apps fail. Yet each form of power engenders effects on people and elicits and provokes types of resistance: sovereign power elicits and provokes revolt (protest, uprising, occupation), disciplinary power elicits and provokes subversion (strike, refusal, slowdown, anonymity), and regulatory power elicits and provokes evasion (escape, deception). The performance of such types of resistance is what makes all forms of power visible and articulable. Each form of power draws forth a latent or potential resistance, thus outlining the contours of otherwise invisible power.

Yet the resistance against lockdowns, distancing, face-covering, isolation, or vaccination misunderstood the relationship between sovereign power and regulatory power. These technologies of regulatory power had proved effective in protecting public health in past epidemics and pandemics. Ostensibly resisting sovereign power without understanding its relation to regulatory

power is a misguided and dangerous way of playing with power.

What, then, are the forms of resistance that sensory power elicits and provokes? If sensory power governs people through clusters, this raises the problem not only of how to perform acts of revolt, subversion, and evasion, but also of how to perform acts of resistance appropriate to sensory power in relation to other forms of power. We have so far witnessed concealment (encryption, anonymization, aliases), opacity (spoofing, cloaking), and sentiments (irony) as forms of resistance to this new form of power.

The remains of the pandemic demonstrate that the relations between states and citizens entered into new arrangements in the twenty-first century with the birth of sensory power. And the relations between and among the three prior forms of power have been transformed significantly with the emergence of a fourth.

Relations between states and citizens are now mediated by a form of power whose logic and technologies permeate and penetrate territories, peoples, and the wealth of states from both within and without. This changes not only the relations among the three older forms of power, but also their own logics and technologies. We do not yet understand how resistance to sensory power relates to sovereign, disciplinary, and regulatory forms of power. How we can play with sensory power in relation to other forms of power is a key question we face now. ∎

The Vulnerability and Resilience of the Global Container Shipping Industry

JEAN-PAUL RODRIGUE

A standard can go a long way in promoting commercial interactions by providing benefits such as interoperability and fluidity. Consider the impact of the intermodal shipping container. The container represents one of the most successful and far-reaching standards ever introduced, allowing previously separated segments of regional and global transport systems to interact. First deployed in 1959, the container gradually emerged as a standard that the global economy could wrap itself around. As intended, the container and its associated transport modes and terminals became ubiquitous.

The container both serves as a transport unit and acts as a logistical unit that has helped create new distribution structures and networks across the world. Since it is intermodal—suited for use across a range of conveyances, including trucks, trains, barges, and ships—locations that have the ability to transit and transship containers have attained strategic importance.

This emerging geography of containerized freight distribution concurrently displays resilience and vulnerability. It has been considered resilient because of its impressive ability to handle shocks and disruptions while maintaining global supply chains. Yet it also shows signs of vulnerability, even though many stakeholders and supply chain managers had assumed that maritime shipping was consistently reliable and deployed procurement strategies accordingly.

The resilience of these supply chains has come into question in recent years. The global container shipping network has faced a series of challenges, culminating in 2020–21 with the COVID-19 pandemic and its complex and multifactorial consequences. What started as a slowdown in shipping and port activity in the first half of 2020 quickly escalated after the second half of that year into a series of disruptions and bottlenecks. The situation further deteriorated in 2021. (Several of these disruptions were unrelated to the pandemic but compounded its effects, such as the Suez Canal blockage of March 2021.)

A system that used to be synchronized with a reasonable level of additional capacity became unsynchronized and subject to shortages in assets such as containers, ships, chassis, and even labor, including truck drivers. These compounding effects disrupted supply chains in ways that would have been difficult to anticipate previously. Looking at the structure of the global shipping industry can provide some indications of the duration and long-term consequences of these disruptions.

ROUTES AND CHOKE POINTS

The global shipping network is constructed from commercial opportunities, geostrategic interests, and basic geographical considerations that lead to the usage of specific routes, straits, and passages. The latter represent both a "meta layer," around which the global shipping network is organized, and the core source of its vulnerability, particularly in major choke points. This layer can be divided into two tiers to understand the hierarchy of shipping routes and choke points.

The first tier of maritime routes is composed of those that try to follow the great circle route, seeking to cover the shortest possible distances on the most important east–west commercial shipping flows between the major markets of Europe, Asia, and North America. The main core route is a circum-equatorial ring connecting Gibraltar, Suez, Malacca, and Panama. The second tier is

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composed of secondary routes, acting primarily as north–south connectors between smaller markets. Many of these routes are structured by feeder services calling from major transshipment hubs such as Singapore, Dubai, Algeciras, and Panama. Feeder routes indirectly connect smaller ports to the global shipping network via these transshipment hubs. (See Figure 1.)

A two-tier system has also formed around the world's major choke points. Primary choke points are the most important, since there are limited shipping alternatives. If they are compromised, global trade will be seriously impaired. These choke points functionally represent the most vulnerable locations of the global shipping network.

Two types of connector are found among the primary choke points. The first type, including the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal, and the Strait of Malacca, links major oceans and seas, making them key locations in the global trade of goods and commodities. The closure of these bottlenecks would force the diversion of maritime traffic over long distances, with the associated loss of time and capacity resulting in severe supply chain disruptions.

The second type of tier-one connector includes choke points offering access to maritime dead ends with substantial resources and commercial potential. Examples include the Strait of Hormuz, which grants access to the Persian Gulf, and the Bosphorus, granting access to the Black Sea. The closure of these bottlenecks would force the use of alternative overland routes unlikely to have the capacity to handle the volumes of diverted traffic.

The second tier of global maritime choke points comprises those that support alternative maritime routes, yet still involve a notable detour or deviation. These include the Dover, Sunda, and Taiwan straits and the Windward Passage.

EXPANDING STANDARDS

Strategic passages have had an important indirect role in setting standards for the shipping industry in terms of vessel size, configuration, capacity, and clearance. Capacity can be measured in deadweight tons (dwt), which is the mass a ship can carry through these bottlenecks, and in twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), which indicate the volume a container ship can carry. The oldest standard is Panamax, with a capacity of 65,000 dwt, set in 1914 to match the dimensions of the locks of the Panama Canal. After containerization began, the weight standard gave way to a volume standard, at about 4,500 TEU. This standard turned out to be highly resilient, and set the specifications for port infrastructure design across the world.

Once standards are set, the whole industry is bound by them. This makes exceeding the standards a calculated risk. For instance, it took until the mid-1990s for the container shipping industry to move beyond the Panamax standard. By the
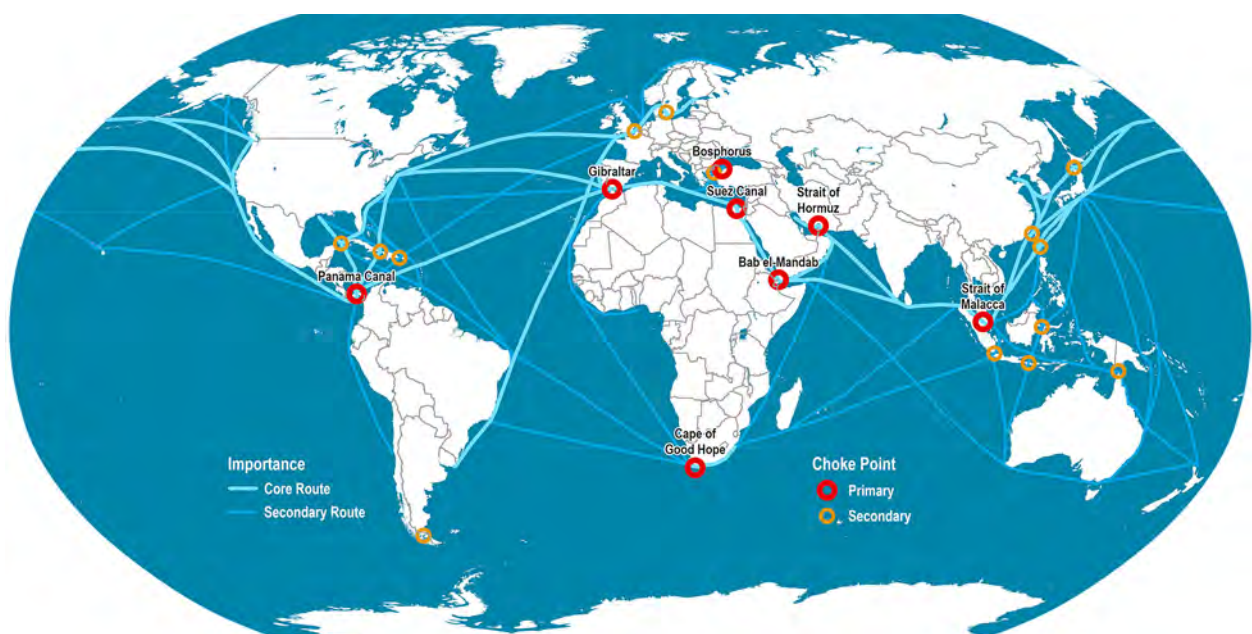
Figure 1. Global shipping connectivity—maritime routes and choke points.

2000s, the expansion of transpacific trade and the growing number of larger post-Panamax ships provided the impetus for the enlargement of the Panama Canal and emergence of a new standard. When the Panama project was completed in 2016 with a new set of locks, their capacity of 12,500 TEU, three times the Panamax standard, became the New Panamax standard.

This standard has become the norm for ports on the East Coast of the United States, setting off a wave of infrastructure improvements. Other bottlenecks have their own standards, including the Suez Canal (Suezmax, at 22,000 TEU) and the Strait of Malacca (Malacca-max, at 25,000 TEU).

The importance and vulnerability of choke points can be assessed by their number of transits and their related share of global trade. The Strait of Malacca ranks first with about 30 percent of worldwide maritime trade, making it the most important passage in global shipping. However, it is not the most vulnerable; it is unlikely to be blocked, and the risk of piracy is relatively minor. The Suez and Panama canals account for 15 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of global maritime trade, and they are vulnerable to blockage because they are very narrow.

TRANSSHIPMENT HUBS

The growth of long-distance containerized trade gave rise to transshipment hubs connecting different systems of maritime circulation. Shipping lines normally elect to connect the most important ports with long-distance deep-sea services using large ships, leaving smaller ports to be serviced by feeder services usually calling from a transshipment hub. These hubs tend to be located along the main circum-equatorial maritime route.

This form of connectivity has led to the specialization of a few major hubs at strategic locations linking north–south and east–west shipping lanes. Transshipment incidence is used to measure a port's level of specialization in connecting shipping networks; it represents the share of the total port throughput that is "ship to ship." Ports having a transshipment incidence above 75 percent are considered "pure" transshipment hubs.

The geography of transshipment hubs reveals two fundamental vulnerabilities. The first is the high concentration of transshipment activities in proximity to major bottlenecks. Container port activity around the Strait of Malacca, the world's most important transshipment cluster, was above

59 million TEU in 2019, and 80 percent was transshipped cargo.

The second vulnerability is that many ports have a high level of dependence on transshipment services. Only 20 percent of all country pairs are connected by a direct shipping service, with 65 percent requiring one transshipment, according to a 2017 study conducted by Marco Fugazza and Jan Hoffman. Thus, about 80 percent of the world's maritime commercial relations rely on a form of maritime transshipment. This network structure increases vulnerability since direct trade relations need to be handled by third-party ports.

SUPERSIZED SHIPS

The principle of economies of scale is fundamental to maritime transportation: the larger the ship, the lower the cost per unit transported. This trend has been particularly apparent in bulk and containerized shipping. The evolution of container ship sizes, as indicated by the size of the largest available container ship, has followed a stair-step pattern. Changes have been rather sudden, corresponding to the introduction of new classes of container ships.

Since the 1990s, three substantial steps in the evolution of container ships have occurred. The first step took place after 1994, when the first post-Panamax ships above 4,500 TEU were introduced. This threshold is particularly important. Since most container ports were designed to handle Panamax class ships, it represents a crucial operational limitation in maritime shipping.

The second step took place in the mid-2000s when ship capacity began to exceed 10,000 TEU, forming a class labeled Very Large Container Ships (VLCS). The development of this class made a contradiction increasingly apparent: the divergence between the benefits of economies of scale for the carriers and the related externalities, such as infrastructure investments (dredging, portainers, yard equipment) assumed by port terminals and inland transport systems.

Since 2014, a third step has been unfolding with the introduction of container ships above 18,000 TEU, which came to be known as Ultra Large Container Ships (ULCS). By 2017, ships above 20,000 TEU were available, and the latest generation, introduced in 2020, has a capacity of around 24,000 TEU. The upper capacity limit of container ships is a subject of ongoing debate. But it is unlikely that a ship of more than 25,000 TEU can be introduced, since that would reach the

technical limits of the Strait of Malacca and the Suez Canal, curtailing its commercial viability. Despite the push toward ever-larger container ships, the physical limitations of maritime shipping, particularly at its bottlenecks, remain the fundamental limiting factor.

Less discussed are the disruptive effects that each step has had on the maritime and container port system. Carriers face the cost of increasingly capital-intensive ships. The latest generation of ships costs over $100 million each. These sunk investments represent a risk that only carriers with access to large capital pools can undertake.

Larger container ships also require substantial improvements in transport infrastructure, including deeper drafts and yard equipment, the costs of which tend to be borne by port authorities. Thus, the new megaships have led to the creation of a two-tiered container shipping system. Economies of scale allow a limited number of ports to capture a large share of the traffic.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PORTS

Ports have become crucial actors in the global transport system: about 80 percent of all trade is carried by maritime shipping, underscoring its preeminent role as an interface between global systems of circulation. In 2019, the 25 largest container ports accounted for 49.8 percent of this traffic, a trend that has remained relatively stable over the past two decades. The high concentration level creates efficiencies, but also vulnerabilities, as the global shipping system becomes highly reliant on a small number of well-connected hubs. Ports are now de facto choke points of global freight distribution and barometers of the scale and efficiency of shipping activity.

Recent decades have seen the liberalization of the port terminal industry through the entry and expansion of transnational holding companies. These can be grouped into three categories, involving very different actors. The first comprises independent stevedores—terminal operators that developed operational expertise in their home markets and have expanded through the acquisition of leases in other markets. PSA International (Singapore) and Hutchison Ports (Hong Kong) are the two largest, accounting for about 50 percent of the port hectares controlled by terminal operators worldwide as of 2020.

Passages, canals, and ports are the key bottlenecks.

Maritime shipping companies have also developed a business segment in port terminal facilities to supplement their shipping activity. In many cases, they form hybrid structures with separate business units or sister companies active in liner shipping or terminal operations. APM Terminals, a subsidiary of the Maersk Line, is the largest global terminal operator with a maritime shipping background. Shipping lines account for about 31 percent of the port hectares controlled by terminal operators worldwide.

A third category of port holding companies comprises a range of financial institutions, including investment banks, pension funds, and sovereign wealth funds. In the 2000s, the container terminal sector became increasingly attractive as an asset class. Perceived to be a high-value proposition over the long term, it started drawing institutional investors. The majority of investors in this sector take an indirect approach to management, acquiring an asset stake and leaving the existing operator to handle the details. Others directly manage terminal assets through a parent company. DP World, a branch of the Dubai World sovereign wealth fund, is the largest global terminal operator from the financial sector. Financial holding companies account for about 19 percent of the port hectares controlled by terminal operators worldwide.

An important consideration is the distribution of the terminal surface. The majority of terminals are in the range of 30 hectares. However, there are a number of mega facilities strategically located at the world's most important gateways and hubs, mainly controlled by global terminal operators.

The emergence of large private terminal operators has stirred controversy over the control of strategic port assets by foreign corporations. Notable recent cases include Greece, where the port of Piraeus is mainly operated by China Ocean Shipping Company, and Sri Lanka, whose Colombo port is mainly operated by China Merchants Port Holdings.

THE PANDEMIC STORM

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath are likely to stand as the most disruptive episode in recent maritime shipping. A series of events buffeting the sector was set in motion as the pandemic progressed. It began with a sharp

reduction in shipping activity as lockdowns were implemented across the world, along with operational adjustments such as prioritizing essential services and new sanitary protocols for transportation workers. Due to the international composition of the maritime workforce, thousands of mariners were stranded onboard ships for several months. Nations fearing possible infection clusters were reluctant to allow for crew rotations in the earlier stages of the pandemic, a problem compounded by restricted international air services.

An important outcome of the pandemic disruptions to shipping was a push toward more extensive digitization of the industry. Transactions involving the exchange of physical documents, such as bills of lading, were sharply curtailed. Forms of digital substitution and information sharing accelerated, a trend that was under way well before the pandemic.

The pandemic also drew attention to the crucial importance of maritime shipping. A divergence took place between passenger and freight transport systems as demand for travel collapsed while demand for goods remained robust. A shortage of parts, such as semiconductors, created manufacturing disruptions and scarcity of related goods, such as cars and computer components. At the other end of supply chains, shifts in demand patterns created surges in orders for household and retail goods. In between, the lack of sufficient containers resulted in delays at terminal facilities.

Similar to the financial crisis of 2008–9, the pandemic initially caused a sharp drop in traffic, set off by the full lockdowns imposed in China in January and February 2020. Shipping lines responded through capacity management and "blank sailings," which occur when a shipping line cancels a scheduled port call or a shipping service, mainly due to a lack of demand or to maintain schedule integrity.

Strong government responses to the pandemic across Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, mainly in the form of stimulus packages, resulted in a rapid economic rebound. These factors, in addition to a resumption of Chinese manufacturing, resulted in an unexpected surge of demand by mid-2020. Some of this was deferred demand—annual traffic growth was just around 2 percent for 2020 overall, compared with 2019.

At the port of Los Angeles, the largest in the United States, traffic declined by only 1.33 percent between 2019 and 2020. This implies that most of the traffic that did not take place in the first half of 2020 was transferred to the second half of the year, straining the capacity that was undermined during the early stages of the pandemic. The availability of containers on major shipping lanes rapidly declined. By June 2020, transpacific shipping rates started to surge. (See Figure 2.)

As the shift in consumption patterns and the surge in demand for household goods endured into 2021, Los Angeles began to face unrelenting
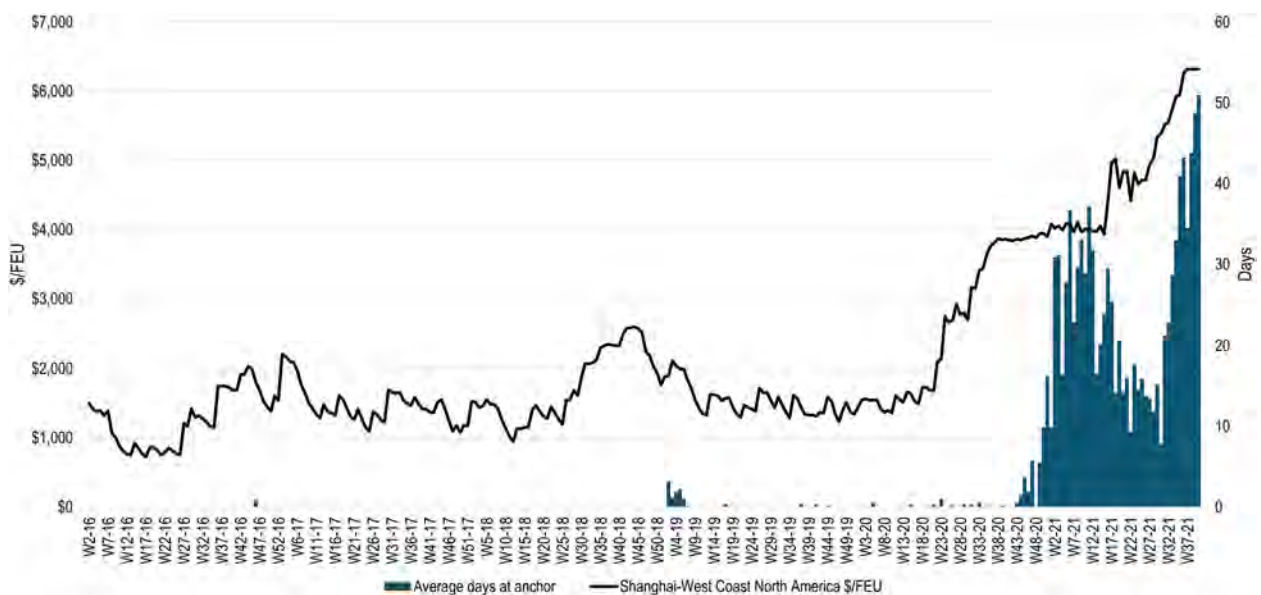

Figure 2. Container freight rates (per 40-foot equivalent unit) between Shanghai and the US West Coast; average days at anchor at the Port of Los Angeles, 2016–21. Source: UNCTAD/Clarkson Research/Port of Los Angeles.

congestion, with more ships waiting at anchor to offload their cargoes. Traffic between January and August 2021 grew by 15.1 percent compared with the same period in 2019. The associated port congestion created a compounding effect, leading to a global shortage of containers as they became stuck on ships, at port terminals, and at distribution centers.

In this context, relatively small increases in traffic resulted in a disproportionate decline in the movement of containers, resulting in additional rate surges. Workforce shortages and overstrained capacity in inland transport systems, including rail and truck drayage, added to the congestion. The repositioning of empty containers back to Asia became a priority for shipping lines, which had a negative impact on American exports handled at Los Angeles.

Finding additional shipping capacity remained a challenge as the container ship fleet was fully utilized to cope with the demand surge. As 2021 progressed, the situation deteriorated as a growing number of container ships were delayed by rising terminal wait and anchor times at major gateways in Asia, Europe, and North America. By mid-2021, the average time at anchor was around 30 days, rising to more than 40 days later in the year.

Shipping rates reached historic highs by mid-2021.

These unprecedented delays further reduced the velocity of supply chains and created more container shortages, with many stuck in ships and at terminals. The provision of new containers was also a challenge, since 90 percent of all containers are manufactured in China. Many manufacturers were using the surge in demand for containers to increase their profitability, and not necessarily their capacity.

Limited additional shipping and container capacity converged to drive a surge in container shipping rates that reached historic highs by mid-2021. Under normal circumstances, high shipping rates would be a strong incentive for carriers to provide additional capacity and remove marginal demand. However, about 50 percent of all shipping contracts are set at long-term rates well below the spot rate. These long-term rates are often locked in by large customers, such as retailers. High shipping rates thus are more a reflection of the decline of systemic capacity than of a long-term rise in demand for additional cargo.

THE SUEZ BLOCKAGE

On March 23, 2021, the 20,000 TEU container ship *Ever Given* ran aground in the Suez Canal, triggering a six-day blockage that compounded the pandemic disruptions in global supply chains, particularly those connecting Europe and Asia. Since 2016, about 58 percent of the length of the Suez Canal has been expanded to allow for two-way transit. However, the incident occurred in the southern section of the canal, which still has only one navigation lane, resulting in the complete blockage of transits in both directions. On March 29, the ship was finally refloated and towed away to the Great Bitter Lake (an artificial lake in the middle of the canal), and canal operations resumed shortly afterward.

The main impacts of the blockage included a holdup of more than 430 ships on both ends of the canal, resulting in additional costs for the shipping lines, including loss of revenue and capacity. During the blockage, the daily queue accumulation was tying up an additional 0.5 percent of global shipping capacity. Due to the uncertainty over how long it would take to clear the blockage, 27 ships opted to use the Cape Route around Africa, adding 7 to 10 sailing days. Once the blockage was cleared on April 3, the transit capacity of the canal was doubled from an average of around 50 transits per day to about 100 in an attempt to restore normal shipping services as soon as possible. The blocked shipments of containers, raw materials, and other goods created inventory disruptions, particularly for European imports from Asia.

The Suez blockage reinforced perceptions of the declining reliability of maritime supply chains. It was associated with a surge in shipping rates between Asia and Europe, which had been declining up to that point. Once the blockage was cleared, ships rushed to reach their European destinations, creating a surge of port activity and further declines in supply chain performance.

The blockage cost about $100 million in revenue for the Suez Canal Authority, representing about 2 percent of its annual total. The shipping line and its insurers paid an unspecified settlement to the authority.

Even if the Suez Canal blockage can be considered a separate event, unrelated to the disruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, it certainly

compounded those disruptions. It had a notable impact on the surge in shipping rates, the decline in supply chain reliability, and the availability of containerized shipping capacity along the world's most heavily used shipping corridor. It also placed maritime shipping and global supply chains at the center of unprecedented public attention.

DUE FOR OVERHAUL?

Maritime shipping must contend with several points of potential failure. Passages, canals, and ports are the key bottlenecks. The pandemic and its aftermath created a multiplicity of disruptions in containerized maritime shipping, which compounded to test its resilience. Since the financial crisis of 2008–9, the industry has paid close attention to capacity management, seeking a strategy to handle volatility in demand and improve its resilience. In the early stages of the pandemic, as traffic dropped, the industry responded rationally through blank sailings and by mothballing a number of ships.

However, as demand recovered faster than expected, the synchronization of shipping capacity and the availability of containers emerged as challenges that were exacerbated by delays at the world's most important container ports. Those ports also had their own problems of synchronization with their commercial hinterlands, including trucking, chassis, and rail capacity shortages. These problems were further compounded by the six-day shutdown of the Suez Canal.

As the disruptions spread through global supply chains, the maritime shipping industry became more visible—and subject to unaccustomed scrutiny. Mitigation strategies are limited, since capacity cannot be readily created for transport systems as capital-intensive as containerized shipping. But this array of interconnected disruptions is bound to have several consequences that may improve the resilience of maritime shipping.

First, in the short term, there will be regulatory responses: governments and their regulatory agencies will feel compelled to react. For instance, in October 2021, the US government responded to the supply-chain disruptions by pushing American ports, particularly Los Angeles and Long Beach, to commence round-the-clock operations as a temporary measure. Such a strategy can only be effective if it is synchronized with the corresponding hinterland capacity,

particularly truck drayage. The key bottlenecks are not only shipping and port capacity, but also the capability of hinterland freight transport systems to handle the required volumes. Most of the distribution links between port terminals and the hinterlands are not designed to function continuously; many distribution centers do not operate through the night. This suggests that the limitations may pertain to labor availability as opposed to physical capacity. There could also be temporary abatements for environmental regulations to allow more hinterland capacity to be brought forward.

Second, cargo owners will be undertaking an ongoing reassessment of their procurement and distribution strategies. Major importers and exporters bear the consequences of maritime supply chain disruptions in terms of additional costs, delays, and inventory shortages, forcing them to reassess their market prices. Higher shipping rates may contribute to consumer price inflation in the range of 1 to 2 percentage points. Many firms are reevaluating their offshoring strategies and taking a closer look at the complex transportation sequences within their supply chains. The largest cargo owners may seek more direct control, such as chartering their own ships.

Third, because of significantly higher rates that are expected to remain elevated for the next couple of years, the shipping industry will be in a position to convert windfall profits into capital investment in additional capacity, better processes, and especially the expected transition of the industry toward decarbonization. This will also encourage the entry of new actors, conveyances, infrastructures, services, and even routes that under normal circumstances would be unable to compete but could become profitable within a higher rate structure. It will be an opportune moment for introducing ships using alternative fuels such as liquified natural gas, methanol, and ammonia, and for the electrification of port terminal equipment.

The global shipping industry has faced a series of unprecedented and compounded disruptions during the pandemic. Yet higher shipping rates, temporary capacity shortages at major ports, and difficulties with moving goods in the hinterland represent an opportunity to transition toward a system that is more resilient. ■

> "To all appearances, the financial sector is currently in one of those periods of exceptionally rapid change that punctuate history."

Digital Currencies—More than a Passing Fad?

BARRY EICHENGREEN

The evolution of money is best characterized as a sequence of long eras of stasis or imperceptibly gradual change, punctuated by exceptional periods of sharp, discontinuous adjustment. The question is whether, as a result of the digital revolution, we are on the cusp of one of those exceptional periods.

In thinking about digital money, three categories are usefully distinguished. The first might be called plain-vanilla cryptocurrencies. Bitcoin is the best known, though it has many rivals. These cryptocurrencies rely on a distributed ledger verification technology popularly known as blockchain, and their prices fluctuate with supply and demand, sometimes wildly.

The second category is so-called stablecoins. These are cryptocurrencies that run on either a distributed ledger or a centralized system maintained by the issuer, which stands ready to convert them into legal tender, such as the US dollar, at a fixed price on demand. The best known example is Tether, which is "tethered" to the dollar (one Tether is worth one dollar). A couple of years ago, Facebook made a splash by proposing to enter this space with its own stablecoin, initially called Libra, but subsequently rebranded as Diem and hived off to an independent governing association.

The final category is made up of prospective central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). These are digital units with fixed value, analogous to Tether but issued by central banks. They would be made available to consumers as a token, by depositing them into digital wallets, or by allowing individuals to open retail accounts at the central bank. Central banks around the world are actively studying these possibilities. Some, such as the People's Bank of China, have launched pilot projects that entail issuing a CBDC on a limited basis (in certain cities or for specified transactions).

What does the history of money tell us about the viability and desirability, from a social standpoint, of these monetary innovations?

THE EVOLUTION OF MONEY

Coins minted out of precious metal were probably first created in Greece around 600 BCE. Banknotes followed in China, 1,300 years later in the period of the Tang Dynasty, when merchants and wholesalers, finding it awkward to settle large-value transactions in bulky copper coin, began making payments using paper receipts issued by a trusted person with whom their coins were deposited. In the tenth century, under the Song Dynasty, the central government began issuing its own notes, promising to redeem them in specie.

In time, such notes, issued by various governments, were supplemented by checks drawn on deposit accounts held with private bankers, first in Persia and then in Europe. These handwritten instruments, instructing the banker to pay a specified amount to a third party, gave way in the eighteenth century to the preprinted forms that we know as checks. With this standardization and growing acceptance of checks as a means of payment, the bank deposit accounts on which checks are drawn came to be regarded, along with currency and coin, as part of the money supply.

Such was the state of affairs until the twentieth century, although precise details differed across countries and over time. In some places, the central government asserted its exclusive right to issue banknotes and assigned that privilege to a financial institution, the central bank, which provided the state with other services in return. In other instances, such as the antebellum United States, where there existed deep and abiding distrust of a powerful financial institution affiliated with the government, all chartered banks were

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permitted to issue notes so long as they committed to redeeming them for specie.

The specie basis of the system differed across countries. In some places it was silver, in others gold, in still others both. As the nineteenth century progressed, a growing number of countries gravitated toward gold as the uniform monetary standard, Britain's early adoption of the gold standard providing a focal point.

To be sure, specie convertibility was never universal or unconditional. Issuing banks might default on the obligation to redeem their notes; dissatisfaction over the operation of so-called Free Banking in the United States centered on this notorious problem. The convertibility of government-issued money might be suspended in wartime and in response to financial crises and other emergencies. Although governments generally sought to resume convertibility at the earlier rate once the emergency passed, some suspensions were associated with spectacular inflations that made resumption impossible.

MORE RECENT INNOVATIONS

The preceding is probably as close as one can come to summarizing two and a half millennia of monetary history in a few short paragraphs. The twentieth century then saw two monetary transformations, one institutional, the other technological. Institutionally, the system shifted from one based on an external anchor, namely a fixed domestic-currency price of gold, to one based on the reputation of its steward, namely the central bank. Central banks were given mandates to maintain price and financial stability—and, increasingly, the independence needed to pursue them. They were judged by their success at achieving their mandated objectives.

In terms of technology, the mid-twentieth century saw the advent of credit cards, first the Diners Club Card in 1950 (accepted initially by 28 restaurants), and then the first general-use card in 1951 (issued by Franklin National Bank). These supplemented bank checks as means of payment and, eventually, bank overdrafts as a source of credit. Debit cards, which deduct funds directly from bank accounts, were next to emerge in the 1970s.

Most recently, with the growth of the Internet and 3G connectivity (which is the minimum standard for linking cellphones to the Internet),

In some countries, like Sweden, cash has virtually disappeared.

consumers have embraced online and mobile payments. As a result, banks as providers of payment services are increasingly competing—and in some cases partnering—with nonbank digital payment and wallet apps operated by platform companies and telecoms, such as Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Amazon Pay in the United States, M-Pesa in Africa and Asia, and WeChat Pay and Alipay in China.

COVID-19, it is widely said, has had the effect of accelerating ongoing trends. In this context, it accelerated the trend away from using cash and making withdrawals at bank branches and automatic teller machines, in favor of paying bills online and making payments electronically. In some countries, Sweden for example, cash has virtually disappeared.

WHAT DIGITAL CURRENCIES LACK

This transition might be thought to open the door to the widespread use of cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and central bank digital currencies, since individuals are already using a variety of close digital substitutes for cash. Yet a closer look suggests that the prospects for these forms of digital money are not clear-cut.

Most obviously, plain-vanilla cryptocurrencies lack the essential attributes of money, namely providing a stable store of value, accepted unit of account, and convenient means of payment. The value of Bitcoin, to take the leading example, is anything but stable, as will be apparent to anyone who has followed its ups and downs. This volatility makes it unattractive as a unit of account in which to price merchandise and set wages. It is inconvenient for payments, requiring the user to possess a degree of technological sophistication, a secure digital wallet, a reliably recalled password, and, not least, a counterparty prepared to accept it. Validating transactions through so-called Proof of Work, in which users of the distributed ledger solve arbitrary mathematical problems, is notoriously intensive in its consumption of energy and computational resources.

Bitcoin's champions argue that it deserves a place in investment portfolios, not unlike gold, because its returns are uncorrelated with those of other asset classes. (The lower the correlation, the greater the diversification benefits of the investment.) But this is different from saying that it will be used as money. Returns on investing in gold are

similarly uncorrelated with returns on other investments. This doesn't make gold easy or attractive to use in transactions. Just as gold coins no longer have a consequential role in payments, the same is certain to be true of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies of its ilk. Bitcoin looks to be more a niche investment product than a widely utilized money.

Stablecoins possess the stable store of value and unit of account features lacked by plain-vanilla cryptocurrencies, since a dollar of Tether or Diem is supposed to always be worth a dollar. But what is true in principle may not also be true in practice. A stablecoin is only as stable as the collateral standing behind it. If an issuer holds a dollar's worth of US cash in reserve for every dollar coin it issues, then there should be no question about its ability to redeem that stablecoin at par on demand. But having to raise a dollar of capital from investors in order to issue a dollar's worth of stablecoin is expensive, unprofitable, and therefore nonviable.

This creates a temptation to cut corners in one of two ways. The stablecoin issuer could decide to hold collateral equal to only a fraction of the value of the coins it issues. That would not be a first. Fractional reserve banks hold capital and reserves equal to only a portion of the loans they extend; they raise additional resources to fund their lending from depositors or on the wholesale interbank market. Similarly, central banks maintaining currency pegs, whether under the classical gold standard or today, have generally held gold and foreign exchange reserves equal to only a fraction of their currency emission.

The one thing these examples have in common is their fragility. If doubts arise, for whatever reason, about the sustainability of a currency peg, investors will dump that unit as a way of avoiding losses; either this will strip the central bank of its reserves and force it to abandon the peg, or the central bank will abandon the peg preemptively in order to preserve at least a portion of its reserves. Similarly, if doubts develop about the solvency of a fractional reserve bank, depositors will rush to withdraw their funds before the cupboard is bare and the convertibility of deposits into currency is suspended.

To avoid the destabilizing consequences of this bank-run problem, governments today insure retail deposits up to a specified ceiling, and central banks act as lenders of last resort to aid embattled financial institutions. In return, they require banks eligible for assistance to follow regulations designed to limit the incidence of such problems. Presumably, stablecoin issuers, to receive similar protection, would be required to apply for bank charters or their equivalent. From the vantage point of the monetary system, this would not be anything new under the sun.

STABLECOINS AS MONEY MARKET FUNDS

A second way to cut corners is by holding a portion of the collateral backing the stablecoin not in cash, but in interest-earning assets, such as US treasury bills or high-quality private securities known as commercial paper. In this case, the stablecoin issuer would be functioning like a kind of money market mutual fund.

Money market mutual funds pool their customers' share purchases. They use the proceeds to purchase treasury bills and commercial paper, making money on the spread between the interest earned on these investments and that paid to their clients. Like a stablecoin issuer, they promise their customers that shares can be redeemed at par—that a share purchased for a dollar can be redeemed for a dollar. They obtain the funds to finance redemptions by selling off a corresponding quantity of liquid securities.

The problem with this business model became evident in the global financial crisis of 2008, when normally liquid investments abruptly became illiquid. If everyone wants to sell commercial paper and no one wants to buy, or if commercial paper can only be sold at a substantial loss, then the fund won't have the resources to make good on its promise to redeem shares at par. Instead of paying out a hundred cents on the dollar, it will require its shareholders to accept less, as Reserve Primary Fund, one of the oldest and largest money market funds, did in 2008. This practice came to be known, for self-evident reasons, as "breaking the buck."

In that instance, the US government intervened to backstop the money market fund industry. It temporarily insured the holdings of publicly offered funds, quelling the panic, and provided commercial banks with additional resources to purchase securities from money funds. But there was a reluctance to regularize these practices on the grounds that they were likely to encourage additional risk-taking by fund managers. Instead, the US Securities and Exchange Commission instituted rules requiring funds to post floating net asset values rather than maintain a $1 share price,

as a reminder to investors that money market funds are not free of risk. It also allowed funds to institute redemption gates, under which they can limit withdrawals and charge temporary fees of up to 2 percent.

Revealingly, Diem's latest whitepaper similarly foresees redemption gates and conversion limits to protect the stablecoin against runs. But a stablecoin that is not entirely stable and that can't be redeemed for dollars on demand in unlimited amounts won't be an attractive alternative to Federal Reserve money, in the same way that a share in a money market mutual fund is an imperfect substitute for cash.

LOSING CONTROL

The only viable alternatives to existing central bank-issued money, then, are central bank digital currencies. Nearly every central bank on the planet is contemplating their possible issuance. Gauging the prospects requires one to understand their motives.

A first potential motivation for issuing a CBDC is to avoid losing control of the payments system. In the United States, individuals and businesses make payments using the communications and settlement system known as Fedwire, jointly owned by the 12 US Federal Reserve Banks. Some 6,000 US banks maintain "master accounts" with the Federal Reserve, allowing them to execute money transfers using Fedwire. The person or business paying the funds first instructs his or her bank to transfer funds to the payee's account at the receiving bank. On receiving the instruction (or "wire"), Fedwire debits and credits the relevant master accounts, and the transfer immediately becomes final. The Fed ensures that the payments system operates smoothly, which keeps economic activity humming. In addition, the central bank has a valuable inside source of information on financial flows through the economy.

The worry is that individuals and businesses will no longer pay their bank $30 or $40 to send a wire transfer if there is a widely accepted stablecoin that can be transferred at a fraction of the cost. The Fed will have reason to be concerned about the security of that private system. If it is possible to cyberattack Colonial Pipeline (the largest fuel pipeline in the United States, which was forced to shut down for several days in May 2021

when hackers demanded a ransom in Bitcoins), why not Tether or Diem? And what will happen to the economy then?

It is therefore proposed by various CBDC proponents that the Fed (and other central banks in its position) should issue its own digital unit. Unlike private-label stablecoins, there would be no question of whether a Federal Reserve–issued CBDC will remain stable against the dollar, any more than there are questions about whether a commercial bank's dollar deposit in its master account at the Fed is worth a dollar. But the cybersecurity risks would remain. Layering a CBDC on top of the existing payments system makes sense only if that new construct is unquestionably secure.

Moreover, if control of the payments system is the issue, there are other ways of addressing the problem. Digital payment platforms can be required to share information with the central bank. This is what the People's Bank of China recently decreed as part of its crackdown on Alipay and WeChat Pay, China's two leading private payment systems. Private platforms can be strictly regulated to enhance their stability, and Fedwire can be opened up to participation by nonbank financial firms.

If the concern is that banks charging their retail customers $30 or $40 a wire are gouging their customers, then the solution is more competition. More pressure on banks to adopt new technologies brings down costs.

Cryptocurrencies lack the essential attributes of money.

MAKING FINANCE MORE INCLUSIVE

A second argument for contemplating a CBDC, mooted by US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen among others, is in order to enhance financial inclusion. The Treasury Department had difficulty getting COVID-19 stimulus checks to individuals who hadn't filed a tax return and didn't have a bank account. Although nearly 15 million American adults are unbanked, almost everyone has a smartphone. If they all downloaded a digital wallet that automatically registered with the Federal Reserve, the government could deposit digital dollars into it directly.

This assumes, of course, that everyone eligible to register a digital wallet will do so. In practice, a significant fraction of the unbanked cite privacy concerns as their reason for not having a bank account. And even if greater financial inclusion is an admirable goal, it still needs to be balanced against the potential cyber risks of a CBDC.

Financial inclusion may be a problem in the United States, but it is even more pervasive in developing countries, where many people lack access to a bank branch or the wherewithal to open an account. However, private payments systems such as M-Pesa have already gone a long way toward solving this problem. Remoteness is no longer an issue when transactions can be undertaken via cellphone and satellite. The minimum balance and documentation requirements of such systems are extremely modest. M-Pesa may charge substantial fees, but these can be regulated. Nor is it clear that the Central Bank of Kenya can operate such a system at lower cost.

Mobile phone–based money transfer services are now branching into the provision of other financial services, such as micro-lending. They use information gleaned from payments to assess the creditworthiness of their customers, enabling them to efficiently price their loans. This kind of micro-lending to individuals is not a suitable business for a central bank. Thus, it can be argued that access to financial services will be superior if retail digital payments are organized by a private provider. And if there are consumer-protection worries, these are best addressed by the appropriate financial regulator and competition authority.

DETHRONING THE DOLLAR

Countries like China see issuing a CBDC as a way to enhance the international attractions of their currencies and diminish the dominance of the dollar. As of mid-2021, fully 40 percent of cross-border payments cleared by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT, the international equivalent of Fedwire, which is owned and operated by its member financial institutions) were transfers of dollars. This is despite the fact that the United States accounts for just one-seventh of global GDP in purchasing power parity, or price-adjusted, terms. In contrast, transfers of China's currency, the renminbi, accounted for less than 2 percent of cross-border payments.

The dollar's dominance has been a thorn in the side of policymakers outside the United States ever since Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, as French finance minister, raised the issue in the 1960s. Recent US efforts to weaponize the dollar have highlighted the problem. In 2018, the Treasury Department adopted legal measures preventing Rusal, a Russian aluminum firm, from accessing the dollar-based financial system, devastating the company. In

2012 the Iranian central bank was disconnected from SWIFT at US insistence, and in 2020 the Treasury Department froze the US assets of 18 Iranian banks as part of its sanctions effort, barring American banks from dealing with them and threatening secondary sanctions against banks of third countries that did so. The costs to Iran were considerable.

Countries like China worry that they might be next, and that their trade with third countries, which expect to collect dollars, will be disrupted. The corresponding solution is to encourage third countries to accept renminbi in payment. Issuance of a Chinese CBDC is intended to make this option more convenient and attractive.

The question is whether this will work. Understanding the answer requires uncovering the sources of the dollar's ubiquity. First, the market in dollar funds is large and liquid. By some measures, the market in US treasury securities is the single largest asset market in the world. This liquidity means that individuals and businesses accepting dollar payments can sell their dollars all but instantaneously, without moving market prices. This is why they opt to transact in the currency. Chinese financial markets, in contrast, are still ringed by capital controls, limiting both their liquidity and the access of foreigners.

In addition, the dollar has a large existing base of users. Individuals and firms hold and use dollars because those with whom they do business similarly hold and use dollars. There is no straightforward mechanism for coordinating their simultaneous shift to a different currency.

International money transfers are notoriously expensive, since they require payment of fees to two banks, in the sending and receiving countries, and the intermediation of SWIFT. So substituting a CBDC might significantly bring down this cost. And the first large-country central bank to issue a digital currency would have a head start in this race.

But would a Chinese CBDC really be an attractive alternative to the dollar and SWIFT? It is not clear that the People's Bank of China (PBOC) will allow nonresidents to hold renminbi tokens or retail accounts at the central bank, or to buy and sell the CBDC freely. Doing so would undermine the operation of its capital controls. Nor is it clear that nonresidents would be comfortable doing so, given privacy concerns. The PBOC has said that it will track only limited information about

transactions using its CBDC. But take-up requires that it be believed—and that no one suspects the existence of a digital back door.

Alternatively, central banks could make their digital currencies interoperable, so that they interact and exchange data with one another. Doing so could allow them to be exchanged on a digital platform or clearinghouse. The feasibility of such arrangements is being studied by, among others, the Bank for International Settlements' Innovation Hub, run jointly by the BIS, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and the Bank of Thailand (with the participation of other central banks). But, studies notwithstanding, the actual creation of a network of interoperable CBDCs capable of displacing the dollar as the leading international currency seems aeons away.

Meanwhile, the private sector is actively bringing down the cost of international payments. Ripple, a California-based company, is using blockchain-based technology to facilitate cross-border financial transfers by its bank customers. Fintech firms like Payoneer and Ebury have developed online platforms to complete cross-border business-to-business payments at a fraction of their traditional cost. Western Union is collaborating with the French fintech Linxo to do the same for remittances.

Even SWIFT is updating its platform, using digital technology to provide the pre-validation of essential data, fraud detection, data analytics, and transaction tracking traditionally provided by each financial institution individually. Eliminating redundancy holds out the possibility of significantly reducing cross-border transaction costs. Again, it is not clear what central banks can do in this space that private financial institutions cannot.

IN SEARCH OF A PROBLEM

To all appearances, the financial sector is currently in one of those periods of exceptionally rapid change that punctuate history. We are seeing the adoption of cloud computing to store and process financial data, artificial intelligence and machine-learning algorithms to analyze it, and blockchain to secure it. The future will surely see additional movement in these directions.

But it is uncertain whether digital currencies will be part of that future. Plain-vanilla cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin lack the essential attributes of money and are likely to remain no more than niche investment products. Stablecoins have more of the attributes of money but are expensive to operate. They are fragile, absent transaction limits that would diminish their "moneyness."

Central bank digital currencies are more obviously viable, but they are a solution in search of a problem. It's not clear, in other words, what economic and social problems they can solve that can't also be solved by suitably regulated private-sector entities.

History has seen many passing financial fads and fashions. Digital currencies, as distinct from digital technology and the digital revolution more generally, may be little more than another one. ∎

How Persons with Intellectual Disabilities Are Fighting for Decision-Making Rights

CHESTER A. FINN, MATTHEW S. SMITH, AND MICHAEL ASHLEY STEIN

For millennia, societies around the world have deployed labels, devised procedures, and designed schemes to defend and legitimize restrictions on how persons with intellectual disabilities exercise their fundamental human rights. These practices are often justified by paternalistic attitudes about what is in the "best interests" of a person with an intellectual disability. Under this paradigm, societies have long euthanized "invalids," sterilized "imbeciles," institutionalized "lunatics," and disenfranchised "incompetents."

Disability and Equality

Fifth in a series

That we continue today to hear such terms in casual conversation only illustrates how the world we inhabit has been profoundly shaped by the bias and stigma that forged these terms in the first place. The personal experiences of the lead author of this article, Chester Finn, illustrate how subtle and pervasive these attitudes remain. Chester is an experienced self-advocate—that is, someone who identifies as a person with an intellectual or other disability and is committed to demanding and educating others about their rights. As Chester puts it:

For a long time, people have felt that people with disabilities were incapable of a lot of things. We started to change the narrative and advocated for what we can do, and we showed people that we're capable of things. But still somehow they don't believe it. Even now, you'll see some people that you've worked with for a long time, they'll still have some of those old-fashioned ideas, like, they'll say, "You can do this, and you can do that," but then they won't let you do whatever you need to do and help you if you need assistance.

Persons with disabilities have long fought against the paternalism that pervades societies' rules for how they may or may not exercise the myriad rights that people without disabilities take for granted. These include the rights to vote, to have sex, to raise children, to manage money, to consent to health care, and so on.

The first international human rights treaty of the twenty-first century, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was adopted by the United Nations in 2006 and has since been acceded to by 182 countries and counting, contains important protections for these rights. It is a powerful tool for disability rights advocates to use in the fight against paternalistic rules and attitudes that limit the ability of persons with intellectual disabilities to exercise their rights. Chester says:

When the CRPD was being negotiated, I had an advocate from another country tell me if there was a law to support them, they could justify going up to their government to tell them what their rights are. Because if they spoke up too much, they could lose something—whatever rights they had claimed, they could lose those. In some countries, it's not only about just losing your rights: you might lose your life. In the United States, they don't take us out and shoot us. Instead, they destroy us constructively, with rules and laws and money.

Specifically, the CRPD gives disability rights advocates new ways to combat restrictions on the right to legal capacity. Frequently described as the "right to have rights," the right to legal capacity

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plays gatekeeper for laws protecting other human rights.

In most countries, the right to legal capacity can be restricted by a judge through a guardianship order or similar determination. In such cases, a judge generally decides both that a person with disability is functionally incapable of exercising legal capacity and that it is therefore in their "best interest" to have another person appointed as their guardian. The judge then transfers many, if not all, of the rights of that person with disability to the guardian, who exercises those rights on their behalf.

Because of this transfer of rights, guardianship has aptly been described as a form of "civil death." Fundamentally, guardianship is premised on a paradox: removing someone's rights in order to protect them. As Chester observes:

Why do you have to take someone's rights away in order to help someone make decisions? It just doesn't make any sense. Rights protect people. How does taking those away help someone? I think they're just using the disability against the person. If they didn't have the disability, they'd say, "These are what your rights are." What good does it do to say someone is too disabled to have rights? That's the whole point. What they're saying is, "You're disabled, so you shouldn't have rights." People don't come out and say it but in practice that's what they do.

Restrictions like guardianship take away from persons with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to make important decisions about their lives. Although a guardian generally is required to make decisions that are in the "best interest" of someone in their charge, in practice there are few checks on a guardian's authority. As a result, a guardian can fall into the habit of making decisions on behalf of a person with intellectual disabilities without consulting them.

Even where a guardian does actively consult with a person in their charge, the law typically gives persons with intellectual disabilities few, if any, means for stopping or undoing actions with which they disagree, creating power imbalances that can become ripe for abuse. The same dynamics that can flow from power imbalances between persons with intellectual disabilities and service providers become amplified in court-created relationships between guardians and their "wards," as the law often calls the persons with intellectual disabilities who are in a guardian's charge. Chester explains how power imbalances can lead to incursions on the smallest of decisions:

People have rights but they're not followed. Your rights according to whom? It's what your staff or what your agency thinks. Those are the rights. There's a person who left a voice message for me. On the message I could hear what was happening. He wanted to go to the bank. But they wanted to take them to a grocery store and get cash. But he said he didn't want to go to the grocery store because they charge a fee for taking money out. He didn't want to pay that fee. Even though it wasn't much, it wasn't his choice. When you don't have control over those small things, it can make you dependent on somebody else, and you don't need that.

DECISION-MAKING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The CRPD aims to help persons with intellectual disabilities combat decision-making restrictions large and small. Importantly, the CRPD does not only require that states allow persons with disabilities to exercise legal capacity as any person without disability would. Article 12(3) of the CRPD also specifically guarantees all persons with disabilities the right to "the support they may require" to make decisions. This means that states must avoid relying on stigma and biases about persons with intellectual disabilities in regulating who can exercise legal capacity, and must also affirmatively help them to do so if they need and want assistance.

Self-advocates should be at the forefront of reform efforts.

In other words, the CRPD requires states to look past the threshold question of "Who should exercise legal capacity?" and instead help persons with disabilities to do so. In Chester's view, this means that instead of sitting in judgment of decisions that persons with disabilities make, we should help them to exercise their rights. For example, he says:

I got a call the other day from an investigator who wanted to know about a situation that I had reported. The person tried to wave off what I reported because they thought it was something that a person with intellectual disability told me. They asked me, "Oh so, the person called you and they told you about it?" And I said, "No. They didn't have to. I was on the phone with this person talking to them and I heard about the incident myself." Then the investigator understood and we talked a little bit about it. He tried to say, "Oh, you're a person with a disability. You

can't possibly know the difference or understand." And my whole thing is, if you can't support me and listen to what I have to say, how are you going to support the people, the hundreds and thousands of people, that you're supposed to be protecting?

In many places, doing away with legal capacity restrictions for persons with intellectual disabilities remains a novel or even extraordinary proposition. At least before the CRPD's adoption, virtually every country had guardianship laws that allowed judges to restrict the legal capacity of persons with intellectual disabilities if they were believed to be unable to make their own decisions.

Although some view guardianship as a benign mechanism that aims to protect a person with disability's interests, it can disempower them by depriving them of opportunities to make important decisions that affect their lives, including where to live, how to spend their money, and whether to marry or start a family. Ultimately, guardianship orders give license not just to guardians but also to others to assume that persons with intellectual disabilities are incapable of making decisions about their lives. That's why Chester urges them to fight these assumptions:

It's hard for people to understand. They think that you need something or someone to help you. And a lot of times you don't. You just ask for help when you need it. You don't want people to think that if they're not around that you can't do something. No one knows why but it's something about human nature: they think that you have to be dependent because of your disability. And they don't get that it's just about letting people be able to make decisions and carry them out, that it's important. It's okay to have people to assist you and help you when it's needed, but not all the time. Because what are you going to do when there's nobody around? In life at certain times people get caught up with the things in their lives and the things they need to do, so you have to learn to be independent and how to make things happen on your own.

Courts' broad grants of legal authority to guardians and affirmations of negative assumptions about the capabilities of persons with intellectual disabilities have had dire, dehumanizing consequences. Legal capacity restrictions have exposed them to forced abortion and sterilization, forced medication, involuntary hospitalization or institutionalization, disenfranchisement, ineligibility for adoption or marriage, termination of parental rights, and financial exploitation, among other human rights violations. We would be remiss not to mention that people with other kinds of disabilities, such as psychosocial disabilities or disabilities associated with aging, have faced similar treatment.

Despite documented instances of legal capacity restrictions leading to abuse and exploitation, widespread stigma and biases about what persons with intellectual or other disabilities are capable of have allowed institutions like guardianship to persist. Chester puts his finger on the doublespeak that persons with intellectual disabilities frequently hear, which helps to explain how purported protective measures can devolve into struggles for control:

You tell people that you have a right, you have a choice, yet at the same time, you tell them, "These are the decisions that we're making for you. Whether you like it or not, you're depending on us." And that's what it boils down to. It changes the narrative when you have to depend on someone else. And I know that because I'm one of those persons that might need assistance from people. But if I don't get things in the way that I need, I'll find another way. But people who are depending on others to do things for them don't have that opportunity. For them, it's either you do it our way or you're not going to get it done. That's why you should never let people know that you need them too much. If you let them do too much, then they start to control the situation. And you don't want to give the control up.

Popular representations of guardianship, as in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and Netflix's *I Care a Lot*, dramatize the control inherent in guardian–ward relationships. Britney Spears' recent, high-profile efforts to restore her rights have highlighted this aspect of guardianship. But the struggles of persons with intellectual disabilities to end their guardianships rarely receive splashy headlines or capture the broader public's imagination. The same stigmas and biases that inform judges' guardianship orders also create barriers to galvanizing broad-based support for systemic changes.

The CRPD has started to turn the tables on these paternalistic patterns. Since the CRPD's adoption, a diverse array of countries, including Peru and Colombia, have either abolished or radically reformed their guardianship laws. Others, such as Ireland and Israel, have adopted new laws to allow persons with disabilities to make arrangements to get decision-making help while avoiding legal capacity restrictions. Still other countries, such as Spain and Germany, have blunted certain effects of guardianship orders by ensuring that

persons with disabilities who have guardians can nevertheless exercise their right to vote in elections.

SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

Part of the reason the CRPD has enabled disability rights advocates to successfully challenge legal capacity restrictions is that the CRPD also elevates a guardianship antidote called "supported decision-making." The idea is that just about everyone at some point in their lives needs or wants help when making some kinds of decisions, and therefore it follows that society should not discriminate against people because their support needs or preferences are different from those of others. The principle is simple: let people have the help they may need to make decisions that are tough for them instead of stopping them from making those decisions altogether. Speaking from experience, Chester states:

Supported decision-making is a way of you making your own decisions with support from those who you choose to help you. It gives you the freedom to make a decision but it also helps you know what's good about a decision and also the negative things and what could happen in different scenarios. People don't do that for persons with intellectual disabilities. For them, it's either you get it, or you don't. They don't ask, "How do you want it?" It's "You can't have it," or "You're not capable." They look at your disability and your mental capacity—whether you can handle it or not—and that's not the right way.

Article 12(3) of the CRPD guarantees all persons with disabilities the right to "the support they may require" to exercise legal capacity, which has sparked initiatives to translate this principle into practice. For example, the Bulgarian Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities designed a program for systematically helping people to articulate their life goals and to pair them with support persons to help them realize those goals. Although other countries had individualized service planning processes in place before the CRPD, such a program was novel in Bulgaria. More recently, Costa Rica passed a law in August 2016 creating court-appointed "guarantors" tasked with assisting persons with intellectual disabilities to make their own legally binding decisions. How court-appointed supporters may act differently from guardians remains to be seen.

Describing novel service delivery systems or court-made legal arrangements in terms of supported decision-making carries risks, however. This is because of the ways that similar systems historically have constrained rather than liberated persons with intellectual disabilities. As Chester has witnessed:

I think that's where having something like supported decision-making allows you to get people that understand stuff to tell you or point out when other people are trying to control you. There's a number of ways of controlling people without them even knowing it. You know, we had a hard time advocating to shut down the sheltered workshops. I'm no psychologist but mentally those places work on you. You go to those places every day, you do the same job, you get beat down and then you decide to stop fighting. You stop arguing, you stop doing any of the stuff that you did, because you get tired and it wears on you. And then they look at it as, "They're not causing no trouble. They're being nice." That's why I like what John Lewis says about "good trouble." Some people who advocate for themselves get labeled as "troublemakers" simply because they're trying to take control of their lives and the service systems can get in the way of that, even though they're not supposed to. To me, that's just good trouble.

Even in countries with established service-delivery systems for persons with intellectual disabilities that predated the CRPD, supported decision-making is providing new opportunities for them to reclaim control over their lives. In the United States, for example, organizations like the Supported Decision-Making New York project have piloted programs to assist persons with intellectual disabilities to create written supported decision-making agreements that set expectations for support persons they choose and explain these arrangements to family members, health care and service providers, and others. One person even demonstrated the impact that such documents can have by successfully using his agreement as part of a court proceeding to undo his own guardianship. Chester recalls conversations with a recently deceased friend who believed in the power of these agreements:

When my friend was alive, we talked a lot about supported decision-making agreements. At first I was like, "What do you need that for?" But he explained to me, "I need it for backup. I need it to pick some

> *Guardianship has aptly been described as a form of "civil death."*

different people to support me." For him, it was all about getting the people to support him, and the agreement is almost like a contract for your life. So, he did that. He put it all down in writing and then he felt better about it. He said, "I've got this. If something happens, or something changes, then I know how to make up my mind about a decision." You know, he didn't get his own apartment, like he was always striving for, but he did have the notion of having that freedom of having this decision that was important to him. That helped him out. So, for him it was a great thing because that way he got his stuff on paper, in a document. Even though when he talked to his family about it, they discouraged him, he still kept it.

Laws, policies, and practices inspired by supported decision-making will inevitably vary across contexts and continents. They may even be difficult to distinguish in practice from pre-CRPD paradigms. We should be skeptical when service providers present billable schemes that maintain status quo provider–recipient power imbalances as supported decision-making initiatives. Or when nominal supporters in fact exert control or influence over the choices of persons with intellectual disabilities in ways that undercut the spirit of supported decision-making. Or when courts rebrand guardians as "supporters" in half-hearted attempts to align outmoded laws with the CRPD's requirements. Chester has a litmus test for everyone working on supported decision-making:

I have a question for all of them. Are you able to give people the support to make their own decisions without strings? Because no matter who it is or what it is, people will say, "What we're giving you is this, look at this," or, "This is a privilege for you," and, "You must follow this." Are you truly letting people decide what they want to do with their lives without putting strings and stipulations on it? I don't think that supported decision-making comes with strings. It's just a natural way of life, with supports. You don't come to your friends offering a friendship with strings. Supporters with strings are like Facebook friends. There are lots of people on there who aren't really friends, even though that's what Facebook calls them.

But supported decision-making can also be transformative. It might serve as an impetus for a massive redistribution of decision-making authority from persons without disabilities to those with them. It could also prove to be a means for persons with intellectual disabilities to showcase—and be remunerated for—their lived expertise in navigating complex systems and hierarchies, as they assist their peers to assert more control over their lives. Peer mentoring programs, like one run by the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, are breaking important ground and may signal a path forward.

At a September 2021 US Senate hearing on guardianships prompted by concerns about Britney Spears' case, numerous persons with intellectual disabilities testified that supported decision-making—whether it takes the form of a written instrument, an organized practice, or a personal conviction—has empowered them to reclaim their rights and emerge from restrictive guardianships. As with so many reforms, though, the ways in which laws, policies, and practices inspired by supported decision-making are implemented will be more decisive than whether they are implemented in the first place.

SELF-ADVOCATES IN THE LEAD

One important criticism of the growing number of supported decision-making efforts is that some are not designed or directed by persons with disabilities themselves, those whom these efforts are supposed to benefit. This reflects the broader, ongoing struggle of the global disability rights movement to ensure that persons with disabilities are involved in all decisions that affect them. The movement's slogan "Nothing about us without us!" remains as relevant as ever in the context of initiatives that turn on positioning and enabling persons with disabilities to play decision-making roles in their own lives. Recalling Roland Johnson, the pioneering self-advocate and survivor of the abuses at the Pennhurst State School, Chester says:

Part of why people don't understand is that they don't listen. Half the battle is listening to what people say. Other people want to get into a conversation and let people with disabilities know, "I'm in charge. I'm the authority." But early in the 1990s, when Roland Johnson was alive, he did an international conference in Toronto, and he talked about who's in charge. It should be us: we should be in charge of our own lives. But a lot of us have forgotten that it's about us. A lot of times, if you listen to people, they talk about "our agency." They say, "This is what our agency thinks." But what do you think? What are the points that you want to say? How do you feel about the situation? So that's why you need people that can support you, but also let you be yourself.

Self-advocates should be at the forefront of supported decision-making efforts. The impact of

initiatives purporting to restore and preserve the decision-making autonomy of persons with disabilities will be limited if they are not led by self-advocates. The moral impetus for self-advocate leadership and direction of supported decision-making efforts should be self-evident. But it is also a question of pragmatism: self-advocates are keenly aware of the barriers to decision-making that they and others face on a daily basis. They often have the deepest understandings of how systems can coerce or control the people they are designed to serve. In other words, self-advocates have a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will inevitably strengthen and improve supported decision-making efforts. We have witnessed this in our own work.

Unfortunately, self-advocate leadership on supported decision-making remains the exception rather than the rule. Chester recently observed one such exception while he was embedded in a self-advocate–directed supported decision-making initiative, during a research fellowship with the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness:

What Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) *is doing is important because no one gave it to them. They came up with the idea that they wanted to be included and they wanted to be a part of making any decision about their lives. They really took "nothing about us without us" to heart. I enjoyed my time working with* MASS *and what they put together. What was so important to me was that they put it together themselves. They sat down and thought and had conversations about how this will work for the people with disabilities in their state. It wasn't thinking just about themselves; they were selfless. A lot of people will advocate for issues and when the issue gets resolved, they're done with it. Some advocates and professionals are like, "It's behind us now, we don't have to worry about it. We either won that one or we lost that one." But it's not about wins or losses for self-advocates. For the individuals who want to make changes in their lives, they're the ones with something to really lose.*

To this end, we have tried to model self-advocate leadership in our process of developing this essay. With Chester in the lead, we are helping to inject at least one self-advocate's voice into the kind of forum where self-advocates have rarely had a platform to share their grassroots knowledge and expertise as authors in their own right. By doing so, we hope not only to raise awareness of the potential and pitfalls of supported decision-making as part of the ongoing fight waged by persons with intellectual disabilities for control over their lives. We also seek to inspire others to respond to the CRPD's challenge to put aside the traditional assumptions and exclusionary rules surrounding competency, and instead endeavor to provide the support necessary for persons with intellectual disabilities to assert their autonomy. ∎

Aging, COVID-19, and Resocializing Public Health

KAVITA SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

Older people form the fastest growing section of the population in many parts of the global South, where longevity has rapidly increased over the past few decades. Between 1990 and 2015, life expectancy worldwide rose from 64 to 71 years, and though there are significant disparities in these shifts, even in the poorest countries the gains were 6 to 7 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced complex social and public health dimensions to these demographic changes, however.

Even though data and evidence on the specific implications of the pandemic are still sparse, news reports and city- and country-based household surveys and studies from Asia and Africa have documented a huge deficit in access to health services and home-based care for older adults, along with increased poverty. Older persons reportedly were more vulnerable than younger generations during the first and second waves of the pandemic in these societies due to their frailty and greater risk of severe infection and mortality from COVID-19. They have faced constraints on their mobility and ongoing care, as well as difficulty in finding continuing employment and livelihood support during lockdowns.

The pandemic is intersecting with a trend of demographic aging in the global South that has already compounded the precarities faced by older populations in recent decades. These demographic shifts raise critical issues pertaining to family, kinship, and shared spaces of work and care. A majority of those above 65 years of age in South Asia and Africa belong to extended families, comprising six persons or more and often forming co-residential households.

Policymakers across Asia, Latin America, and Africa have been largely unprepared for the challenges posed by a rapidly growing older population that needs dedicated support for health care and social pensions. They have done little to bolster these chronically underfunded sectors, even though it is evident that migrations for work and globalized mobility among younger people have consequences for family-based care. At the same time, the social capital and societal potential of longer lives is barely recognized outside of traditional family hierarchies and networks.

This historic conjunction of overlapping crises, both demographic and pandemic-related, has implications far beyond the immediate situation. By its historical framing, the idea of "crisis" implies a critical turning point or rupture that necessitates choices and transformations. This crisis has exposed the "endemic risks" experienced by aging persons in environments where individual initiative and adaptation are stressed, invoking the virtues of family support and blaming risky lifestyle choices, instead of calling for collective, systemic support and investment in health care and welfare for older persons.

Thus, the question is whether we should frame the challenges of COVID-19 and aging in the global South simply as a unique medical and health crisis, or as recurring, interlinked socioeconomic and moral crises that require decisions to be made about implementing reforms. If we opt for the former and persist with medical metaphors of suffering and immunity, focusing mostly on questions of epidemiological origins and of eradicating COVID-19 through technoscientific cures, we will let slip an opportunity to make necessary, transformational choices for our societies.

NOT JUST A NUMBER

Who are the "aged" or "aging" populations to which we refer as we assess the impacts of COVID-19 in the global South? There are no homogeneous

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generalizations that can be made about who counts as "aging." The United Nations defines aging in chronological terms and associates it with those who are 65 years old or above. But apart from such designated global thresholds of population aging, it is apparent that there is vast diversity and difference in people's experiences, based on place, race, class, caste, and gender disparities.

COVID-19 can also severely affect those who are chronologically in their fifties or sixties, but have had an early toll taken on their biological health and are already experiencing frailty. The threat posed by COVID-19 among the most marginalized, dependent aging populations is particularly acute in societies with long histories of poverty, under-nourishment, and deprivation. They often have a far wider, more vulnerable older population than is conventionally estimated—one that is dependent on the strength of intergenerational and social ties. An assessment of the crisis faced by older persons during the pandemic is incomplete if we view their needs as siloed, separate from other social ties.

The severe health risks associated with the COVID-19 crisis are intimately tied to longer-term, structural health care challenges that precede the pandemic. These challenges especially include the effects of economic recessions after the 2008 global financial crisis and neoliberal policies that have left older persons with diminished access to state-subsidized health care, social security, and pensions. The labor and productivity of youth have consistently attracted investment from governments, but policymakers' consideration of older persons and their potential has remained siloed.

Private investors have focused on older persons as consumers who can be targeted in a growing "silver" market in real estate, drugs, and devices—in Asia, for instance. But this leaves out an invisible majority of the aged who must navigate daily, "lived" crises with minimal health coverage and savings. In the global South, older persons, especially those dependent on long-term care, are more than ever characterized as a liability for the state in the crisis caused by the pandemic.

Long-term care for older persons in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa is not situated primarily in institutional settings such as old age homes, as it is in the West. Instead, most such care is provided in shared, co-residential, domestic spaces. Older adults also typically practice self-care in neighborhood parks, with group exercises such as yoga, and in informal community programs in temples, mosques, and churches. The COVID-19 lockdowns have brought a disconnection in access to and benefits from these forms of care. Families and their social and moral commitments to caregiving and burden-sharing have been severely challenged by pandemic-related public health measures and their economic and social effects.

FRAGILE FAMILIES

There is a close, fragile interdependence between and within families and kinship networks that are held together in caring for both children and older persons. Often this care—and both material and emotional support—is provided by young wage earners. Any loss of income for adolescents or adults in the workforce—or their illness and death—thus has dramatic and direct implications for the elderly.

In South Africa, older generations who were born in the apartheid era (1948–94) have suffered from related trauma and vulnerability; with family poverty exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS crisis, they are already embedded in reciprocal and interdependent relationships. More than 60 percent of HIV/AIDS orphans live in grandparent-headed households. Grandparents have also nursed and cared for their own sick children while also caring for grandchildren, often relying on state-sponsored pensions that support both old and young. In such ways, aging populations are embedded in fragile, reciprocal relationships, with a hierarchy of needs that stretches between various members of each family.

In the spring of 2020, one of the initial effects of lockdowns in South Asia and Africa was a huge migration of the informal labor force from cities. Except for health care and other essential services, everything closed as cities entered long lockdowns—Dhaka's lasted 66 days. As young workers returned to their villages, older people, women, and children who relied on their incomes were exposed not only to COVID-19 infections, but also to a growing gap in their ability to secure food and other essentials. Meanwhile, older persons, who were often employed in part-time labor in nearby villages and towns, also lost their jobs, especially

Now more than ever, older adults are characterized as a liability for the state.

older women who had found employment in domestic labor outside their households. The lockdowns disrupted public assistance programs, and access to food was a particular challenge for older people, given their reduced mobility.

In Dhaka, amid a struggle among the urban poor for access to government relief, older people were particularly vulnerable. A requirement to show an identity card in order to obtain relief left them more reliant on younger members of their families and communities, since older persons often have high rates of illiteracy and low mobility, and lack access to technology. At the same time, the young were also under great economic pressure: many had lost jobs in the retail, wholesale, construction, and garment sectors, in an economy where 85 percent or more of the workforce is engaged in informal wage activities and casual labor. Informal workers typically lack job protection or health and unemployment benefits.

VALUES AND VISIBILITY

So far, the conjuncture represented by the COVID-19 crisis and the needs and rights of older persons has not translated rhetoric (often voiced by senior UN officials) into reform or rupture. Older people are invisible and erased, assumed to be "safe" and cared for in domestic spaces, looked after by heroic family members. State and local governments have had mostly regulatory roles, enforcing pandemic rules, and have offered limited interventions, such as cash transfers or food rations.

A 2020 study of some 5,000 Indian older adults by HelpAge India found that more than 60 percent felt socially isolated among their families, had experienced stress, and faced care challenges. It also found that more than 65 percent had lost their jobs in the past year. South India–based nongovernmental organizations such as Era Nenjam reported that they were receiving four calls a day reporting abandoned elderly people in cities, many left at bus stops or near government hospitals. India has a law, the Maintenance and Welfare of Older Parents Act (2007), that makes elder abandonment and abuse a crime, but there are rarely any tribunals to deter it; cases seldom are filed by parents.

Some groups have sought to counteract such behavior. Volunteer agencies in Chennai have tried to help older persons, offering meal deliveries and pickups to go for medical checks. But elderly people living alone in cities such as Chennai say that they have encountered problems in trying to join these networks. They particularly face challenges related to technological access to medical care. This highlights the interrelated bodily, social, and technological dimensions of the pandemic.

No easy solutions present themselves for addressing these complex dimensions of COVID-19 for aging populations in the global South. A first step must be to recognize that such social and public health challenges will be recurring and endemic if the elderly are overlooked. But realistically, policy shifts can happen only if we make visible the social capital of older persons, which consists of their social networks, quality of contacts and bonds, emotional wisdom, and ability to bridge generations and communities. Both material and moral reasons place them at the heart of the imperative to build a values-based and resocialized public health system during and after this pandemic. ■

Modern Epics

JOSHUA LUSTIG

Is fiction suited to handling the hardest cases among contemporary global events, like the exodus of millions of people displaced from their homes and countries? In attempting through the novel to demonstrate how world-historical forces shape the lives of individuals, is there not a risk of sentimentalizing or trivializing unspeakable tragedy? Or worse, appropriating lives in extremis for the sake of providing a few hours' entertainment for a comfortably distanced Western audience, which may experience a passing frisson of empathy before casually moving on?

The Wrong End of the Telescope
Rabih Alameddine
Grove Press, 2021

Some novelists surely do fall into these traps, while others stay on safer ground. But a few have been more successful in drawing on the resources and freedoms of this most capacious literary form to capture the border-crossing extremes of human drama, of lives thrown into flight from war and poverty. If done well, a novel can treat such themes with unique depth, taking the materials provided by journalism—or even social science research—and bringing them to life with the techniques of literary fiction: imaginative associations and conjunctures, subtle shadings of character, explorations of interiority and ambiguous motivations, suggestive situations lit by flashes of transfiguring irony. The use of these powerful tools on the material of epic human suffering requires sensitivity as well as daring.

In his latest novel, *The Wrong End of the Telescope*, Rabih Alameddine displays these qualities to impressive effect. He has written a highly distinctive account of the refugee crisis that unfolded in the past few years on the easternmost Greek islands, as tens of thousands fleeing war and poverty in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere risked a treacherous sea crossing from the Turkish coast to reach what they hoped would be sanctuary and prosperity within the promised land of the European Union.

What sets Alameddine apart from most other chroniclers of the refugee drama is that he dares to use humor in what is objectively a deadly serious context. And his sense of humor has a strong tinge of camp, slipping often into bawdiness. Of encountering an Iraqi refugee couple, a pair of bearded gay men, a Palestinian aid worker recalls, "I turned around, and before me was my ultimate sexual fantasy. Mamma mia!" He coaches the men on how to adopt a slightly "less masculine" self-presentation in order to convince the European gatekeepers of their gayness and hence of their need for asylum.

Although one of Alameddine's notable accomplishments is drawing attention to the presence of sexual minorities among the usually undifferentiated mass of refugees, at first this tone may seem off-putting, even outrageous, to a reader expecting a more solemn register: What is this frivolity doing in a portrayal of Moria, the notoriously squalid refugee camp on Lesbos, the shame of Europe? Moreover, his narrator is a transgender doctor from Chicago who volunteers to spend a few of her winter days off helping with a new influx of arrivals on the island. Will this complicated Western identity be just another distraction from a proper regard for the human misery at hand?

Yet Mina, the narrator, turns out to be not quite the outsider she seems at first glance. She is also very much an insider, a Lebanese emigrée with Syrian roots. Repeatedly she experiences shocks of recognition in her series of brief encounters with various refugees: these are her people, sharing the same Levantine culture in which she grew up. Some of them even resemble certain relatives of hers, living or dead. The first sentence of the novel, recording an immediate impression on her arrival at the airport on Lesbos, sets this motif in motion: "He was my people, kneaded of the same hands."

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Alameddine avoids rendering this connection as a sentimental kind of ethnic solidarity. Mina is thoroughly alienated from her own family, which disowned her when she came out as trans, and has not returned to her home city of Beirut since leaving for America forty years before. Mina is also a former refugee herself in a more literal (if privileged) way, having been sent off to British and American boarding schools during the Lebanese civil war. Although she stayed in America, she is not entirely at home there either. A US battleship destroyed her childhood home.

Also present on Lesbos is a novelist resembling the real author, another Lebanese emigré in his sixties, who keeps nearly running into Mina, becoming ever more distraught after interviewing some of the refugees. Finally Mina and her companions find him dining alone at a restaurant and insist that he join them. He testifies to a compulsion to bear witness, not in obedience to some universal humanist principle, but because these are his people, too. Yet the witnessing of such misery has shattered his nerves. He urges Mina to substitute for him and write the story of the island.

The novel is set a few years ago, at the end of 2015—the year Angela Merkel took the astonishingly humane step of leaving Germany's borders open to the surge of refugees from the war zones on the Mediterranean periphery and beyond. But as the characters converge on Lesbos, the mood has already changed with the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, followed by mass sexual assaults allegedly perpetrated by migrants in German cities on New Year's Eve. The openings in Europe's armor are closing. The populist right is rising on a wave of anti-immigrant anger.

CLOSE ENOUGH?

Some of Alameddine's satire skewers Western NGO workers, volunteers, and journalists for their general cluelessness and occasional biases concerning the recipients of their well-meaning attentions. But what about other novelists? Does it take someone with similar origins and experiences—someone positioned between cultures—to do justice to a story like the refugee crisis?

The prominent German novelist Jenny Erpenbeck published *Go, Went, Gone* in 2015 (the English translation appeared in 2017), the peak year of the crisis Alameddine portrays. But Erpenbeck took her cue from an earlier episode:

a 2012–14 occupation of a park in Berlin's Kreuzberg district by African asylum seekers protesting their treatment. Erpenbeck's narrator, Richard, is a retired professor of classical philology, and a widower. At first the novel seems ponderous, lugubrious; it lacks Alameddine's playful style and his narrator's sense of direct connection with the outsiders. But Erpenbeck gradually reveals that Richard, like Mina, is a kind of double refugee himself. As a former East Berliner, he spent much of his life under a vanished regime. When he was a small boy, after World War II, he and his parents were among the 2.5 million Germans expelled from the Sudetenland.

Richard takes an interest in the Africans and starts volunteering as a German teacher. In his conversations with the men, they tell him their stories of war, atrocity, dispossession, and harrowing journeys. As with Alameddine, these tragic tales are clearly based on conscientious ethnographic research by the author. Yet the reader may wonder whether this approach—limiting each refugee to relatively brief testimony, rather than allowing their narrations to expand to fit the epic scope of their stories—makes the most of the novelist's resources. Both Alameddine and Erpenbeck scatter mythological references throughout their novels, yet both authors seem more interested in showing how contact with migrants awakens old memories and bittersweet emotions in their volunteer-narrators than in attempting to take the full measure of the odysseys of these modern-day Ulysses figures.

Perhaps it takes someone who has experienced the odyssey firsthand to do it justice. The novel is not the only medium suited for this task. One of the most memorable works about the refugee experience that I've encountered is a 2017 video by the Iraqi artist Hiwa K, *Pre-Image (Blind as the Mother Tongue)*. Like Alameddine, Hiwa K uses humor as a means of drawing an audience into what might otherwise be forbiddingly grim material. But in his case, Hiwa K is reenacting his own epic journey from Kurdistan to Athens on foot. He does so while balancing a metal pole festooned with small mirrors on his forehead, as if performing a circus routine. Is this feat meant to symbolize the self-reflection that occupies a solitary trek? Or are the mirrors being held up to those of us in the West who observe the stranger's approach with sympathy or dread? ∎