

Volume V

October 2024

A Hoot About The World

Shifting Currents:
Migration, Democracy
and Truth



CONTENTS

A Hoot About the World - Volume V

Masthead

Editor's Letter

Elias Orrego

Citizens on the Move

Immigration's Impact on Society

Isabella Spiegel & Santiago Orillac

Petro's Colombia

Blind Trust, Uncertain Future

Antonia Forero

Bukele's Iron Fist

Clear Results, Controversial Methods

Nicolas Van Hoorde

Cartels in Control

Mexico's Internal Struggle

Lauren DeSaint Malo

Weaponizing Misinformation

The Backbone of Hama's Strategy

Ana Matilde Zarak & Ana Lucia Leignadier

Will Democracy Vote Against Itself

Elias Orrego

A Hoot About The World

October 2024 - Volume V

EDITORS

Lead Editor, Elias Orrego

Antonia Forero

Nicolas Vanhoorde

Ana Matilde Zarak

Diego Castellero

Santiago Orillac

DESIGN

Heads of Design, Lara Ricardo & Gabriela Medina

Lauren De Saint Malo

Ana Lucia Leignadier

Isabella Spiegel

Juan Pablo Berberian

PRODUCERS

Executive Producer, Natalia Castellero

Maria De Lourdes Preciado

Saul Motta

Mario Tejeira

Published by



AIP's International Relations Class

Project advisor: Marina Boyd

WRITERS



Elias Orrego

Elias Orrego is a dedicated and ambitious student very passionate about topics ranging from mathematics to international relationships and literature. Outside of school, he participates in many activities ranging from the math Olympics to debate. As one of the five members of the debate national team, he travelled to Serbia to compete in the World Schools Debate Championship, where his love for international relationships helped him debate complex topics like France's exit from West Africa, for example. Apart from this, Elias is also very passionate about sports and competition. He constantly competes in tennis tournaments, looking to follow the steps of his idol Novak Djokovic. Recently, he also founded the AIP running team to share his love for running with his peers. Using his knowledge of foreign affairs, Elias brings to us an insightful article about the state of the democracy in the world. Questioning its rule as the top system of government.



Lauren De Saint Malo

Lauren De Saint Malo is a dedicated student with great organization skills. She is a born perfectionist and always works hard towards achieving her goals. In her free time, Lauren enjoys dancing, baking, and going to coffee shops to study. She has been a key member of AIP Press Corps Team due to her devotion towards photography and design. Besides this gift, Lauren is very passionate about sciences and is looking forward to studying medicine and specializing in either neurology or dermatology. Since she was a little girl, she discovered a love for writing and her dream is to one day write a book about her future medicine studies. In her article "Cartels in Control, Mexico's internal Struggles", Lauren explores the consequences of what is known today as a Narco State. She explains in detail what is causing this issue and tackles the history behind the great drug empire present nowadays. What Lauren is most interested in is making a positive impact in the world and leaving an important contribution to society.



Santiago Orillac

Santiago Orillac is a lifelong student of AIP and a representative of the school's values who has a strong passion for world history, ranging from the medieval to the modern. He puts character and education as the highest of values. He is a student of international relations and French where he hopes to attain the values necessary to study cultures and issues around the world. As an aspiring engineer, Santiago values greatly the importance of science courses ranging from mathematics to physics and chemistry. He is an active member in his local religious and cultural community where he hopes to be a role model for future generations not just in his school, but in his wider community.



Antonia Forero

Antonia Forero is a resourceful and determined young student that is actively involved in AIP for paws and Operación Sonrisa Panamá. Besides being an important member of the female soccer team of the school, she has participated in the Physics Olympics and is a friend worth admiring. She is passionate when it comes to helping others by doing whatever she can. She stands by what she believes in and fights for her position and for the respect of others. In her article, "Blind Trust, Blurred Future: When Voting Blindly Leads to Chaos", Antonia addresses the importance of knowing the context and the person when choosing new leaders.

WRITERS

Nicolas Van Hoorde

Nicolas Van Hoorde is a disciplined young man with a wide range of interests. He is as passionate for football and basketball, as he is for numbers and debate. Sports play a significant part in his life. He believes that the benefits one gets from playing different sports is unmatched, and that one should always practice them. The anxiety relief and peace one gets from sports are benefits that many neglect. With this peace, Nicolas likes to focus on intellectual conflicts like debate and math. Understanding the language of numbers gives Nicolas a feeling of accomplishment, and diving into intellectual debates gives him a feeling of personal growth. These activities and their outcomes are what define Nicolas. In his article, Nicolas tries to give an unbiased overview of the latest intellectual debate he has immersed himself in. He explains what El Salvador's president Nayib Bukele has done for his country, and the controversial ways through which he has done this.



Ana Lucia Leignadier

Ana Lucia Leignadier, best known as Lucci, is a very decisive, caring and organized companion. She's been involved in a life full of arts, from dancing since young, to traveling and appreciating artworks at museums all around the world. Lucci has been part of the school musical AIP Theatre for three years now, where she has demonstrated talent and discipline acquired in her cherished ballet academy. Additionally, she enjoys having intellectually stimulating conversations with professors, classmates, and professionals who share the same interests as her. To compliment her caring personality, she talks about the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the amount of misinformation spreading through our generation in her article, given the effect of rising numbers of protests.



Ana Matilde Zarak

Ana Matilde Zarak is a passionate learner with a love for good books and journaling. Ana always puts her best efforts into her favorite activities and always tries to help society around her. She loves bonding with her dad over political economy and engaging in fiery debates both with him and with others. Her love for debate and speaking goes with her anywhere she goes, either in a serious debate or a simple talk with her family, Ana's love for discussion shines a fire bigger than herself. She is an avid helper and is currently the president of Girl Up AIP, where she channels her passion for justice into fun activities and creative learning experiences. When she is not learning or speaking, she is trying to make people around her laugh and feel loved with her loud personality. Ana hopes to study law and be a lawyer in the near future to be able to help her country get a step closer to justice and stability. Her co-written article delves into the complexities of present-day campus protests and the world's struggle with misinformation.



Isabella Spiegel

Isabella Spiegel is a creative and aspiring soul seeking to make the world a better place. Isabella continuously contributes to society participating in organizations that prioritize helping families of scarce resources have better educations by visiting schools throughout the whole country and collecting donations to help improve the country's well-being and social harmony. Her creativity shines with theater as she has been participating for three years on the school's play 'AIP Theater'. Singing and dancing are also key to helping those around her. Doing internships in different organizations that concentrate on dance and music as well as education, Isabella has found a way to use her talents and strengths to influence a better future for her surroundings. Isabella aspires to be a psychologist as she wants to continue helping society through mental health, education, and the formation of a better society.



DESIGN



Lara Ricardo

Lara Ricardo is a compassionate individual whose unusual comments light up everyone's day. She seems extremely shy when you first meet her but once you get to know her, you'll know she never stops talking. Lara is a part of the design and production team of this magazine. She used her creative and artistic side to design this whole magazine. Lara is a passionate girl who hyper-fixes over every small experience she faces. Lara has been involved in multiple extracurricular activities throughout most of her teenage years. She was a part of the Debate club for 4 years and is currently a part of the "Women In Stem Club". She enjoys most of her free time talking with her friends, reading, rewatching her favorite movies or listening to music every second of her day.



Gabriela Medina

Gabriela Medina is an efficient and compassionate student who loves to do creative activities in her spare time. She has a way of always finding the positive side to any negative situation that might arise. As part of the leadership committee of Girl-up she hopes to make an impact on young girls from different backgrounds and ethnicities and to empower women to make the most out of their lives. She's also very about reading and how people can evolve and change their life by reading self-help books. She also loves to make people happy with food, she's a great baker and loves to spend quality time with her friends and family. As the head of design of this magazine she strives to make quality images and designs that communicate a clear picture of what the articles in this magazine are trying to communicate to the reader.



Juan Pablo Berberian

Juan Pablo is an ambitious young man who merges his passion for sports with his love for numbers and knack for critical thinking. Excelling in his competition at the National Mathematics Olympics, Juan Pablo has been honing his analytical and creative skills to be able to take up his preferred major in business analytics. His commitment to excellence is equally evident on the soccer field, where he has represented his school's team since the 3rd grade. Through hard work and dedication, he has helped establish his school as a powerhouse both athletically and academically. On another note, he embraces challenges differently, though, for he is known to be care-free and has an unexplained way of finding humor and positivity in every situation. Juan Pablo brings that same sharpness, patience, and quality control to his editing, which is hopefully evident in his contribution to this magazine's article, "Cartels in Control, Mexico's internal Struggle".

PRODUCTION

Natalia Castellero

Natalia Castellero is a spirited communicator and an enthusiast for education, the stock market and most importantly sports. With an everlasting smile and an extremely passionate personality, she puts effort and all her heart into everything she does. Natalia is vice-president of the Finance and Business club at AIP, in which she enjoys discovering and planning events with various professionals in different fields of the business world. She is also Community Manager for the AIP Liga10 soccer team, in which she eagerly goes to all the games; besides school, she also works as a Community Manager for Grupo10, covering all types of games for Panama City Football Club. She aspires to study Public Relations with a possible minor in Sports Administration, hopefully to become a working woman in sports in the future. Natalia is the Executive Producer of the Hoot podcast, given that she has stellar communication skills to develop this project.



Maria De Lourdes Preciado

Maria de Lourdes Preciado or Lulu, as her friends call her, has always been interested in current geopolitical and socio-cultural conflicts and events around the globe. As an active member of the debate community, she usually discusses topics such as a migration crisis, abuse of power, and other human rights issues. She is also heavily involved in learning and spreading knowledge of topics such as how democracy is being threatened around the world. Lulu is also co-president of Girl Up, an organization that helps women strive forward in Panama while recollecting and learning about gender-based issues in the country. Being a dance teacher in her spare time, she loves dancing and especially teaching dance to children.



Mario Tejeira

Mario Tejeira is a young passionate for finance. He is working on the podcast as an interviewer. His unique way of working and seeing things can contribute to this work because of his particular approach and his funny personality that can take a smile out of everyone. Mario enjoys playing soccer and going to the gym and he is a warm person that likes to joke around and always finds a way of spending time with his friends and loved ones. A fun fact about him is that he is trying to teach himself French. He wants to use this experience to learn, not only about the experience itself and its topics, but also about how he can apply this acquired knowledge in the real world.



Saul Motta

Saul Motta is a sharp, insightful student with an interest in bringing light to what's often overlooked in any field or subject like the sun does at the break of dawn. Saul has a strong passion for learning languages. He's an outstanding student in French who was among the four fortunate students in his school who had a sojourn in Toulouse and who has, also, embarked on the task of learning Arabic, revealing his interest for the numerous cultures around the world and showing his wisdom to listen. In addition, Saul has a great interest in subjects like chemistry, physics, and philosophy, among others, exhibiting his concern in understanding the rules and systems that regulate life. Saul begins studying Law next year in the USMA. In this edition of *A Hoot About The World*, he interviews the two writers of the titled, Misinformation: The backbone of Hamas' devious strategy in providing a sketch and prequel to the article's contents. Following the ways of his heart and the sight of his eyes, he is sure to find joy and fulfillment in no matter the field or discipline. We wish him the best of luck in everything he does!



Diego Castellero

A disciplined student and very hard worker, Diego Castellero has shown results in multiple different areas that reflect his values. Academically, he is part of the AIP Debate Team and has participated in multiple international debates. He has even been selected to debate in WSDC 2024, the most prestigious world debate championship for students. But Diego is more than just brains. He has been awarded the school's "Buho de Oro" award for his hard work and outstanding performance while doing community service in a Panamanian village called 'Claros Abajo'. He is also a black belt in Karate and claims he has won more medals than he can count, including medals in the WSKF World Championship in Japan. In this edition of a 'Hoot About the World', Diego has edited articles on the importance of understanding the pros and cons of Bukele's rule of El Salvador, and on Hamas' manipulation of the populace by spreading misinformation. Overall, Diego is an outstanding student whose discipline and dedication will take him far.



EDITOR'S LETTER

The end of the Cold War in 1989 seemingly marked the triumph of democracy and the rules-based order, yet thirty years later, this doesn't seem as true as it once was. Democracies are struggling with polarization, dysfunction and misinformation. The international order has been fragmented as conflict continues in Gaza and Ukraine and autocracies ascend all around the globe. This year has been tumultuous as many democracies are in an election year and the fate of the system as we know it could be in danger.

Santiago Orillac and Isabella Spiegel provide an intriguing analysis to one of the most pressing issues of our time – immigration. Their article, *Citizens on the Move: Immigration's Impact on Society* delves into how the rising number of asylum-seekers, economic migrants, and internally displaced people impact specific states and the international order itself.

Antonia Forero then takes us to South America with her article *Petro's Colombia: Blind Trust, Uncertain Future*. Here she dives into why Colombians elected their first leftist president after opting for radical change, and what the consequences of this decision have been and could be in the future.

Nicolas Van Hoorde continues this issue with one of the most interesting debates of the moment. With his article *Bukele's Iron Fist: Clear Results, Controversial Methods* he analyzes the good and the ugly side behind everything Bukele has accomplished during his presidency, leaving us wondering if it justifies how he has done it.

The edition continues with its examination of political turmoil, as Lauren De Saint Malo's article *Cartel's in control, Mexico's Internal Struggle* gives us insight into the Mexican government's struggles with the infamous cartels. The article ends with a call to action for a better future for Mexico.

The issue then shifts to a more recent debate as Ana Matilde Zarak partners with Ana Lucia Leignadier in their article *Weaponizing Misinformation: The Backbone of Hamas' Strategy*. They discuss Hamas' use of social media as a key component in their battle for the hearts and minds of the international community.

This issue concludes with my take about the apparent shift from liberal democracy to authoritarianism. Electoral autocracies are on the rise, and liberal democracies seem dysfunctional and shackled by gridlock. In my article, *Will Democracy Vote Against Itself* I dive into this perplexing and alarming trend.

This issue of *A Hoot About the World* is a true overview of the concerning political trends that are creating instability and challenges throughout the world. Will this era mark the end of the liberal order? Will democracy prevail?

Citizens on the Move

Immigration's Impact on Society

Santiago Orillac & Isabella Spiegel

Chaos continues to rise as political conflict, civil wars, elections, inequality, and thousands of social despairs flood global headlines bringing attention to the humanitarian crisis around the world. The faint hope of a better life compels millions of people to leave their homes behind. Migration is a topic well known and discussed in many fields – from the US border to Pope Francis – the migration discussion holds immense sway. Despite the clear causes of mass migration (war, political instability, climate change, religious persecution, and economic decline), no possible solution has been suggested that can control or minimize the situation. According to the International Organization for Migration, in 2020, an estimate of 281 million migrants were spread around the world. Thousands of articles, data charts, speeches and political affairs have created and highlighted migrations origins. In this article, we will instead examine the political, cultural and humanitarian impact that immigration is causing around the world.



Political Polarization: The United States' Southern Border:

The southern border of the United States has been a historic hotspot for illegal immigration, human and drug trafficking, and a political divisiveness. The overwhelming majority of these immigrants come from Latin America, but in recent years, there has even been an increase in worldwide encounters. With over half a million people from hundreds of countries, ranging from China and Russia to India, Angola, and Mauritius, crossing into the United States per year. Recently, there have also been records of unattended children crossing the border, numbering over 120,000. These numbers have worsened considerably in the years following the Covid-19 pandemic. The Biden Administration, initially open to a somewhat lenient and loose immigration policy, has recently cracked down border crossings, but numbers remain high. Where are these immigrants from? Well, in recent years there has been a drop in the number of Mexicans crossing illegally followed by a sharp increase in Central Americans from Guatemala and Honduras, pressured by uncontrollable gang violence. Venezuelans are also greatly represented, as they desperately flee a horrific regime and economic hardship. The immigration question remains a deeply divisive issue in American society, one that could tear the country apart and change the nation's perception of immigrants completely.

Cultural Differences: European Backlash:

If immigration is a divisive issue in America, Europe is far ahead. Immigration has become one of the main pillars of European politics, with entire elections resting on a party's views on immigration. Leading to the rise of 'far right' parties across the continent. How did Europe go from being the most migrant friendly continent to and ever increasingly closed off from new arrivals. The 2015 migrant crisis hit Europe hard, hundreds of thousands of immigrants arrived, and nations, even though they did not have the proper recourses to maintain them all, welcomed them under a banner of inclusivity. Over the years, however, public perception has changed. Due to increasing radicalization from second and third generation immigrants and the rather low opportunities for new arrivals has led many of these immigrants into a cycle of crime and violence. For example, Sweden, the safest country in Europe a decade ago, most engulfed recently in mass gang wars across the country which prompted a state of emergency. Acts of Terrorism and gang crime has been used very potently by anti-immigration parties, who have become increasingly popular across Europe, securing immense victories in recent

state and continental elections against established parties. Many of their voters are young and disillusioned, and if they run on the immigration issue, their support will increase. Their success, however, is not inevitable. European parties are learning, slowly, that their immigration policy is not sustainable, and new legislation from the European parliament which will impose new restriction on immigration might have been a final nail in Europe's pro-migrant policy.

Humanitarian Crisis: El Darién, the Jungle of Despair

As immigration grows, the capacity of the 'dream destinations' for migrants all over the world has been greatly reduced. Because of this, said countries have begun limiting immigration, which has forced migrants to seek other routes to reach these destinations, albeit dangerous and illegal. One of the most prominent alternatives is Panama's Darien Gap, as 520,000 immigrants have crossed illegally in the past year. To cross, one must pay exorbitant prices for local guides, usually Colombian military or the Colombian Gulf Clan drug cartel. Constant exploitation, unsanitary conditions, and rampant sexual violence, make this journey one of the most dangerous in the world. Providing free healthcare, safe lodging, and transportation has proved to be a heavy burden on the Panamanian government, so the recently elected Jose Raul Mulino placed wired fence protected by Panamanian police forces, restricting migration even more. However, the key issue with immigration is that restricting it will do nothing to stop it. In any case, people will find other alternatives which may easily be even more dangerous and exploitative. So, the world must unite and listen. Will we find a way to make immigration sustainable, safe, and legal?

What's Next

Unfortunately, like most other articles, we cannot offer a prescriptive solution to the varied impacts of the current immigration crisis. As such a controversial and polarizing issue, we caution our readers to engage in nuanced debate and not fall prey to simplistic messages of blame or hate. This is a deeply complex issue that no leader, state, or system can address easily.



Petro's Colombia

Blind Trust, Uncertain Future

Antonia Forero

Colombia is a truly beautiful country blessed with rich biodiversity ranging from beaches to the rainforest, a vibrant culture and music industry, and natural resources such as flowers and coffee. But Colombia is also a country plagued by guerrilla violence and drug cartels. Colombia is also like many other Latin American countries as it has struggled the past twenty years with weak governance, rampant corruption, and ineffective leadership. This trend continues with Colombia's current president, Gustavo Petro. This man is a polarizing figure with a complex past, and his presidency has been turbulent and divisive. In order to evaluate his presidency, one must become much more aware of his origins and early political career.

Born in 1960 in Córdoba, Colombia, Petro moved to a town near the capital of the country and began involving himself in labor movements. When he was only 17, Petro joined the M-19. This organization is a Colombian guerrilla that wanted to implement their socialist regime throughout the country. Just as most guerrilla groups, it started as one which looking for a better country but that got awry and corrupted along the way, to the point of carrying out kidnappings, robberies, and attacks that caused massacres. The most famous one was the siege of the Palace of Justice in 1985. During this siege, the guerrilla's militants took hostages and demanded the annulment of a decree to extradite drug traffickers to the United States, and the military response was so violent that it caused a fire in the building leading to more than 100 deaths and missing people, including 11 magistrates. Actions like these were constantly committed by the M-19 and forever marked both the memory of the Colombian people and the history of Petro and his political career.



But why did Petro join the guerrilla in the first place? He has stated that it all began when he saw his father cry over the death of Che Guevara. At that time, the era of 'La Violencia' in Colombia had just ravaged the country, affecting the entire population and awakening in Petro the need to fight against the feudal oligarchy that was enriching itself at the expense of others. He was never a combatant during his time with the M-19; however, in 1985, he was arrested for illegal possession of arms and served 18 months in prison. Despite this criminal and complicated past, he was able to shift into politics. He was elected as councilman by the National Popular Alliance in 1981 and served as town councilor from 1984 to 1986. He also served as the mayor of Bogotá from 2012 to 2015, but he was removed from office due to his poor management.

Colombia's Pendulum swings left

It's a bit ironic that, knowing this man's past, people would want him as president, but 50.48% of Colombians thought otherwise. Petro's third and final attempt to reach the presidency came when the country was deeply struggling with rising inequality, violence, and inflation, and people's discontent led them to vote against the usual centrist and right-wing politicians. Unfortunately, conditions have led people to prefer voting for a candidate just to oppose the rival, without truly understanding who they are voting for. They led people to opt for the most radical option. That's how Petro won, by promising drastic change. He promised ambitious reforms in pensions, taxes, and healthcare, as well as strengthening strategies to combat drug trafficking and crime. Now, has this man kept his word regarding what he proposed?

Petro's presidency has sparked discussions about his ineffectiveness, and his administration is the very definition of that word: ineffective. The truth is that he has not been able to fight the country's most important issues, such as violence, poverty, and corruption. This is something seen throughout Latin America, but those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it, creating an endless cycle of despair. Petro's promises have been carried away by the wind, and the country continues to suffer from armed groups and drug traffickers, despite peace agreements. The number of murdered social leaders has increased while the currency's value has decreased, seriously questioning his commitment to the people who trusted him and who seek peace, justice, and equality. His relationship with the media has also deteriorated, as he labels those who dare to criticize him as liars, resulting in harassment and intimidation, undermining the supposed democratic principles his government claims to uphold. In the end, the people are left with nothing but their shattered hopes and no good leader to fulfill them.

This is how Petro slowly became just another one of those who achieved nothing, those who promised heaven in earth but delivered nothing. The consequences of having a president like this are overwhelming, as they involve the integrity of the country and its citizens, who are seen under a shady light by many for electing such an immoral person as president. Democracy is also at stake. Petro is known to have been a very close ally of Hugo Chavez, even saying that he was 'a great Latin American president,' and this worries those who value freedom. Polarization is also one of the greatest consequences, as one of Petro's main strategies in his campaigns was to make the opposing parties look like enemies, causing great rivalry in a country that does not need more internal problems. Colombia needs people who support each other and a good leader they can trust. Currently, there are not many options to choose from, but it is still important to know the context of individuals to at least consider the risk of electing them as our presidents. It is clear that a candidate with a history of failures and crimes should not even be considered, and that is why we must strive to ensure that history does not repeat itself.





COMING SOON...



EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT INTO HOOT'S
CREATIVE PROCESS

Bukele's Iron Fist

Clear Results, Controversial Methods

Nicolas Van Hoorde

The “world’s coolest dictator” has shaken up El Salvador. With mass trials, he has transformed the most dangerous country in the world into one of the safest. With his outrageous but effective actions he has done what no one has been able to do before. There has been controversy around his actions because to do this he has had to violate the human rights of many Salvadorians. The dilemma is: do the ends justify the means?

Nayib Bukele was born on the 24th of July of 1981. He started his political career as mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlán, his small hometown, just 15 minutes away of San Salvador. He was at first a member of FMLN (a leftist party that was once a guerrilla) but he then chose to run for president under a new banner. In 2019, with very little political experience, he ran with the Grand Alliance for National Unity (GANA). Despite being an outsider, he won by a significant margin. He campaigned on a classic message of populist blame, and promised to reduce crime. Bukele was quite innovative with his communication style (effective use of social media), and strongly appealed to both Millennials and Gen Z voters. Bukele is still incredibly popular, and was recently reelected for his second term, something that had only just recently been sanctioned in El Salvador. His claim to fame has been the radical and rapid reduction in crime in El Salvador – once known as the murder capital of the world, Bukele has single-handedly thwarted the epidemic of gang violence. How has the “coolest dictator” achieved all this?

Bukele implemented the Plan Control Territorial to attack the problem of gang violence in El Salvador. It consisted of increasing military presence on gang-controlled areas; cutting off the gang’s resources; creating programs, jobs and education to prevent the youth from joining gangs; and to use technology and surveillance cameras to dismantle gang operations. In response to Bukele’s plan, on March 25, 2022 El Salvador’s MS13 gang murdered 87 people in 3 days. This led to Bukele instituting a 30-day “state of exception” to address the problem. This legislation allows the government to suspend various rights of Salvadorians. With this power, the Legislative Assembly approved a bill authorizing mass trials for up to 900 suspects at a time, which goes against due process and therefore violates human rights.

Additionally, authorities could arrest anyone that they considered suspicious, with no definition of what suspicious is; detainees are not entitled to any legal defense; the right to gather in groups of more than two got suspended; and all minors go to trial as adults. Bukele has imprisoned tens of thousands of Salvadorians, many without much evidence or access to due process, and the state of exception is still in effect over two years later.

Have these extreme measures been effective? In a word, yes. In three years, he has brought the murder rates from 21.2 to 2.4 murders per 100k inhabitants. He has successfully transformed El Salvador from the most dangerous country to one of the safest in the world.

Bukele's methods have been effective but do not respect human rights. From the moment suspects are captured, they lose all communication with the outside world. Families know nothing about them for years. The only news that comes out of prisons are of some people dying and of all of them living in scarce and painful conditions. The government has a quota of capturing at least 2 people a day. This fuels many doubtful and unfair imprisonments. Most of the captured are arrested without much evidence. Some human rights groups argue that this is state-sponsored terrorism and that there have been hundreds of extrajudicial killings by the government.

We need to be aware of all the human right violations and innocent people suffering; we need to be aware of all the power that Bukele is gaining, and of all the rights that the people are giving up; but we cannot neglect the safety and peace he has brought to El Salvador. Does the peace and safety of most Salvadorian citizens outweigh the unlawful mass trials and imprisonments of thousands?



ASTRA 2024

• 1983 •



SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 18 & 19
2024

Cartels in Control

Mexico's Internal Struggle

Lauren De Saint Malo

Perhaps you've watched countless Narco TV shows on Netflix and were shocked by their content, but the truth is, the harsh reality behind them is even more brutal. While these shows often dramatize events for entertainment, the real-life violence can be far more extreme. Drug cartels are responsible for thousands of brutal killings, and for fostering corruption in their country. El Chapo, one of the most famous drug kingpins from these shows, is from the one and only Mexican Society. Many drug trafficking countries, specifically Mexico, are achieving more power each time. Drug cartels are everywhere, and they are expanding their influence all over the world, primarily in Latin America. This is deeply destabilizing the region and a humanitarian crisis as well.

So, what is a Narco State? The word Narco State is a political and economic term applied to countries where all legitimate institutions become captured or trapped by the power and wealth of the illegal drug trade. In a Narco State the government is heavily influenced or even controlled by these drug traffickers and criminal organizations leading to corruption, violence, and instability of the country.

The Origins of Cartel Control

Mexico is known to be one of the most prominent Narco States in Latin America. However, this has been building up since a long time ago due to its long history of political instability. Mexico has always had a wealthy elite, but also, a large population living in pure poverty. For most of the 20th century, starting in 1910, Mexico's political system was dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). During this period, the PRI maintained control in the country, and it massively encouraged a culture of corruption. Criminals, like drug lords, took advantage of this period of instability to start building their empires. Since then, successive governments have been trying to break the power of these criminal organizations, but their efforts were in vain and hobbled by the corruption.

Mexico's involvement with drug cartels quickly began to escalate in the 1980s. The cartels from Colombia started joining forces with Mexico for their cocaine shipments to the U.S. This led to the rise of Mexico's own drug cartels, including the famous Guadalajara Cartel which became deeply involved in the Drug World. By the 1990s other several drug cartels started emerging, such as the Sinaloa Cartel, the Juarez Cartel and the Tijuana Cartel. Obviously, due to the growing number of drug cartels in the region, violence started significantly increasing. The birth of these new groups radically transformed the drug trade business inside Mexico. The cartels went from simply buying and selling drugs to using torture, human trafficking, kidnapping and gruesome murder. All issues that are still present today.

In 2006, another effort to fight the narco corruption was made. President Felipe Calderón sent military forces to combat the powerful drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. Drug cartels have always existed but they weren't the powerful violent organizations which came to existence in the 1990s. This was when the rise of organized and profitable drug trafficking in the region began. The money these cartels started receiving radically transformed them from loose groups to fully criminal organizations with operations beyond narcotics. The cartels began to hire private armies of enforcers to protect their sacred markets. This intervention, however, led to a bigger escalation in violence and conflicts between cartels and security forces.

Consequences and Crimes

Being considered a Narco State, such as Mexico is, entails numerous consequences. As you all know, “trends” are very common in Latin America, and they spread faster than rumors. That is precisely what makes the growth and expansion of Narco States a dangerous issue. Influences are caught rapidly and throughout Latin America countries such as Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Venezuela, Honduras, and even more are already hopping on this Narco State trend. Tens of thousands of people die in the turf wars between drug cartels, and homicide rates are soaring while an atmosphere of fear and insecurity spreads through the country. Cartels compete for control over drug trafficking routes, leading to assassination, kidnappings, and extortions. Unfortunately, this is not just affecting the cartel members, but even worse, it spills into local communities causing fear and instability in the whole country. Societally, the impact that living in a Narco State leaves in any citizen's life is enormous. The experience of trauma, displacement, and hardship reinforces poverty and inequality. Emigration has also sparked due to people's fear of violence. Approximately 100,000 to 150,000 Mexicans have left home to seek safety and opportunities elsewhere and it is very alarming. People must get educated about organized crime and Narco States.



Mexico's Future

Though in no way an easy feat, if Mexico can step up and root out impunity by all those entrenched in organized crime, then it may have a chance of salvation. But it is also apparent that Mexican law enforcement will need to be overhauled, the rule of law strengthened, and effective judicial institutions established to combat Mexico's well-entrenched drug cartels. Focusing on making economic and political reforms that offer alternatives to drug money, reinforcement of education, and social programs directly impact fewer people involved in crime —most pointedly, the youth. It also makes working with other states that are occupying the global space for potential major importing countries essential. In such a reality, civil society, represented by journalists, activists, and community leaders, is crucial to make the government accountable for its actions and crime syndicates for their crimes. Mexico, a country where justice often seems to favor criminals and where impunity has given years of advantage to organized crime and those turning to violence to solve problems, could find new hope through a brave, determined young generation demanding a brighter future, free from the grip of organized crime.



Weaponizing Misinformation

The Backbone of Hamas' Strategy

Ana Matilde Zarak & Ana Lucia Leignadier

This April 2024, Sahar Tartak, a young Jewish student at Yale, was doing nothing but film and observe an ongoing pro-Palestinian protest, when suddenly, she was stabbed in the eye by a protester wielding a Palestinian flag.

To understand how these inhumane actions come to be in institutions so far away from the Israel-Palestine conflict, we first must understand how public opinion has been shaped by this conflict.

How did a conflict so far away end up closing institutions? What is Hamas' strategy to effectively misinform people and strategically make protests erupt around the world? Why are college students especially so prone to both misinformation and protests?

While Israel is being accused of genocide in Gaza, Hamas is actively violating numerous human rights. It is a group that walks through mind-numbing patterns of violence, bloodshed and death. Even though it has all the ingredients of a group that can fail, Hamas has managed to play its cards and manipulate the stories of victims and the unceasing war worldwide.

The group's strategy has been to misinform thousands across the world. By using deceiving lies, powerful social media platforms like TikTok, and understanding their audience, this terrorist group has changed the cards of war now. People all around the world have actually been able to side with Hamas' savage strategy and goal.

Misinformation is fomenting more violence rather than helping share awareness and culturize people who are unaware of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Social media platforms that are available for everyone have as much power as a traditional weapon of war. The danger is that they are used by millions around the world as a source of information and therefore can create mass movements instantly where others can get inspired and act upon radical ideas.

As the war continues, day by day, both sides are having casualties and seeing their resistances being deceived. We have also been seeing protests on college campuses, which are provoking harm and uncomfortable environments.



Columbia University, University of Southern California, University of Michigan are among many universities that have felt the necessity to shut down in-person graduation ceremonies and classes because of the dangers that these protests bring.

Students around the world are prone to mass movements as they are learning how to think freely and find a purpose or a meaning. Because of this, Hamas' enterprise has been a popular one amongst many, and their cause is spreading faster than anticipated.

Hence, over the past few months, protests have taken college campuses: in the US and other nations by storm. Mostly revolving around the Israel-Palestine conflict, students have gone to measures such as camping outside the campus, disrupting open days, and closing buildings.

Though passive at most, there is an underlying violence lingering around these protests; some have decided to halt education and use violence and vandalism to gain attention using a conflict happening on the other side of the world as a justification.

Student protests have been organized, strategic, and clever, using attention as their primary weapon. The truth is that these students need to learn to practice what they preach and stop acting like victims of a cause different from theirs. Instead of practicing free speech and choice they are stopping thousands of other students from taking classes and taking away their right to educate themselves.

Student protests stopped being about defending a cause a long time ago, they are turning into a source of performative activism, violence, vandalism, and even meaning to those students who do not feel as if they are a part of something.

The protests have taken place globally and are definitely changing the way student activists are perceived, mostly for the worse. With their main goal being seeking attention, debate has increased over the legitimacy and usefulness of these protests. How far can you take free speech and how far will it take you?

Everybody has a right to protest, but everybody has a right to education, too. Storming Open Days and ruining graduation ceremonies is nothing but a need of attention and disruption, making law enforcement necessary in most of these protests. Though mostly passive, those violent among the peaceful stand out, making this situation unnecessary and harmful. The attention they are getting is not the one they want.

Hamas' goal of winning this war by any means is being achieved. Using the tactical weapon of misinformation and shooting towards college students that are finding something to believe in has proven to be a successful strategy. On the battlefield, Israel's dominance is evident, but how important will public opinion be in the crux of this boundless war?

Will Democracy Vote Against Itself?

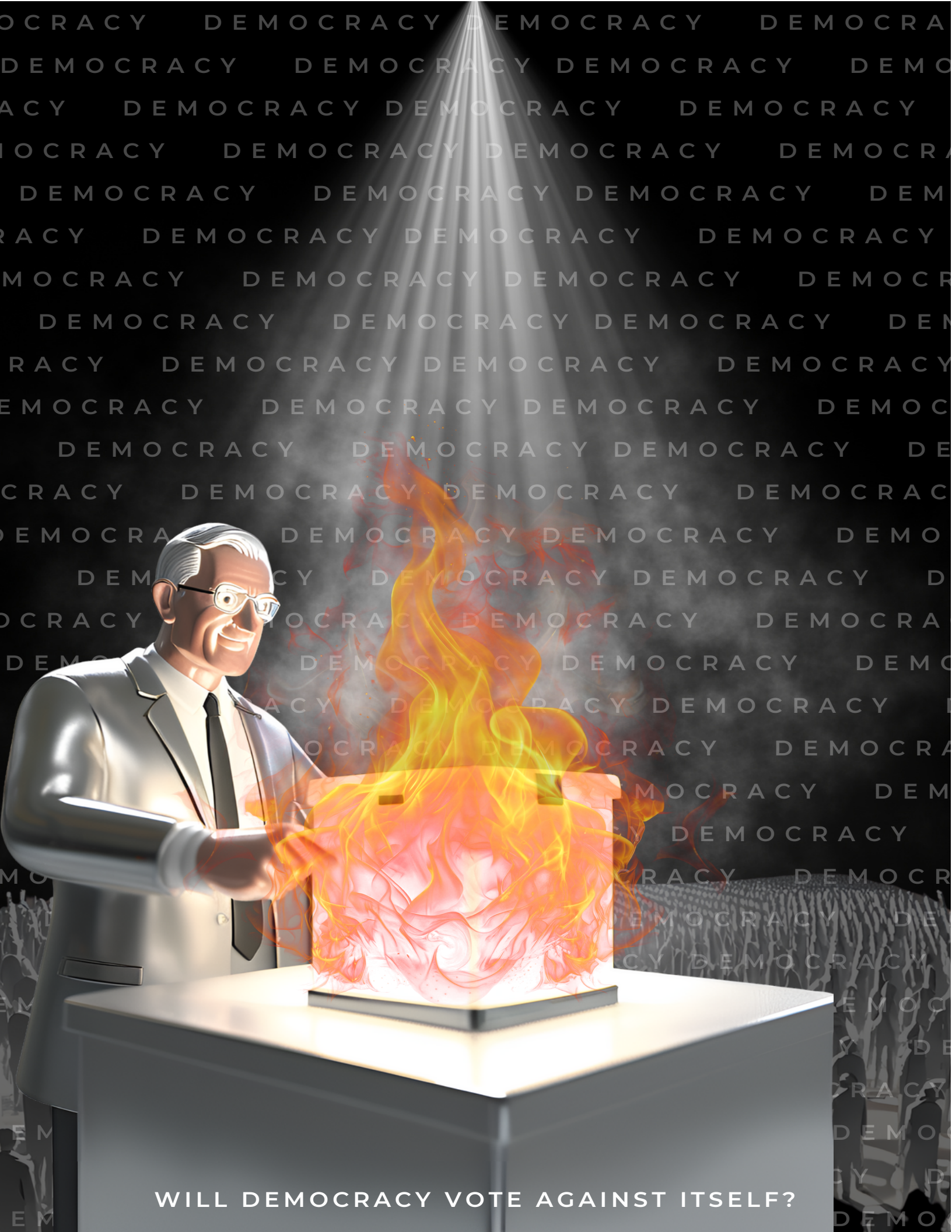
Elias Orrego

A liberal democracy is a form of government with rule of law, protection for individual freedoms and rights, and limitations on the power of the elected representatives. Ever since the end of the cold war, democracy has been widely considered to be the best form of government. Let's look at some reasons as to why this is true. The first and most important reason is that democracy is the best system for achieving equality for oppressed minorities by giving them the ability to vote for the candidates and for the policies they believe in. Other systems of government, such as autocracies, theocracies and monarchies are not able to achieve this because they allow one person or group of people to make decisions for the whole population. This means minorities are silenced and therefore feel oppressed. Only democracy allows all groups to participate in politics. Another reason why democracy is so favored, is because of the checks and balances, which prevent the unconstrained exercise of power. Checks are the mechanisms which allow political institutions to limit one another's power. Meanwhile, balances ensure that different views are represented in the democratic process, like for example, the existence of different political parties. Checks and balances are attractive because they assure the people that the decisions made will be for the interest of the people, not for one leader's own self-interest.

This year, half the population of the world has taken part or will take part in elections of some sort. It's the biggest electoral year ever. There are elections in the United States, India, Mexico, Taiwan, and others. This means that the fate of democracy as the dominating system is at stake. Although the benefits of democracy seem to be clear, people are favoring autocrats more and more. Is this because they are deceived, or are these people fully aware of their choice and still prefer autocratic governments? Let's look at the different countries around the world where democracy is at risk, and why this seems to be.

Case Studies:

India and the US India is the world's largest democracy. The current prime minister, Narendra Modi, has ruled for 10 years and is running for a third term in office, where he is expected to win. Modi and the BJP (his political party) are extremely popular in India, with 75% of Indians approving of his rule and massive economic growth for the country. What is the problem then? Under his rule, the country has also witnessed signs of democratic backsliding. Over the last decade, the BJP has run on a very popular Hindu nationalist ideology. Which has been problematic for minorities in India, especially the large Muslim minority in the country.



WILL DEMOCRACY VOTE AGAINST ITSELF?

He has made discriminatory comments against Muslims many times, recently calling them 'infiltrators' at a rally. He has also continually echoed support for establishing a 'Hindu Rashtra' or Hindu Nation. While all of this has gained him the support of the Hindu majority, the Muslim minority is still around 204 million people, which makes this problematic. Now to the biggest economy in the world. The United States of America's democracy is also under threat because of the upcoming elections. Donald Trump is running for office again, and the odds are closer in his favor. However, he is accused of undermining democratic norms in the country. One of the clearest examples is employing loyalists as civil servants in favor of America's meritocratic system. Not only has Trump claimed that the constitution gives him absolute power, but he also poses an even bigger threat to democracy with his recurring refusal to accept the 2020 election results. He even encouraged a storming of the US Capitol, which resulted in the arrest of thousands of rioters, who Donald Trump refers to as hostages. Will democracy in the US survive a second Trump term?

Dismantling Democracy from Within:

If democracy is so superior then, why do people vote for autocrats? There's a variety of reasons as to why this happens. It's crucial to acknowledge first that many people vote for autocrats because of necessity. Democracy is a very attractive system for people who don't have to worry about basic needs. But for those who live in increasingly unstable nations with rampant crime and poor economic prospects, representation and checks and balances are not a priority. That's why informed voters know that they're electing autocrats and still do it. This is the case in autocracies like Hungary, Poland and El Salvador. What is even more alarming however, is the people who are deceived into voting for autocrats. Deception is the method that most autocrats employ in order to get votes. Democracy is still viewed, widely, as the best political system. This keeps autocrats from showing their true colors, as they would lose widespread support. Instead, autocrats deceive the people to make it seem like they will respect democratic norms. To win popular support, they use a series of undermining techniques. Moises Naim, a political consultant and author, describes the process by which potential autocrats are gaming the democratic system and getting elected. In his most recent book, *The Revenge of Power*, he describes three tactics: polarization, populism and post truth. These tactics are used to distract the people from their undemocratic tendencies. Autocrats use polarization by basing their campaigns around a common 'enemy'. Normally, they blame the current government, or rival candidates for everything that's wrong with the country. They accuse them of being corrupt, weak and even undemocratic. They do this so that they can then claim they're defending the common people, making it seem like they must get elected to save the country. However, this causes polarization in the country between different political groups. Much like has happened in the United States. The other technique autocrats use is populist rhetoric. Here, they instill fear in a racial or ethnic majority by convincing them of an elitists plot to replace them, then they'll again claim they are their saviors who will restore their influence.

The best example of this is Modi with the Hindu population in India and his comments against Muslims. The third technique then is post-truth. This is when autocrats erase the line between truth and untruth, purposely lying about past events to bend history in their favor. They do this by spreading misinformation, which is facilitated by social media. Elections require an informational landscape where citizens can debate ideas and evaluate candidates and their policies. Democracies cannot function when there is an absence of trust, and autocrats are using this to their advantage.

What's Next?

It is easy to point out the weaknesses and the general dysfunction in many modern democracies. It is easy to see how aggressive and populist rhetoric seem like the quick and effective response to a frustrated population. But do we really want to dismantle checks and balances? Do we really want to live in a state where the elections are not free and fair? Perhaps we should take a closer look at countries like Venezuela and Russia – they both had ‘elections’ this year, but we know these elections were a total sham. Voters around the world need to be much more aware of how autocrats sell themselves and how dangerous the results might be if elected. 2024 is a crucial year – democracy really is on the ballot.

YOUR FIELD.

YOUR MOMENT.



The key to
the perfect move
is with you

NIKE

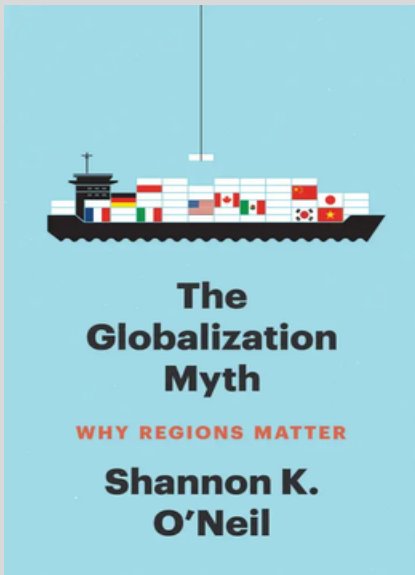
A Hoot About the World

BLACKWING

POP SOME COLOR
INTO YOUR LIFE

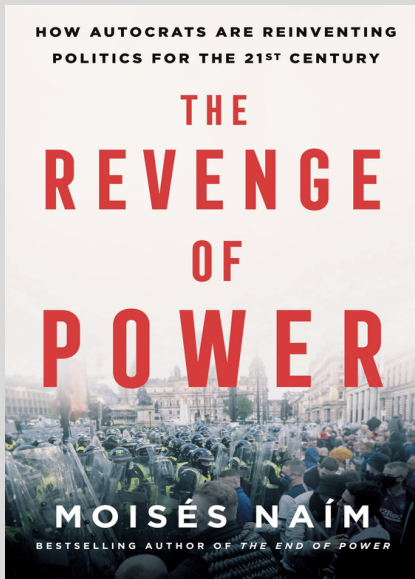


Hoot Recommends:



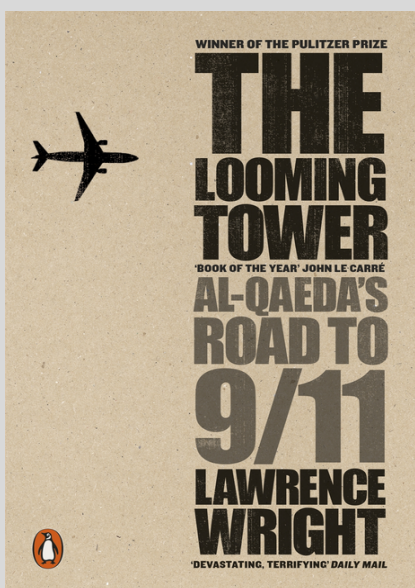
“Shannon O’Neil’s call for ‘more NAFTAs and fewer America Firsts’ is timely, constructive, and pragmatic. With her deep knowledge of the Americas and of the politics of regional integration, she makes a practical case for an American economic strategy which would work in a world dividing into more blocks. I urge our elected officials to open their minds to O’Neils compelling argument.”

-Adam S. Posen, President at Peterson Institute for International Economics



“An usually smart, insightful, and elegantly written book about why authoritarians and autocrats have risen to power around the globe—and how we can defend democracy in our own backyards. No one understands power better than Moisés Naím, and I was hooked from the third sentence

-Adam Grant, Professor at the Wharton School for Organizational Psychology



“A page-turner... encompassing religion, politics, economics and more. If you’ve been meaning to sharpen your understanding of what all led up to September 11, 2001, then Wright may have written just what you’ve been waiting for.”

-San Francisco Chronicle

• 1983 •

