

LETTER

FROM THE EDITORS

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2020 is a year best known for all of its anomalies; we end it with situations and mindsets that are vastly different from years previous. In times like these, where we are forced to set our sights on the preservation of both self and society, it becomes all too natural to limit our perspectives to our own situations and proximal experiences. For many, the year has come to a stand-still, offering little to no change or development on a surface level. This issue serves as a reminder of change — of growth in knowledge, in perspective, in the world. As time moves on, so does the human consciousness, whether we can easily perceive it or not, and in a time when many aspects of humanity seem challenged or hindered, it is important to remember that, one way or another, we are still, somehow, getting better, day by day.

The first paper in this issue, entitled “Democratic Deficits: Pathways and Barriers to Electoral Reform in Canada,” tackles the issue of representation gap in the Canadian government. Katelynn Kowalchuk conducts a comprehensive case study of two countries, New Zealand and Uganda, analyzing their inclusion of ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+, and women in their own government systems, and explaining the likely reasons why Canada has yet to implement such changes. The author recommends reform in specific circumstances for the Canadian government and details its possible outcomes if implemented.

Emmanuel Ndhlovu writes about the Fast Track Land Reform Program in Zimbabwe in his paper entitled “The Migration Livelihood Nexus: Emerging Opportunities, Emerging Challenges in Rural Zimbabwe.” The author, having conducted interviews with individuals entrenched in this situation, illuminates and delves into details about the effects of migration on livelihood in this area, both positive and negative. In doing so, he illustrates how the landscape of rural Zimbabwe has been affected by the movement of disadvantaged blacks into areas resettled by the FTLRP.

In “Global Skills: Articulating the International Studies Skillset and Its Value,” the authors examine the popular field of international studies and the various aspects of global students’ mindsets and approaches to international academic endeavors. The paper includes a case study of an international student’s own assessment of their global skills and how they have helped in cross-cultural engagement, illustrating how a certain set of skills has value in creating the optimal learning experience for international students.

Suyoung Kim examines the threat China appears to pose to both Taiwan and Japan in her paper, “The Invisible but Indispensable Partnership: Understanding the China Factor in Taiwan-Japan Relations.” The author focuses on how China’s involvement in various interactions between Japan and Taiwan have affected the latter two countries’ interactions and perceptions of each other. It also determines how and why Taiwan and Japan seem to act similarly even when only one of the two countries is at odds with China.

In “The Indian Determination of Jammu and Kashmir: A Critical Appraisal of History, Sovereignty, and Jus Genitium,” Adarsh Vijayakumaran discusses their stance on the claim that the Republic of India has violated International Law with regards to the aforementioned regions. The paper provides readers with a holistic view of the two regions, the conflict surrounding them, their self-determination, and the events and actions of the Republic of India that serve as evidence for the

author's claim.

Theophile Begin problematizes the discrimination against ethnic minorities in the Italian justice system in his paper, "The Criminalization of Black Migrant Women in Italy: Issues and Answers." The text analyzes the foundations and pitfalls of the Italian criminal justice system before applying its shortcomings to the cases of the aforementioned minority. Begin concludes with policy recommendations that serve as plausible solutions to such an issue.

The first essay in this issue is written by Pavithra Suresh. Titled "Countering Hindu Hegemony: Tamil Separatism as Counter-Memory Work," the essay examines how the separatist politics of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu engage with Dravidian counter-memory and challenge the Hindu nationalist narratives of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). By focusing on the contrasts between Sanskritization/Tamil purism and BJP casteism/Dravidian anti-caste resistance, Pavithra Suresh's work suggests that Tamil counter-memories transcend elections and reveal both a material and a discursive resistance to fascism. The author believes that work on Tamil counter-memory participates in unveiling the distinctive and transgressive history of Tamil Nadu and Tamil linguistic sovereignty.

Written by Tymoteusz Chajdas, our second essay, "The Political via the Cinematic: Tracing China's Transformation Toward a Globally Ambitious State," represents an interesting exploration of the relation between culture and politics. Beginning with a brief history of the modern Chinese film industry, Tymoteusz Chajdas' work further asks: How are institutions and aesthetics interacting in ways that exhibit resonances and tensions between the cinematic and the political? Using three famed Chinese movies as evidence, the author demonstrates how particular themes and cinematic aesthetics, at various points in time, echo important changes in China's international posture and signal the country's transformation from a relatively nationalist stance to a more ambitious attitude. Tymoteusz Chajdas argues that such changes mirror the steady trajectory of China's integration into the global capitalist economy.

Our junior editor signs the third essay of this issue. Entitled "Leaving Women Behind: Understanding the Impacts of Historical, Political, and Social Factors on the Republic of Korea's Persisting Gender Inequality," Sojung Ha's timely piece centers around the development (or lack thereof) of gender equality policies in South Korea. The author argues, using historical analysis, that, although the ROK has achieved significant progress in various domains over the past few decades, progress in gender equality is unfortunately still falling behind. Using a postcolonial and intersectional feminist framework, Sojung Ha's work specifically examines the legacy of Japanese colonialism and of the Cold War's empty gender politics and explains the current government's lack of commitment to women's rights and the pervasive and persistent contemporary socialization agents that reinforce gender normative roles and contribute to the silencing of women.

Our fourth and final essay is written by co-editor-in-chief Aimee Beatriz Lee. Her work, "Blurring Distance and Digital Lines: The Roles of Real Person Fanfiction in Participative K-Pop Fandoms," explores the role of Real Person Fanfiction (RPF) in participative K-Pop fandom culture. Although fanfiction has recently received more attention from academia, Lee's essay adds to the existing literature in that it

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presents the novel argument that fanfiction in K-Pop represents an avenue towards identity building as well as further participation with and influence on an idol, their company, or the collective fandom. The author's work is built around original data obtained from a survey that collected answers from over 500 respondents who identified themselves as an active part of the K-Pop community.

Thank you to our editors Simone Liew, Grecia Dominique Paniagua Garcia, and Sojung Ha for your diligent work. Without their careful and observant selections, readings, and edits, the completion of this issue would not have been possible. And to our readers, we are thankful for your continued interest in our journal. We wish you safety and good health. Thank you.

Aimee Beatriz Lee and Theophile Begin
Co-Editors-in-Chief