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Ten Questions for American Democracy

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Ten Questions for American Democracy

Executive Summary

● The “Summit for Democracy,” a new international charade by the United States of America, will take place on December 9 and 10, 2021. This move has raised doubts and even dissatisfaction in many countries. At present, even many scholars, media, and relevant organizations from all walks of life in the United States have expressed their concerns that American democracy has caused social disorder at home and created turmoil abroad. As a new variety of think tank been engaged in global governance for years, the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China, has sorted out many American literatures and articles, releasing the research report “Ten Questions for American Democracy” on December 6. The report raises ten pointed questions to American democracy, hoping to help the world fully understand democracy and promote shared values for all humankind.

● **Question 1: Democracy for the majority or “democracy” for the minority?** “Minority rule has metastasized like a cancer,” power serves the capital, and more and more politicians don’t put the real interests of voters first. Can today’s American democracy be called people being the masters of the country?

● **Question 2: Ensure checks and balances of power or lead to abuse of power?** There has been “hyperpolarization” in the political operation. The tactics of American politicians far exceed those in the TV

series House of Cards. The American people's trust in the U.S. government has also “dropped to near freezing point.”

● **Question 3: Improve people's well-being or increase people's suffering?** By the end of 2020, more than 50 million Americans faced food insecurity, a nearly 50% increase from 2019. More than 220,000 people are homeless. The American household wealth has not increased for almost 20 years. The wealthiest 1% of Americans hold about 43.27 trillion U.S. dollars, 14.3 times the bottom 50% of Americans (3.03 trillion U.S. dollars). U.S. Senators and House Representatives rely on the wealthiest 1%'s money for re-election, serve the wealthiest 1%, and even gain rewards from the wealthiest 1% when they leave office.

● **Question 4: Defend freedom or hinder freedom?** “Overloaded freedom” leads to a cultural war that exhausts energy and wastes resources, “which may lead to the disillusionment of democracy, delay the pandemic prevention in the United States, and is killing Americans.” Hypocritical freedom of speech amplifies hatred and extreme emotions through social media. 64% of Americans believe that social media has a negative effect on the direction of the United States.

● **Question 5: Protect human rights or violate human rights?** More than 38,000 deaths are related to gun violence each year, 20% of which are children and adolescents aged 1-17. The United States accounts for only 4% of the world's population but 35% of the world's firearm suicides. Hate crimes against Asians increased by 150% in 2020. The numbers of COVID infections and deaths are the highest in the world. Some cry, “this is a massacre”!

● **Question 6: Promote unity or lead to division?** 52% of Trump voters and 41% of Biden voters believe that separating the red and blue states from the union may be a better choice for the United States today. The United States is plunging into a “cold civil war.” The

proportion of people who agreed that “African Americans suffer a lot of discrimination” increased from 19% in 2013 to 50% in 2020. The shadow of slavery still exists in the United States. Between 2016 and 2017, the number of attacks by far-right perpetrators quadrupled.

● **Question 7: Realize dreams or bring nightmares?**

Americans are so in despair for the American dream that many people write obituaries for the American dream. 59% of Americans believe that journalists deliberately mislead people. Americans are becoming more and more pessimistic about the country’s development path. The number of Americans dissatisfied with the direction of the United States has risen from 33% in 2017 to 50% in 2021. 85% of Americans believe that the United States’ political system needs significant changes or complete reforms.

● **Question 8: Improve national governance or lead to**

system failure? Infighting between the two parties has repeatedly shut governments down. The mutual obstruction between the federal and state governments leads to internal friction, impediments of federal decrees, and poor implementation of infrastructure projects. California has been preparing for high-speed rail construction for more than 25 years and has not yet fully started. “Collapsed” disaster response, inadequate risk prevention, slow rescue and relief, and officials’ indifference, all kinds of documents of the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency express a central idea: don’t rely on us.

● **Question 9: Bring development and prosperity, or**

disaster and turmoil to other countries? Some 241,000 Afghans were killed in the war beginning in 2002. 183,000-206,000 Iraqi civilians have died in violence since the war in 2003. Yemen currently has some 20.7 million people (71% of the total population) in need of humanitarian assistance. The United States is a veritable “refugee maker” in the world today, making at least 37 million people destitute and homeless by the war

launched by the United States after the September 11 attacks.

● **Question 10: Safeguard world peace and development or undermine international order?** As of 2017, the United States had conducted 392 foreign military interventions since 1880. The United States has been at war more than 92% of the time since its founding. The United States maintains approximately 750 overseas military bases in 80 foreign countries and colonies (territories). The United States spends about \$778 billion on the military, accounting for about 39% of the world's total. The Middle East and North Africa still have about one in five people living on the brink of conflict. America's currency, the world's problem.

● 57% of people outside the United States said that democracy in the United States “used to do well, but it has not done well in recent years”; another 23% said that the United States has never been a model of democracy for other countries.

● In the name of “democracy,” the only ones in the United States that can reflect their will are Money-crazy, Gun-crazy, White-crazy, Media-crazy, Milita-crazy, and Drug-crazy. It is not the people who can make the decision, “six masters in one country, there is no democracy.”

● Democracy is a common value of all humanity. There is no universal democratic model in the world. Democracy is a rich and diversified path independently chosen by all countries, rather than a single routine forced to be imposed upon others. We suggest that the U.S. government might as well ask itself the above ten questions when organizing the so-called “Summit for Democracy.”

Democracy is a right of all people, not a monopoly of several countries. It is absurd for any government to declare its monopoly on the definition or model of “democracy.”

The United States, as the world’s only superpower, has historically been an early implementer of modern democracy, and the American people have fought long and hard for democratic rights. However, in recent years, American democracy has gradually metamorphosed: Domestically, it has become a tool for a few people to seek personal gains, violating human rights, and tearing society apart; Internationally, it has become a front and excuse for the United States to maintain hegemony, interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, and undermine the international order.

The “Summit for Democracy,” a new international charade by the United States of America, will take place on December 9 and 10, 2021. This move has raised doubts and even dissatisfaction in many countries. At present, even many scholars, media, and relevant organizations from all walks of life in the United States have expressed their concerns that American democracy has caused social disorder at home and created turmoil abroad. As a new variety of think tank been engaged in global governance for years, the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China, has sorted out many American literatures and articles, releasing the research report “Ten Questions for American Democracy” on December 6. The report raises ten pointed questions to American democracy, hoping to help the world fully understand democracy and promote shared values for all humankind.

Question 1:

Democracy for the majority or “democracy” for the minority?

Democracy means that people are masters of the country. In 1863, in his Gettysburg address, Abraham Lincoln expressed the expectation that “the government of the people, by the people and for the people will last forever.”¹ The long struggle of the American people has promoted the development of American democracy. However, with the gradual transformation of American political behavior in recent years, it has become a more and more frequent situation that a few people seize power and decide the result of voting, which makes people question whether today’s American democracy can be called the people being the masters of the country.

1.1 Minority over the majority

Since the 21st century, the phenomenon that results of U.S. presidential elections depends on the “key minority” has occurred frequently and even in all kinds of elections. This leads candidates to devote more and more resources to a minority of people, such as “swing states” and “key constituencies.” In the six presidential elections held in the United States since the 21st century alone, on two occasions, the party with fewer popular votes was elected: in 2000, George W. Bush won the election by the ruling of the Federal Supreme Court;² in 2016, Hillary Clinton won 2.8 million more

1 History.com Editors. (2010, August 24). *The Gettysburg Address*. History.com. <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/gettysburg-address>

2 Kennedy, L. (2020, September 24). *How the 2000 Election Came Down to a Supreme Court Decision*. History.com. <https://www.history.com/news/2000-election-bush-gore-votes-supreme-court>

popular votes than Donald Trump, which is the widest gap in American history to date, but Trump still took the White House with 304 electoral votes.¹ The presidential election of 2020 is still in dispute.² The “key minority” is more and more decisive than the majority.

At the state level, to compete for power, the two parties are scrambling to redraw the boundaries of congressional districts, and the pursuit is that they can still win even if they get fewer votes. This is the famous “Gerrymandering”³ phenomenon in today’s American democracy. It means that a few people choose voters through political parties rather than voters choosing political parties. The dramas that the minority dominates the majority by “Gerrymandering” are more and more frequently performed:

Take Wisconsin as an example. In 2018, the Republican Governor Scott Walker lost the race by about 30,000 popular votes, but the Republican Party can still won 63 of the 99 state legislature constituencies.⁴

Alexander Hamilton once set a basic rule for democratic government in *The Federalist Papers*, that is, “the sense of the majority should prevail.”⁵ However, facing the current political ecology of the United States, political scholar Steven Hill described, “Minority rule has metastasized like a cancer.” He alleged that, as the U.S. political system continuously evolved in the past few decades, its flawed and outdated mechanism frequently deviated from Hamilton’s standard, fostering a dangerous experiment with “minoritarianism.”⁶

1 Roos, D. (2020, July 23). *5 Presidents Who Lost the Popular Vote But Won the Election*. History.com. <https://www.history.com/news/presidents-electoral-college-popular-vote>

2 Cummings, W., Garrison, J., & Sergent, J. (2021, January 6). By the numbers: President Donald Trump’s failed efforts to overturn the election. USA Today. <https://eu.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/politics/elections/2021/01/06/trumps-failed-efforts-overturn-election-numbers/4130307001/>

3 Cillizza, C. & CNN Editor-at-large. (2017, October 4). *Here are the most gerrymandered US congressional districts*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/03/politics/redistricting-supreme-court-gerrymandered/index.html>

4 Corasaniti, N., Epstein, R. J., Johnston, T., Lieberman, R., & Weingart, E. (2021, November 7). How Maps Reshape American Politics. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/07/us/politics/redistricting-maps-explained.html>

5 Hamilton, A. (1787, December 14). *The Federalist 22. American History from Revolution to Reconstruction and beyond*. <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1786-1800/the-federalist-papers/the-federalist-22.php>

6 Hill, S. (2021, July 16). The Perils of “Minority Rule”. *Common Dreams*. <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/07/16/perils-minority-rule>

1.2 Power serves the capital

From the practical operation of American politics, power is more inclined to serve a few wealthy people with capital than to serve the interests of most voters. Paul Krugman, the Nobel laureate in economics, pointed out that the government's policy direction is often contrary to the interests of the working class. "... America is less of a democracy and more of an oligarchy than we like to think."¹

Many academic studies show that American political circles are operating around capital interests. A report from Princeton University and Northwest University concluded after analyzing nearly 1,800 American policies that ordinary people and groups representing the interests of the

masses have little independent political influence. However, economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have a strong ability to control policies.² A study on the voting pattern of the U.S. Senate found that compared with other groups, the priorities of Congresspersons are more inclined to reflect donors' preferences.³ Another study on the U.S. House of Representatives shows that millionaires, who account for only 5% of the constituency population, get about twice the representation of 50% of the poorest wealth groups in the region. Also, some studies have shown that members of Congress react much faster to the rich than to the poor.⁴ The lack of representation of the poor has spread to all levels of American politics. At the state level, the rich have far more influence on the state platform than the poor.⁵

The phenomenon of political

1 Krugman, P. (2020, July 1). Why Do the Rich Have So Much Power? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/opinion/sunday/inequality-america-paul-krugman.html>

2 Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 564–581. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592714001595>

3 Barber, M. J. (2016). Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the US Senate. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1), 225–249. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw004>

4 Rhodes, J. H., & Schaffner, B. F. (2014). Economic Biases in Representation: Using New Data to Shed Light on How Wealth Affects Access to Political Representation. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. Published. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2561423>

5 Wright, G.C. & Rigby, E. (2020). Income Inequality and State Parties: Who Gets Represented? *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 20(4), 395-415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532440020912461>

contributions, and political lobbying reveals that American political power has become a tool for capital. Hillary Clinton leaked email revealed that politics captured by money was unimpeded during the presidential campaign.¹ As time goes, the cost of elections is on the rise. In the 2004 general election, the U.S. presidential election amounted to 880 million U.S. dollars.² In 2016, it climbed to \$1.5 billion.³ In 2020, the presidential campaign between Biden and Trump cost more than \$4 billion, making it the most expensive election in history.⁴ The re-election of the U.S. Congress in 2020 also created a historical record of a total expenditure of 8.7 billion U.S. dollars.⁵

Political lobbying also confirms that

American capital manipulates power. In 2020, the United States spent more than \$3.5 billion on political lobbying. Among them, the lobbying expenses of the medical and health industry and pharmaceutical industry in the United States set a historical record.⁶

1.3 People's will is difficult to truly realize

Under money politics, more and more politicians do not put the real interests of voters first. This propensity means that even if ordinary people elect leaders who meet the election procedures, they may not deliver on their campaign promises and fulfill the

1 *Virtual Reading Room Documents Search Results Collection: Clinton_Email*. (n.d.). U.S. Department of State. https://foia.state.gov/search/results.aspx?collection=Clinton_Email

2 Open Secrets. (n.d.). *2004 Presidential Race*. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.opensecrets.org/pres04/>

3 Open Secrets. (n.d.). *2016 Presidential Race*. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.opensecrets.org/pres16>

4 Open Secrets. (n.d.). *2020 Presidential Race*. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race>

5 Evers-Hillstrom, K. (2021, February 11). *Most expensive ever: 2020 election cost \$14.4 billion*. OpenSecrets. <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/02/2020-cycle-cost-14p4-billion-doubling-16/>

6 Evers-Hillstrom, K. (2021, January 27). *Lobbying spending nears record high in 2020 amid pandemic*. OpenSecrets. <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/01/lobbying-spending-nears-record-high-in-2020-amidpandemic/>

people's will.

None of the three American presidents who have completed their term of office in the 21st century can entirely fulfill their campaign promises.

George W. Bush promised to cut government spending and stop sending troops abroad. He started the war in Afghanistan and Iraq successively, and the government expenditure rose sharply.¹

During the election campaign, Barack Obama promised to launch a series of actions to reform the distribution of wealth, including improving the corporate tax law and formulating the Buffett Rule, which all turned out to be empty promises.²

Donald Trump broke 53% of his

campaign promises. He claimed to repeal Obamacare, invest \$550 billion in infrastructure and set up an infrastructure fund, lead the manufacturing industry to return, ensure that the economy grows by 4% every year, guarantee workers six weeks' paid vacation, and expel all illegal immigrants, promulgates a five-year ban on lobbying White House officials and Congress members. These promises failed to be fulfilled nationwide, but even the concrete actions were lower than expected.³

From Bush, Obama, to Trump, the Presidents are constantly changing, but people's will are becoming more difficult to realize. The people's will may only be mentioned in the election and gradually forgotten by politicians after the election.

1 Apple, C. (n.d.). Broken presidential campaign promises since 1916. *The Spokesman-Review*. <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2020/jun/26/broken-presidential-campaign-promises-1916/>

2 Politifact. (n.d.). *Obameter: Tracking Obama's promises*. <https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/obameter/?ruling=true>

3 Politifact.(n.d.). *Trump-o-meter: Tracking Trump's Campaign Promises*. <https://www.politifact.com/truth-ometer/promises/trumpometer/?ruling=true>

Question 2:

Ensure checks and balances of power or lead to abuse of power?

The founders of the United States designed the “separation of powers and checks and balances system” to prevent power corruption and abuse.¹ But if the principle of “separation of powers and checks and balances” is used to avoid power from playing a beneficial role or used as a shield for corruption and abuse of power, it loses its original meaning.

At present, the U.S. is “experiencing threats to its system of checks and balances”, along with an “erosion of ethical norms at the highest levels of power”.² At the same time, American people’s trust in the U.S. government has also “dropped to near freezing

point.”³ We have to ask, can the original democratic system design of the United States still realize the checks and balances of power and restrain the abuse of power?

2.1 Objections for the sake of “objections”

“Partisanship continues to be the dividing line in the American public’s political attitudes”.⁴ The principle of party loyalty has replaced democracy as the mainstream value of Americans, and there has been “hyperpolarization”

1 Madison, J. (1788). The Particular Structure of the New Government and the Distribution of Power Among Its Different Parts - The Federalist. Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed47.asp

2 Transparency International. (2019, January 29). *Americas: Weakening Democracy and Rise in Populism Hinder Anti-corruption Efforts*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2018-regional-analysis-americas>

3 Pew Research Center. (2021, May 17). *Public Trust in Government: 1958–2021*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/05/17/public-trust-in-government-1958-2021/>

4 Pew Research Center. (2019, December 17). *In a Politically Polarized Era, Sharp Divides in Both Partisan Coalitions*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/12/17/in-a-politically-polarized-era-sharp-divides-in-both-partisan-coalitions/>

in political operation.¹ American politicians' means go far beyond the TV series *House of Cards*.

Cursing opponents. Politicians take advantage of the mutual dislike among voters without any bottom line because they know that mutual dislike between voters of two parties has reached the highest level in history.² About 80% of voters generally hate each other's political parties. According to statistics, after 2017, the frequency of politicians using dirty words on social media has risen sharply.³

Trump, the former president of the United States, political opponents with vicious and vulgar words, and

suggest voting for him was patriotic⁴ and that those who didn't support him would be "so goddamn poor."⁵ Statistics show that cursing words are the most frequently used words in Trump's public speeches.⁶ At political gatherings, Trump never missed the opportunity to attack his opponent, so that a Michigan official said, "Every single time the President does this at a rally, the violent rhetoric towards her (Trump's opponent) immediately escalates on social media."⁷

Rumors abound. Trump called domestic mainstream media "fake news media" and "enemies of the people."⁸ The Democrats also called Trump and The Republicans the

1 Walt, S. M. (2019, March 11). America's Polarization Is a Foreign Policy Problem, Too. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/11/americas-polarization-is-a-foreign-policy-problem-too/>

2 Enten, H. (2021, November 20). *Statistically, Democrats and Republicans hate each other more than ever*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/20/politics/democrat-republican-hate-tribalism/index.html>

3 Pesce, N. L. (2019, October 3). This chart shows the obscene amount of swearing lawmakers are doing in public. *MarketWatch*. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/this-chart-shows-the-obscene-amount-of-swearing-lawmakers-are-doing-in-public-2019-08-19>

4 Haines, P. (2018). A Vote for Me is a Vote for America: Patriotic Appeals in Presidential Elections. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Princeton University.

5 Mann, W. (2019, November 7). The cursing president. *The Week*. <https://theweek.com/articles/875118/cursing-president>

6 Baker, P. (2019, May 19). The Profanity President: Trump's Four-Letter Vocabulary. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/19/us/politics/trump-language.html>

7 Sanderson, M., & Sanderson, Z. (2021, October 22). *How Trump impacts harmful Twitter speech: A case study in three tweets*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-trump-impacts-harmful-twitter-speech-a-case-study-in-three-tweets/>

8 Obeidallah, D. (2019, October 14). *When Trump attacks the media as the "enemy of the people," people like Robert Chain believe him*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/trump-s-attacks-media-are-going-get-someone-killed-rob-ncna905541>

makers of rumors and lies.¹ According to statistics, Trump spread over 30,000 lies and rumors during his tenure.²

Voters are in a dilemma. In such an information environment, voters become unable to judge. In the 2020 general election survey, 56% of Joe Biden voters believed they voted for Joe Biden because they didn't want Trump to be elected, although they didn't necessarily agree with Biden.³ Behind the voting in the 2020 presidential election, voters' implicit idea is that "Voters of the other side don't get them," and they have "fundamental disagreements on core American values and goals."⁴ Another 40-50% of voters gave up voting

because they didn't feel they were "represented by the candidates."⁵

2.2 Legal corruption becomes the norm

Abuse of the system to amass wealth. In recent years, the degree of corruption in the United States has increased each year, reaching the highest level since 2012.⁶ Now there is an "ever-increasing influence of special interests in government".⁷ It is puzzling that there is a legal basis for making political contributions to campaign groups and lobbying

1 Leonhardt, D., Philbrick, I. P., & Thompson, S. A. (2017, December 14). Trump's Lies vs. Obama's. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/14/opinion/sunday/trump-lies-obama-who-is-worse.html>

2 Kessler, J., Rizzo, S., & Kelly, M. (2021, January 24). Trump's false or misleading claims total 30573 over 4 years. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/24/trumps-false-or-misleading-claims-total-30573-over-four-years/>

3 Brewster, J. (2020, August 13). Poll: 56% Of Biden Voters Say They're Voting For Him Because He's 'Not Trump'. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackbrewster/2020/08/13/poll-56-of-biden-voters-say-theyre-voting-for-him-because-hes-not-trump/?sh=2f4db8e56132>

4 Dunn, A, Kiley, J., Scheller, A., Baronavski, C., & Doherty C. (2020, December 17). Voters Say Those on the Other Side 'Don't Get' Them. Here's What They Want Them To Know. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/12/17/voters-say-those-on-the-other-side-dont-get-them-heres-what-they-want-them-to-know/>

5 Clifford, C. (2020, October 30). 'I don't plan to vote ever again': The psychology of why so many people don't vote, even in 2020. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/10/30/why-people-choose-not-to-vote.html>

6 Transparency International. (2021). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2020*. https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/CPI2020_Report_EN_0802-WEB-1_2021-02-08-103053.pdf

7 Transparency International. (2020). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2019*. https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2019_CPI_Report_EN_200331_141425.pdf

Congress members. As long as the big companies reach a deal with their Congresspersons, they can push Congress to enact laws that are only beneficial to their companies and industries, regardless of the people's interests.¹ At the same time, Congress members themselves can use the loopholes of lobbying and political contributions for personal gain.

Corruption in politics. Lobbying and political contributions are legal, but the hidden parts of them maybe not. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a U.S. Representative, has revealed that Congress members can recklessly accumulate wealth without violating any laws; they can get a series of potential benefits by helping big companies with legislation.² Some

studies have also found that Congress members can always grasp the trading opportunity of stocks to make huge profits.³ Although the annual salary of Congress members sets at \$174,000 before tax, most of them are millionaires.⁴ In the situation of loose monetary policy after the COVID-19 pandemic, senior officials of the Federal Reserve frequently traded stocks and bonds, which aroused strong dissatisfaction from all walks of life.⁵ In 2020, nearly 80% of the respondents thought government corruption was their biggest concern, ranking first for six consecutive years.⁶

Legitimate transaction corruption. “Right now I’m actually surprised by how much money I got,”⁷ former President Obama said so. In the first

1 Denning, S. (2019, August 19). Why Maximizing Shareholder Value Is Finally Dying. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2019/08/19/why-maximizing-shareholder-value-is-finally-dying/?sh=811bd3c67469>

2 Parramore, L. (2019, March 5). *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is right about corruption in Congress*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-right-about-corruption-congress-ncna975906>

3 Karadas, S. (2019), Trading on Private Information: Evidence from Members of Congress. *Financial Review*, 54: 85-131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fire.12180>

4 Evers-Hillstrom, K. (2020, April 23). *Majority of lawmakers in 116th Congress are millionaires*. Open Secrets. <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2020/04/majority-of-lawmakers-millionaires/>

5 Matthews, S. (2021, September 11). Fed Accountability Under Fire After Stock-Trading Revelations. *Bloomberg*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-10/fed-accountability-under-fire-after-stocktrading-revelations>

6 Amirazizi, R. (2021). *America's Top Fears 2020/2021*. Chapman University. https://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/research-centers/babbie-center/_files/Babbie%20center%20fear2021/blogpost-americas-top-fears-2020_-21-final.pdf

7 Clifford, C. (2018, July 18). *Obama on wealth inequality: 'There's Only So Much You Can Eat. There's Only So Big a House You Can Have.'* CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/18/barack-obama-on-wealth-inequality-only-so-much-you-can-eat.html>

year since Obama left office in 2017, he already got an average fee of \$400,000 per speech.¹ From 2001 to 2016, the Clintons earned more than \$150 million by giving speeches.² Former politicians often have considerable political influence in the party. Obama was accused of “imperial presidential behavior” when he was in office, and “The Democratic Party still looks like Obama's party.”³

The revolving door between politics and business. Take the military industry as an example. Through the “revolving door” mechanism, senior executives of military enterprises can turn into dignitaries, and former government officials can enter Wall Street again.⁴ Before the nomination,

Lloyd Austin, the Defense Secretary of Biden’s government, was a member of Raytheon’s board of directors.⁵ One-third of Biden’s transition team of national defense agencies responsible for reviewing the resumes of high-level appointments are from “organizations funded by the weapons industry.”⁶ In the pharmaceutical industry, the high-ranking officials who entered the government through the revolving door mechanism protected the groups with medical interest monopoly and large pharmaceutical companies, which made them use patent protection and monopoly medical contracts to preserve the high profits of the industry,⁷ regardless of the people’s voice that “Most Americans continue

1 Karabel, J. (2017, April 27). \$400,000 for One Speech? For Ex-Presidents, It Is Now the Norm. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/27/opinion/400000-for-one-speech-for-ex-presidents-it-is-now-the-norm.html>

2 Yoon, R. (2016, February 6). *\$153 million in Bill and Hillary Clinton speaking fees, documented*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/02/05/politics/hillary-clinton-bill-clinton-paid-speeches/index.html>

3 Murray, M. (2021, November 9). *The Democratic Party still looks like Obama's party*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/meet-the-press/blog/meet-press-blog-latest-news-analysis-data-driving-political-discussion-n988541/ncrd1183551#blogHeader>

4 Relman, E. (2018, October 10). How Goldman Sachs' Dina Powell became a top contender to replace Nikki Haley at the UN. *Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/dina-powell-trump-national-security-goldman-sachs-photos-bio-2017-8>

5 Capaccio, A. & Allison, B. (2021, January 10). *Biden Defense Pick to Get Up to \$1.7 Million From Raytheon Role*. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-10/biden-defense-pick-to-get-up-to-1-7million-from-raytheon-role>

6 Lazare, S. (2020, November 11). One Third of Biden's Pentagon Transition Team Hails from Organizations Financed by the Weapons Industry. In *These Times*. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/joe-biden-department-of-defense-pentagon-transition-team-weapons-industry-military>

7 Washington, H. (2012). *Deadly Monopolies*. Anchor Books.

to see healthcare costs in the U.S. as a major issue. One in five (20%) are currently satisfied with the total cost, while 79% are dissatisfied.”¹

2.3 Arbitrary and capricious power

The way of abuse of power is constantly “innovative.” Although the original intention of the Constitution was to prevent misuse of power,² the framework of checks and balances of power 200 years ago can hardly stop the new practice of abuse of power.

Abuse of legislative power. Congress members’ fundamental duty is to pass legislation on behalf of the people. But nowadays, it seems that their minds are not focused on legislation. In May

2021, Mitch McConnell, the Senate minority leader, publicly declared a “100 percent” focus on “stopping” Biden's administration.³ On January 6, 2021, after the attack on the Capitol, 147 Republican Congresspersons supported overturning the 2020 election result.⁴ When asked in February whether these Republicans thought Trump was defeated because of election fraud, most of them refused to answer.⁵ In 2018, Nancy Pelosi, then-House minority leader, delivered a speech for 8 hours and 7 minutes. On November 18, 2021, Kevin McCarthy, House minority leader, gave an address for 8 hours and 32 minutes, setting a new record for the duration of the House speech, successfully dragging the voting on the proposal that should have been completed on the same day into the next day.⁶

1 Jones, J.M. & Reinhart, R.J. (2019, November 15). *Americans Remain Dissatisfied With Healthcare Costs*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/245054/americans-remain-dissatisfied-healthcare-costs.aspx>

2 *Constitution of the United States*. (1787). United States Senate. https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=111&session=1&vote=00396#top

3 Smith, A. (2021, May 5). *McConnell says he's '100 percent' focused on 'stopping' Biden's administration*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/joe-biden/mcconnell-says-he-s-100-percent-focused-stopping-biden-s-n1266443>

4 Yourish, K. & Buchanan, L. & Lu, D. (2021, January 7). The 147 Republicans Who Voted to Overturn Election Results. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/07/us/elections/electoral-college-biden-objectors.html>

5 Canipe, C. & Lange, J. (2021, February 4). *The Republicans who voted to overturn the election*. Reuters. <https://graphics.reuters.com/USA-TRUMP/LAWMAKERS/xegpbedzdvq/>

6 Foran, C & Raju, M. (2021, November 19). *Kevin McCarthy gives longest House floor speech in history delaying Build Back Better vote*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/18/politics/build-back-better-house-vote/index.html>

Abuse of executive power. After the general election in December 2020, Trump asked the governor of Georgia to overthrow the election result of Biden's victory in the state through the internal and personal influence of the party.¹ He asked Georgia's secretary of state to help "find 11,780 votes."² When Trump found that the new Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett appointed by himself was not satisfactory, he was ready to abolish her.³ At the state level, former New York Governor Cuomo resigned on suspicion of misconduct.⁴ Between 1996 and 2016, more than 30 state

dignitaries were charged with crimes in New York State alone.⁵

Abuse of judicial power. "Many of the Supreme Court's decisions are reached with no hearings or explanation,"⁶ the Supreme Court is increasingly using "shadow docket" when issuing rulings.⁷ This system should have been used in the adjudication of emergency events. However, in recent years, the Supreme Court has given little or no explanation to the critical rulings of major and long-term national policies, such as election rules, COVID-19 medical care, immigration, and so on.⁸

1 Reuters Staff. (2020, December 6). *Trump urges Georgia governor to call special session of state legislature*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-georgia-trump-idUSKBN28F0U6>

2 Gardner, A. (2021, January 3). 'I Just Want to Find 11,780 Votes': In extraordinary hour-long call, Trump pressures Georgia Secretary of State to Recalculate the Vote in His Favor. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-raffensperger-call-georgia-vote/2021/01/03/d45acb92-4dc4-11eb-bda4-615aaefd0555_story.html

3 Borowitz, A. (2020, December 9). Trump Attempts to Fire Amy Coney Barrett. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/humor/borowitz-report/trump-attempts-to-fire-amy-coney-barrett>

4 Lenthang, M. (2021, August 24). *NY Gov. Andrew Cuomo Gives Farewell Address: A Timeline of the Sexual Harassment Allegations*. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-accusations-york-gov-andrew-cuomo-calls-resignation/story?id=76207242>

5 Craig, S. & Rashbaum, W. & Kaplan, T. (2016, May 3). The Many Faces of New York's Political Scandals. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/07/23/nyregion/23moreland-commission-and-new-york-political-scandals.html>

6 The Economist. (2021, August 28). Many of the Supreme Court's decisions are reached with no hearings or explanation. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2021/08/26/many-of-the-supreme-courts-decisions-are-reached-with-no-hearings-or-explanation>

7 Baude, W. (2015, February 3). The Supreme Court's Secret Decisions. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/03/opinion/the-supreme-courts-secret-decisions.html>

8 The Economist. (2021, August 28). Many of the Supreme Court's decisions are reached with no hearings or explanation. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2021/08/26/many-of-the-supreme-courtsdecisions-are-reached-with-no-hearings-or-explanation>

People are now beginning to think that “the Supreme Court now has too much power,” “There is no doubt that judicial power has become a big problem in our representative democracy,”¹ “People want the Supreme Court to save American politics, but they are looking for the wrong place,”² “The court is against democracy.”³

1 Bouie, J. (2021, September 3). In the Dead of Night, the Supreme Court Proved It Has Too Much Power. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/opinion/texas-roe-supreme-court.html>

2 Kaplan, D.A. (2018, September 22). People are hoping the Supreme Court will save American politics but they're looking in the wrong place. *Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/supreme-court-power-danger-to-american-values-2018-8>

3 Landau, D. & Dixon, R. (2020). Abusive Judicial Review: Courts Against Democracy. *53 UC Davis Law Review* 1313. FSU College of Law, Public Law Research Paper No. 907. https://lawreview.law.ucdavis.edu/issues/53/3/53-3_Landau_Dixon.pdf

Question 3:

Improve people's well-being or deepen people's suffering?

The United States *Declaration of Independence* states that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” President Lincoln regarded the spirit of the *Declaration of Independence* as “a moral standard by which the day-to-day policies and practices of the nation could be judged.”¹ It reveals that the United States regards improving people's well-being as the foundation of its democratic system. Then, is the American reality under American democracy consistent with the people's will? Has American democracy improved people's well-being or increased people's suffering?

3.1 People's life goes from bad to worse

Does today's American democracy guarantee Americans' fundamental rights such as survival, life, and education? According to a report of 163 countries in 2020, only three countries, including the United States, have seen a decline in the “social development index” in the past decade, and the overall index of the United States has dropped the most, which mainly includes personal safety, health, and K-12 education.²

The fundamental right to subsistence is not guaranteed. Since 1990, the poverty population in the United States has remained above 30 million, and the

1 Edell, C. (2019, July 3). How the Declaration of Independence became a beacon to the world. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/07/03/declaration-independence-is-key-americas-founding-it-matters-rest-world-too/>

2 Haynie, D. (2020, September 11). *Report: American Quality of Life Declines Over Past Decade*. U.S. News. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2020-09-11/a-global-anomaly-the-us-declines-in-annual-quality-of-life-report>

poverty rate is above 10%.¹ According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture data, in 2020, 10.5% of families and 38.3 million people in the United States faced food insecurity,² and 14.8% of families with children and 6.1 million children faced the same problem.

Another report shows, by the end of 2020, more than 50 million Americans to be food insecure, which was nearly 50% higher than that of 2019.³ U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders once wrote an article lamenting, “Poverty in America has become a death sentence. Families across the country are worried about how they are going to feed their kids.”⁴

Many people are homeless. According

to statistics, in 2020, at least 580,000 Americans were homeless, and more than 220,000 people slept on the streets. In the past eight years, the number of people sleeping on the streets in the United States has increased year by year.⁵ It is predicted that the number of homeless people in the United States will reach an astonishing 1.168 million in 2023, over two times than before the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Unemployment, domestic violence, and drug abuse are the direct causes of homelessness.⁷ To this end, the Los Angeles Times asked a sobering question: Why is there “so much wealth” but still “so many homeless”?⁸

1 Statista. (2021, September 21). *Poverty rate in the United States 1990–2020*. Retrieved November 29, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/200463/us-poverty-rate-since-1990/>

2 Economic Research Service. (2021, September 8). *Food Security in the U.S.* U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#foodsecure>

3 Bhardwaj, N. (2020, December 20). 50 million Americans, including 17 million children, to be food insecure by the end of 2020, according to *Feeding America*. Insider. Retrieved November 30, 2021. from <https://www.businessinsider.com/54m-americans-to-be-food-insecure-by-end-of-year-2020-12>

4 Sanders, B. (2021, March 29). The rich-poor gap in America is obscene. So let’s fix it – here’s how. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/29/rich-poor-gap-wealth-inequality-bernie-sanders>

5 Office of Community Planning and Development (2021, January). *2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report Part I*. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

6 Flaming, D., Orlando, A. W., Burns, P., & Pickens, S. (2021, January 11). *Locked Out*. Economic Roundtable. <https://economicrt.org/publication/locked-out/>

7 Schneider, B. (2020, July 6). *CityLab University: Understanding Homelessness in America*. Bloomberg Citylab. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2020-07-06/why-is-homelessness-such-a-problem-in-u-s-cities>

8 Letters to Editor. (2021, March 25). So much wealth, so many homeless in LA. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-03-25/conspicuous-wealth-rampant-poverty-la-problem>

While the poverty population remains high, the education gap is getting wider. A study in 2020 showed that in 2015, the gap between the school expenditure of the top 1% school districts in the United States and the national average was 32% larger than that of 2000.¹ This means that the rich's educational resources are far better than ordinary people and the gap is increasing. When asked about the prospects of many social problems in the United States in 2050, such as economy, politics, medical insurance, public education, the gap between the rich and the poor, living conditions, the threat of terrorist attacks, and so on, more than half of Americans are pessimistic about each of them.² All of these are just as what Tocqueville once worried about in *Democracy in America*: “The surface of American society is coated with a layer of democratic paint.”³

3.2 Elegy of the middle class

Most Americans regard themselves as the middle class and are proud of it. They are often willing to believe that the United States is a society dominated by the middle class and relatively equal.⁴

However, with the publication of *Hillbilly Elegy*, the increasingly embarrassing situation of the American middle class has attracted more and more attention. Research shows that the life of the American middle class is getting harder. The proportion of the middle-income class in the total population has decreased from 61% in 1971 to 51% in 2019, while the low-income class has increased from 25% to 29% in the same period. In addition, the median household wealth

1 Koons, S. (2020, November 17). Faculty studying role of funding in exacerbating educational inequality. News.psu.edu. <https://news.psu.edu/story/639378/2020/11/17/research/faculty-studying-role-funding-exacerbating-educational-inequality>

2 Parker, K., Morin, R., & Horowitz, J. (2019, March 21). Looking to the Future, Public Sees an America in Decline on Many Fronts. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/03/21/public-sees-an-america-in-decline-on-many-fronts/>

3 Tocqueville, A., Reeve, H., & Spencer, J. (1840). *Democracy in America*. J. & H.G. Langley.

4 Smith, N. (2019, July 2). Being Middle Class Isn't Just a Matter of Income. Bloomberg Quint. <https://www.bloombergquint.com/view/u-s-middle-class-isn-t-just-defined-by-income-but-outlook>

in the United States in 2016 was even worse than that in 1998. This shows that the proportion of the American middle class has not only shrunk but “the wealth of American families is currently no higher than its level two decades ago.”¹

The Presidents of the United States like to talk about the “middle class.” Obama said that “America does best when the middle class does better,”² Trump promised “massive middle-class tax cuts,”³ Biden claimed to formulate a “foreign policy for the middle class.”⁴ However, the Brookings Institution wrote that the income of the American middle class has hardly increased over the years, and time has become squeezed. Not only do they have to work, take care of family and children, take part in volunteer activities, etc., but the decline of the marriage rate has

also led to the surge of single-parent families.⁵ Many reasons related to childhood, marriage, employment, and childcare have made more and more Americans, especially middle-class whites, commit suicide and become addicted to alcohol and drugs. As a result, an increasing number of people are dying in despair, and they are getting younger.⁶

3.3 1% > 90%

More than a hundred years ago, Associate Justice Louis Brandeis of the United States Supreme Court once said, “We can either have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both.”⁷

1 Horowitz, J., Igielnik, R., & Kochhar, R. (2020, January 9). *Trends in U.S. income and wealth inequality*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>

2 Obama, B. (2015, March 26). *Remarks by the President on Middle Class Economics*. The White House. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/26/remarks-president-middle-class-economics>

3 King, L. (2020, October 27). *Trump promised massive middle-class tax cuts in 2016. He delivered cuts, not as much on the middle class part*. USA Today. <https://eu.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/politics/elections/2020/10/27/donald-trump-mostly-delivered-2016-campaign-pledge-cut-taxes/3685282001/>

4 Traub, J. (2021, March 17). Biden's ‘Foreign Policy for the Middle Class’ Is a Revolution. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/17/bidens-foreign-policy-middle-class-revolution/>

5 Silva, J., Sawhill, I., Welch, M., & Ford, T. (2020, November). *Voices of the Middle Class*. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FMCI-Silva-Qualitative-Report-FINAL.pdf>

6 Belluz, J. (2017, March 23). *Why the white middle class is dying faster, explained in 6 charts*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/3/23/14988084/white-middle-class-dying-faster-explained-case-deaton>

7 Pazzanese, C. (2016, February 8). The costs of inequality: Increasingly, it's the rich and the rest. *The Harvard Gazette*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2016/02/the-costs-of-inequality-increasingly-its-the-rich-and-the-rest/>

American democracy has evolved to the present day, but has it evaded Brandeis warning?

The proportion of wealth owned by the top 1% to the wealth of all Americans increased from 23.6% in 1989 to 32.3% by mid-2021.¹ According to the data of the Federal Reserve, as of the second quarter of 2021, the top 1% of Americans had about \$43.27 trillion in wealth, which exceeded the bottom 90% of Americans' wealth (\$40.28 trillion) and was 14.3 times that of the bottom 50% of Americans (\$3.03 trillion).² America's low-interest rate has also brought more advantages to those who own stocks and investments.³ As of the second quarter of 2021, the wealthiest 10%

of Americans own about 89% of corporate equities and mutual funds, while the bottom 50% only hold approximately 0.6%.⁴

Assuming that the distribution structure of wealth was unchanged from 1975 to 2020, comparing it with the actual distribution structure of wealth, the difference between the two can be said that the wealthiest 1% of Americans earned a "staggering" 50 trillion dollars from the bottom 90% of Americans.⁵ Joseph Stiglitz further pointed out that "virtually all U.S. Senators, and most of the Representatives in the House, are members of the top 1 percent when they arrive, are kept in office by money from the top 1 percent, and know that if they serve the top 1 percent well,

1 Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (n.d.). *Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989: Shares (%)*. The Federal Reserve System. Retrieved 21 November, 2021, from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/table/#quarter:127;series:Net%20worth;demographic:networth;population:all;units:levels>

2 Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (n.d.). *Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989: Levels (\$)*. The Federal Reserve System. Retrieved 21 November, 2021, from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/table/#quarter:127;series:Net%20worth;demographic:networth;population:all;units:levels>

3 Leonhardt, M. (2021, June 23). *The top 1% of Americans have about 16 times more wealth than the bottom 50%*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/23/how-much-wealth-top-1percent-of-americans-have.html>

4 Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (n.d.). *Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989: Corporate equities and mutual fund shares by wealth percentile group*. The Federal Reserve System. Retrieved 21 November, 2021, from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/chart/#quarter:125;series:Corporate%20equities%20and%20mutual%20fund%20shares;demographic:networth;population:1,3,5,7;units:shares>

5 Hanauer, N., & Rolf, D. (2020, September 14). *The Top 1% of Americans Have Taken \$50 Trillion From the Bottom 90%—And That's Made the U.S. Less Secure*. *Time*. <https://time.com/5888024/50-trillion-income-inequality-america/>

they will be rewarded by the top 1 percent when they leave office.”¹ The Economist pointed out that “Rising inequality means that resources are concentrated in the hands of a few... the concentrated wealth leads to the concentrated power...until checked by disasters.”²

1 Stiglitz, J. E. (2011, March 31). Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%. *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2011/05/top-one-percent-201105>

2 The Economist. (2018, July 21). As inequality grows, so does the political influence of the rich. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2018/07/21/as-inequality-grows-so-does-the-political-influence-of-the-rich>

Question 4:

Defend freedom or hinder freedom?

The United States loves to flaunt American democracy defends freedom, and calls itself “the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope.”¹ The *Declaration of Independence* and the U.S. Constitution laid the foundation for democracy to defend freedom, and the women’s and minority rights movement encouraged vulnerable groups to pursue freedom.² Many situations have changed with the development of world politics, economy, science, and technology, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. Is American democracy still defending freedom or hindering it?

4.1 “Overloaded personal freedom”

Samuel Huntington, a political scientist, once warned of the danger of “democratic overload.” When too many interest groups demanding “too much from the state,” it may “lead to democratic disillusionment as the state fails to live up to its ever-escalating promises,” which may lead to mob rule.³ This is happening in the US today.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the

1 Reagan, R. (1981, January 20). *A Beacon of Hope*. Reagan Foundation. <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/forms/featured/article-a-beacon-of-hope/>

2 Pruitt, S. (2018, June 29). 8 Great Strides for Freedom in U.S. History. History.com. <https://www.history.com/news/8-moments-freedom-us-history>

3 The Economist. (2021, January 16). Political theorists have been worrying about mob rule for 2,000 years. *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/international/2021/01/16/political-theorists-have-been-worrying-about-mob-rule-for-2000-years>

“mask freedom war” broke out in the United States. A considerable number of Americans believe that not wearing masks is personal freedom, and together with the trend of opposing stay-at-home orders and vaccines, creating “COVID-19 Cultural War.”¹ Masks, stay-at-home orders, and vaccines are the basic needs of pandemic prevention in most countries. But not necessarily for America. CNN believes that this is a cultural war and is killing Americans.²

In fact, the “liberty” announced in the *Declaration of Independence*³ is not the same thing as some people claim to protect the “freedom” of not wearing masks. The former implies the right to exercise freedom responsibly and orderly based on a system of rules; the latter has a broader meaning

and more points to the opposition of slavery, and psychological or personal encumbrances, etc.⁴ This should not include the “freedom” that causes others to get sick or even die.⁵ Moreover, science does not support this kind of “overloaded freedom”: a study of 200 countries and regions in August 2020 showed that the weekly new death rate in areas where masks are routinely equipped or recommended by the government is only a quarter of that in other areas.⁶

However, American leaders are inciting this “war.” During his tenure, Trump first said that he supported wearing masks, but he seldom wore one; even shortly before his diagnosis, he ridiculed Biden in public, who was elected later, for consistently wearing a mask.⁷ Trump has repeatedly

1 Wagner, D. (2021, August 2). *The COVID culture war: At what point should personal freedom yield to the common good?* USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/08/02/covid-culture-war-masks-vaccine-pits-liberty-against-common-good/5432614001/>

2 Galant, R. (2021, August 8). *Opinion: The culture war that's killing us*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/08/opinions/culture-war-thats-killing-us-opinion-column-galant/index.html>

3 *The Declaration of Independence*. (1776, July 4). UShistory.org. <https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/>

4 Nunberg, G. (2003, March 23). The Nation: Freedom vs. Liberty; More Than Just Another Word for Nothing Left to Lose. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/23/weekinreview/nation-freedom-vs-liberty-more-than-just-another-word-for-nothing-left-lose.html>

5 Tomasky, M. (2020, October 17). Opinion | There's a Word for Why We Wear Masks, and Liberals Should Say It. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/17/opinion/covid-masks-freedom-democrats.html>

6 Leffler, C., Ing, E., Lykins, J., Hogan, M., McKeown, C., & Grzybowski, A. (2020). Association of Country-wide Coronavirus Mortality with Demographics, Testing, Lockdowns, and Public Wearing of Masks. *The American Journal Of Tropical Medicine And Hygiene*, 103(6), 2400-2411. <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-1015>

7 Peeples, L. (2020, October 6). Face masks: what the data say. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02801-8>

expressed his opposition to restrictions such as stay-at-home orders by many states, and tweeted “LIBERATE MICHIGAN,” “LIBERATE VIRGINIA” and “LIBERATE MINNESOTA,” which led some supporters to think that it was “a call to arms,” and many Americans even went to the streets with guns to protest.¹

The current cultural war caused by “overloaded freedom” has “held back the country’s pandemic response.”² For such “freedom,” a professor at New York University wrote: “Bluntly put: There’s precious little freedom in the sick ward and less still in the graveyard.”³

4.2 “That’s the story of life”

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began

to spread in early 2020, Trump, then-President of the United States, had played down the danger and severity of the pandemic in public and repeatedly claimed that the virus would “disappear” soon. But he later admitted that he knew that the virus was “deadly” as early as February and “probably” misled the public in order to “reduce panic.”⁴

In this regard, *the Nation* published an article titled “Trump Lied, Americans Died,” saying that if Trump had implemented emergency measures such as social distance early, tens of thousands of American deaths could have been avoided.⁵ However, in March 2020, facing a reporter’s question: “How are non-symptomatic professional athletes getting tests while others are waiting in line and can't get them? Do the well-connected go to the front of the line? ... Should that happen?” Trump replied, “No, I

1 Collins, B., & Zadrozny, B. (2020, April 18). In Trump's 'LIBERATE' tweets, extremists see a call to arms. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/trump-s-liberate-tweets-extremists-see-call-arms-n1186561>

2 Lutz, E. (2021, September 14). The Right’s War on COVID Vaccine Mandates Is About to Get Scary. *Vanity Fair*. <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/09/the-rights-war-on-covid-vaccine-mandates-is-about-to-get-scary>

3 Appiah, K. A. (2020, August 6). The True Face of Freedom Wears a Mask. *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-true-face-of-freedom-wears-a-mask-11596727495>

4 Samuels, B. (2020, September 9). Trump says 'perhaps' he misled public on coronavirus to 'reduce panic'. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/515730-trump-says-perhaps-he-misled-public-on-coronavirus-to-reduce-panic>

5 Nichols, J. (2020, September 10). Trump Lied, Americans Died. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/trump-covid-february-woodward/>

wouldn't say so. But perhaps that's been the story of life."¹

When Trump was infected with the COVID-19 in October 2020 and was about to be discharged from hospital after treatment, he tweeted that the treatment was "really great" and called for "don't be afraid." However, Time pointed out that the healthcare system in the United States caused the treatment experience of most Americans to be very different from that of the President: First, the treatment that the President received at that time was difficult for ordinary people to access; second, nearly 30 million Americans without health insurance have to spend \$34,000 to \$45,000 (median of different age groups) to treat COVID-19. Even those with insurance will have had paid more than \$1,000 deductible, while nearly 40% of American adults say they can't afford \$400 emergency with cash.

Third, the COVID-19 test couldn't keep up at that time, people in some areas even had to wait days or weeks to confirm whether they were infected or not, and many people unexpectedly received COVID-19 test bills when they should be free.²

The pace of vaccination also confirms this social injustice. For example, at the initial stage of vaccination, the African American population accounted for only 12% of the vaccinated population in Philadelphia, PA., while its total population in Philadelphia accounted for 44%. In Miami-Dade County, FL., these two numbers are 7% and 17%, respectively;³ And 11% and 24% in New York, respectively.⁴ The gap between the rich and the poor also plays an important role. For example, according to the data for March 2021, the higher the average income of a borough in New York, the higher the vaccination rate. Among them, the

1 Lahut, J. (2020, March 19). Trump says celebrities shouldn't get first coronavirus tests, 'but perhaps that's been the story of life.' *Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-says-celebs-getting-coronavirus-tests-is-story-of-life-2020-3?r=US&IR=T>

2 Vesoulis, A., & Abrams, A. (2020, October 6). Under America's Broken Health Care System, Some Who Downplayed COVID-19 Received the Best Treatment For It. *Time*. <https://time.com/5896719/trump-covid-healthcare-treatment/>

3 Goodnough, A., & Hoffman, J. (2021, February 2). The Wealthy Are Getting More Vaccinations, Even in Poorer Neighborhoods. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/health/white-people-covid-vaccines-minorities.html>

4 Fitzsimmons, E. (2021, January 31). Black and Latino New Yorkers Trail White Residents in Vaccine Rollout. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/31/nyregion/nyc-covid-vaccine-race.html>

vaccination rates in Manhattan with the highest average income and the Bronx with the lowest average income are the highest and lowest, 31% and 20%, respectively, with a gap of 11 percentage points.¹

4.3 False freedom of speech

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects freedom of speech and freedom of the press,² and the latter is called one of the two pillars of American democracy.³ But a serious problem in practice is that the spread of misinformation is difficult to control.⁴

Misinformation during the U.S. election cycle bears the brunt. From 2015 to 2016, candidates spent a total of \$4.22 billion on political advertising, of which digital advertising accounted for 2% to 3%; in 2019-2020, this cost reached \$6.89 billion, and digital advertising surged to 18%.⁵ Brad Parscale of Trump's campaign team once said that their campaign on Facebook was 100 to 200 times more efficient than their opponents.⁶ The critical point is that not only does the First Amendment protect freedom of speech, but also social media such as Facebook will not check the authenticity of political advertisements, thus allowing misleading content to exist;⁷ in addition, Facebook can use "microtargeting" political

1 Horton, J. (2021, March 18). *Covid: How ethnicity and wealth affect US vaccine rollout*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56405199>

2 *Constitution of the United States - First Amendment*. (1791, December 15) U.S. Congress. <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>

3 Kalb, M. (2021, July 22). *The shaky pillars of American democracy*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/07/22/the-shaky-pillars-of-american-democracy/>

4 Bazelon, E. (2020, October 13). *The Problem of Free Speech in an Age of Disinformation*. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/13/magazine/free-speech.html>

5 Statista Research Department. (2020, October 28). *Political advertising spending in the in the United States 2015/2016 and 2019/2020 election cycles*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1182410/political-advertising-spending-election-cycle-united-states/>. Homonoff, H. (2020, December 8). *2020 Political Ad Spending Exploded: Did It Work?* *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/howardhomonoff/2020/12/08/2020-political-ad-spending-exploded-did-it-work/?sh=125808113ce0>

6 Bump, P. (2018, February 27). *Trump's Facebook advertising advantage, explained*. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/02/27/trumps-facebook-advertising-advantage-explained/>

7 Isaac, M., & Kang, C. (2020, January 9). *Facebook Says It Won't Back Down From Allowing Lies in Political Ads*. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/09/technology/facebook-political-ads-lies.html>

advertisements based on personal information and interests, which not only confirm biases but also lead to “voter suppression.” It’s “a lie just for you.”¹

Therefore, false information and social media have a lot of room to play in politics. For example, social media can amplify hatred and extreme emotions through algorithms. Forbes website says that social media has made American politics more

divided.² According to a survey, 64% of Americans think that social media has a negative effect on the direction of the United States, where the top reason is misinformation.³

A law professor at the University of Michigan wrote, “Once a defense of the powerless,” the First Amendment now serves “authoritarians, racists and misogynists, Nazis and Klansmen, pornographers and corporations buying elections.”⁴

1 Torres-Spelliscy, C. (2020, September 21). *A Lie Just for You in 2020*. Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/lie-just-you-2020>

2 Suci, P. (2020, August 20). Social Media Is Making The Political Divide Even Worse. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuci/2020/08/20/social-media-is-making-the-political-divide-even-worse/?sh=62338bba102c>

3 Auxier, B. (2020, October 15). *64% of Americans say social media have a mostly negative effect on the way things are going in the U.S. today*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/15/64-of-americans-say-social-media-have-a-mostly-negative-effect-on-the-way-things-are-going-in-the-u-s-today/>

4 Bollinger, L., & Stone, G. (2019). *The Free Speech Century*. Oxford University Press.

Question 5:

Protect human rights or violate human rights?

The United States regards “protecting human rights” as one of the reasons for promoting American democracy abroad. However, it is difficult to guarantee the American people's most basic right to life from the United States' practice. Does American democracy protect or hurt human rights?

5.1 Every year, more than 30,000 people are killed in gun violence

Compared with other countries globally, the United States has the

weakest gun laws and the most guns - 393 million - of any comparable nation.¹ The problem of gun proliferation has always been an incurable pain in American democracy.

During 2015-2019, more than 38,000 deaths were related to gun violence every year.² In 2020, affected by the pandemic, the shooting incidents in the United States became more serious, with 45,000 people killed.³ In 2020, murders in the United States surged by 25% year on year, among which there were several hundred more murders in Chicago, New York, and other cities than in 2019.⁴ Data from the past five years show that nearly 1,000

1 Karp, A. (2018). *Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms Numbers*. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep20049.pdf>. Giffords. (2021, August 17). *Statistics*. Retrieved December 4, 2021, from <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-violence-statistics/>

2 Brady. (n.d.). *The Facts That Make Us Act*. <https://www.bradyunited.org/key-statistics>

3 Giffords. (2021, October 6). 2020 CDC Data Shows Record Number of Gun Deaths. <https://giffords.org/press-release/2021/10/2020-cdc-data-shows-record-number-of-gun-deaths/>

4 Beckett, L., & Clayton, A. (2021, June 30). How bad is the rise in US homicides? Factchecking the ‘crime wave’ narrative police are pushing. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jun/30/us-crime-rate-homicides-explained>

Americans are killed by the police every year.¹

“The vast majority of these tragedies happen far from the glare of the national spotlight, unfolding instead in homes or on city streets and — like the covid-19 crisis — disproportionately affecting communities of color.”²

The proliferation of guns threatens the fundamental human rights of every American. Americans are 25 times more likely to be killed in gun homicides than people in other high-income countries.³ The United States accounts for only 4% of the world’s population, but it accounts for 35% of firearm suicides worldwide.⁴ The threat of guns permeates the memory

of every American, “almost every American knows at least one victim of gun violence in their lifetime.”⁵

5.2 “Black Lives Matter”

It has always been difficult to solve the personal safety problems caused by racial discrimination in the United States by the American democratic mechanism. Since 2013, the “Black Lives Matter” campaign has attracted worldwide attention, but the tragedy has never stopped. “Black men are about 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police over the life course than are white men”⁶ Even a year after

1 Fatal Force. (2021, November 18). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 21 November 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>

2 Thebault, R., & Rindler, D. (2021, March 23). Shootings never stopped during the pandemic: 2020 was the deadliest gun violence year in decades. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/03/23/2020-shootings/>

3 Grinshteyn, E., & Hemenway, D. (2019). Violent death rates in the US compared to those of the other high-income countries, 2015. *Preventive Medicine*, 123, 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.02.026>

4 Naghavi, M., Marczak, L. B., Kutz, M., Shackelford, K. A., Arora, M., Miller-Petrie, M., Aichour, M. T. E., Akseer, N., Al-Raddadi, R. M., Alam, K., Alghnam, S. A., Antonio, C. A. T., Aremu, O., Arora, A., Asadi-Lari, M., Assadi, R., Atey, T. M., Avila-Burgos, L., Awasthi, A., . . . Murray, C. J. L. (2018). Global Mortality From Firearms, 1990–2016. *JAMA*, 320(8), 792. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2018.10060>

5 Kalesan, B., Weinberg, J., & Galea, S. (2016). Gun violence in Americans' social network during their lifetime. *Preventive medicine*, 93, 53-56. See also, Parker, K., Horowitz, J., Igielnik, R., Oliphant, B., & Brown, A. (2017). America's complex relationship with guns: An in-depth look at the attitudes and experiences of US adults. Pew Research Center. <https://pewrsr.ch/2txQZSP>

6 Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(34), 16793–16798. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116>

George Floyd's death which shocked the whole world, the police in the United States at least killed 229 black people.¹ Faced with the deaths of 229 American citizens, people inevitably have doubts. Did Floyd's death change the situation of black people? The data shows despair.

Latinos also suffer from security threats in the United States. In 2019, a white racist terrorist shot and killed 22 people and injured 26 others in El Paso, Texas. The FBI reported that anti-Latino or Hispanic hate crimes increased by more than 21% in the same year.²

Hate crimes against Asians increased by 150% in 2020.³ In March 2021, a 21-year-old white man shot and killed six Asian women in three massage parlors in Atlanta.⁴ Helpless and in despair, Asian Americans finally

had to rely on themselves and went to the streets, setting off the "Stop Asian Hate" movement.⁵ Is it true that the guarantee of the right to personal security for all U.S. ethnic groups cannot be solved through the mechanisms of American democracy?

5.3 Near 800,000 lives died in the "massacre"

The fragility of American democracy is exposed in the face of disaster. By the beginning of December 2021, about 50 million people in the United States had been infected with the COVID-19, and the death toll is approaching 800,000. The number of infections and deaths ranks first in the world. Some people sigh, "This is a massacre!"⁶

1 Rahman, K. (2021, October 4). Full List of 229 Black People Killed by Police Since George Floyd's Murder. *Newsweek*. <https://www.newsweek.com/full-list-229-black-people-killed-police-since-george-floyds-murder-1594477>

2 Canizales, S. L., & Vallejo, J. A. (2021). Latinos & Racism in the Trump Era. *Daedalus*, 150(2), 150–164. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01852

3 Yam, K. (2021, March 10). Anti-Asian hate crimes increased by nearly 150% in 2020, mostly in N.Y. and L.A., new report says. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-nearly-150-2020-mostly-n-n1260264>

4 Fausset, R., & Vigdor, N. (2021, March 16). 8 People Killed in Atlanta-Area Shootings at Massage Parlors. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/16/us/atlanta-shootings-massage-parlor.html>

5 Namkung, V. (2021, May 4). *The story behind the group tracking anti-Asian hate incidents*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/story-group-tracking-anti-asian-hate-incidents-rcna662>

6 Kristof, N. (2020, October 22). Opinion | America and the Coronavirus: 'A Colossal Failure of Leadership.' *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/22/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-united-states.html>

The inefficiency of democracy in the United States has made the country full of partisan disagreement for a long time after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, from nucleic acid testing, wearing masks, keeping social distance, quarantine at home, vaccinating to the distribution of strategic medical reserves, emergency relief bill, etc. The disputes between two parties also exist among the federal, state, and local levels, the executive, legislative, judicial departments, as well as conservative and liberal media. The pandemic prevention and control have fallen into

“politicized internal friction.”

“When the virus came here, it found a country with serious underlying conditions, and it exploited them ruthlessly. Chronic ills—a corrupt political class, a sclerotic bureaucracy, a heartless economy, a divided and distracted public—had gone untreated for years.”¹ Faced with approximate 800,000 dead souls who died in the COVID-19, it is inevitable that people will have doubts. Can American democracy effectively protect the right to life of the American people?

1 Packer, G. (2020, June). The Coronavirus Revealed America’s Failures. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/06/underlying-conditions/610261/>

Question 6:

Promote unity or lead to division?

Democracy should promote national unity and social harmony. If it leads to more and more division in the state and society, then this kind of “democracy” is a harmful system for the state.

As early as 1796, George Washington, the first President of the United States, gave a warning in his farewell speech: “The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism.”¹ George Washington also believed that the essence of government’s public management lies in compromise, and compromise needs to be fulfilled through the promise of unity.² Does today’s American

democracy still have a sense of compromise and unity?

6.1 “Go separate ways”

The United States is a federation of 50 states. Democracy should promote unity among them. However, now the two parties in the United States are constantly using the system design to attack each other, leading to severe political polarization, social disorder, and contradictions. A split call of “going separate ways” has arisen in the U.S.

A polling project by the University of Virginia Center for Politics to explore the common political ground in the

1 Washington, G. (1796, September 19). *Washington’s Farewell Address to the People of the United States*. United States Senate Historical Office. https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/Washingtons_Farewell_Address.pdf

2 Allen, D. (2019, December). The Road from Serfdom: How Americans can become citizens again. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/danielle-allen-american-citizens-serfdom/600778/>

United States shows that 52% of Trump voters and 41% of Biden voters believe the separation of the red and blue states from the union may be a better choice for the present United States.¹ Nearly 90% of voters on both sides believe that if the other side's ideas "succeed," then they will no longer belong to the United States.

The general disappointment with the other camp constantly erodes voters' confidence in American democracy. Regardless of the Trump camp or Biden camp, many voters have doubts about voters, elected officials, and media sources on the other side. In the eyes of Trump voters, there is no essential difference between Democrats and socialists; in the eyes of Biden voters, there is no real difference between Republicans and fascists to some extent. Given the irreconcilable differences, many voters in the red and

blue camps expressed their willingness to consider sacrificing democratic tendencies and norms to prioritize their considerations.²

Separatism has long been marginalized in the United States. In recent years, the irreversible political rift in the United States has made the proposal of national disintegration attractive to both the right and left wings. Frank Buckley from George Mason University published the book *American Secession*, proclaiming that "we're ripe for secession," advocating "there's much to be said for an American breakup." Richard Kreitner of *The Nation* wrote, "We must finally finish the work of Reconstruction or give up on the union entirely."³ The United States is in a "Cold Civil War," It is now increasingly torn by two hostile constitutionalism, culture and lifestyle.⁴

1 Villarreal, D. (2021, September 30). Majority of Trump Voters Want to Split the Nation Into 'Red' and 'Blue' Halves. *Newsweek*. <https://www.newsweek.com/majority-trump-voters-want-split-nation-red-blue-halves-1634523>

2 UVA Center for Politics. (2021, September 30). *New Initiative Explores Deep, Persistent Divides Between Biden and Trump Voters*. University of Virginia. <https://centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/new-initiative-explores-deep-persistent-divides-between-biden-and-trump-voters/>

3 Lowry, R. (2021, October 6). Opinion | A Surprising Share of Americans Wants to Break Up the Country. Here's Why They're Wrong. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/10/06/americans-national-divorce-theyre-wrong-515443>

4 Kesler, C. R. (2018). America's Cold Civil War. *Imprimis*, 47(10), 1-5. Codevilla, A. M. (2017). The Cold Civil War: Statecraft in a Divided Country. *Claremont Review of Books*, 17(2), 24-27.

6.2 “Go back where you came from”

America is a multi-ethnic country, and democracy should promote inter-ethnic unity. Another critical question running through American politics is: can this country survive as a multi-ethnic democracy, and how?¹

Blatant racist attacks are not surprising in the United States, Former President Trump once threatened four Democrat minority Congresswomen to “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime-infested places from which they came.”² The Congresswomen reacted strongly, saying that “This is what racism looks like. We are what democracy looks like.”³

With the spread of racism, ethnic minorities in the United States are in different degrees of an identity crisis, which stimulates the nerve of racial

division in the United States. Political scientist Michael Tesler pointed out that more and more Americans agree that the United States has not made real racial progress in the past 50 years. The proportion of people who agree that “African Americans suffer a lot of discrimination” increased from 19% in 2013 to 50% in 2020.⁴

Under American democracy, there is still the shadow of slavery. “Blacks are particularly gloomy about the country’s racial progress. More than eight in ten black adults say the legacy of slavery affects the position of black people in America today, including 59% who say it affects it a great deal. About eight in ten blacks (78%) say the country hasn’t gone far enough when it comes to giving black people equal rights with whites, and fully half say it’s unlikely that the country will eventually achieve racial equality.”⁵

During COVID-19, a wave of anti-

1 Edsall T. B. (2021, September 1). How Strong Is America’s Multiracial Democracy? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/01/opinion/us-multiracial-democracy.html>

2 Quilantan, B., & Cohen, D. (2019, July 14). Trump tells Dem congresswomen: Go back where you came from. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/14/trump-congress-go-back-where-they-came-from-1415692>

3 Pengelly, M. (2019, July 15). 'Go back home': Trump aims racist attack at Ocasio-Cortez and other congresswomen. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/14/trump-squad-tlaib-omar-pressley-ocasio-cortez>

4 Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2020, October 24). Opinion | End Minority Rule. *The New York Times*. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/23/opinion/sunday/disenfranchisement-democracyminority-rule.html>

5 Horowitz, J., Brown, A., & Cox, K. (2019, April 9). *Race in America 2019*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/>

China sentiment has made Asian Americans increasingly hate crime targets. Since 2020, anti-Asian violence in the United States has surged. According to a poll conducted by Pew Research Center in April 2021, 81% of respondents agreed that atrocities against Asian Americans increased, and 32% of Asian adults were afraid of threats or personal attacks.¹ American democracy was once mainly based on immigration. When some Americans shout to other American-born minorities to “go home,” where can they go?

6.3 Torn values

The United States is an immigrant society with diverse values. Democracy should promote the unity of different values. However, while ethnic minorities are persecuted in today's

America, whites also feel discriminated against. White parents are surprised to find that six-year-old children's education at school is that “most white people are bad.”² According to a joint poll by the National Public Radio and Harvard University, 55% of the white people surveyed felt poorly treated.³

The value division disguised by democracy originates from the deep-rooted white supremacy in the United States.⁴ During the four years of Trump's administration, the once marginalized white racism concept gradually penetrated the mainstream democratic political debate in the United States. Stephen Miller, Trump's policy adviser with the most extreme ideology, promoted a series of ideas that incite white people's racial anxiety. His advocations include the “great replacement” theory that warns that non-whites are squeezing white people, the white genocide caused by immigration, and even ethnic science

1 Ruiz, N. Z., Edwards, D., & Lopez, M. H. (2021, April 21). *One-third of Asian Americans fear threats, physical attacks and most say violence against them is rising*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/21/one-third-of-asian-americans-fear-threats-physical-attacks-and-most-say-violence-against-them-is-rising/>

2 Ferguson, N. (2018, April 1). *White Men Are Bad; Even a Six-Year-Old Tells Me So*. Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/white-men-are-bad-even-six-year-old-tells-me-so>

3 Gonyea, D. (2017, October 24). *Majority Of White Americans Say They Believe Whites Face Discrimination*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/24/559604836/majority-of-white-americans-think-theyre-discriminated-against>

4 Jones, R. L. (2021, January 21). Why I love Donald Trump: He exposed just how deep American white supremacy runs. *The Courier-Journal*. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2021/01/21/donald-trump-legacy-he-exposed-just-how-deep-white-supremacy-runs/4239779001/>

and eugenics theories.¹

White supremacy's thought caters to the superiority of traditional white men, and at the same time, makes use of their fear. Throughout history, the identity of white Americans has been based on their advantages over other ethnic groups, which the American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois called "wages of the whiteness." This autosuggestion gives white Americans psychological feedback that their social status is higher than their black counterparts. When American society is trying to change towards a broader sense of "equality," many white people are worried that social resources are inclined to ethnic minorities, and they feel deprived and unbalanced in their hearts. American sociologist Michael

S. Kimmel described this as "aggrieved entitlement."²

The political elites in Washington, D.C. tactically use "wages of the whiteness" and "aggrieved entitlement" to aggravate the value division of the whole society. The Trump administration ignored the growing tendency of white extremism and paved the way for political violence.³ Between 2016 and 2017, the number of attacks by far-right perpetrators quadrupled.⁴

Francis Fukuyama, a political scientist, pointed out that long before Trump was elected, the United States was gradually "captured by powerful elite groups" and "the system is still too rigid to reform itself," and "the

1 Clark, S. (2020, July 1). *How White Supremacy Returned to Mainstream Politics*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2020/07/01/482414/white-supremacy-returned-mainstream-politics/>

2 Bebout, L. (2021, January 6). *Trump tapped into white victimhood – leaving fertile ground for white supremacists*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/trump-tapped-into-white-victimhood-leaving-fertile-ground-for-white-supremacists-150587>

3 Talor, K. (2021, January 12). *The Bitter Fruits of Trump's White-Power Presidency*. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-bitter-fruits-of-trumps-white-power-presidency>

4 Jones, S. G. (2018, November 7). *The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States*. Center for Strategic & International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-far-right-extremism-united-states>

rigidity...has become more and more obvious and problematic.” Trump himself was the product of this system while continuing to “weaken the country’s institutional foundations.”¹ After Trump failed in re-election in 2020, “Storming of United States Capitol” became an American tragedy that shocked the world.² The rift of American values is constantly expanding.

1 Fukuyama, F. (2021a, January 21). Rotten to the Core? How America’s Political Decay Accelerated During the Trump Era. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-18/rotten-core>

2 Bennhold, K., & Myers, S. L. (2021, January 6). World Leaders Express Horror at U.S. Capitol Attack. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/06/world/europe/trump-capitol-2020-election-mob.html>

Question 7:

Realize dreams or bring nightmares?

As a new continent, America has long attracted immigrants worldwide with the “American Dream.” Realizing dreams is the motivation for countless Americans to move to this land. Then, whether American democracy can protect the “American Dream” is the key to whether this land can provide a peaceful and content living and working environment. Looking into the history before 2021, does American democracy bring dreams or nightmares to people?

7.1 Disillusionment of the American Dream

More than a century ago, Horatio Alger created a series of characters who went from poverty to wealth through

personal struggle in best-selling novels such as *Ragged Dick*, which made the United States a magnet to realize the “American Dream.” However, there are fewer ways to get the class lifted or earn a higher income in today's America. “The can-do spirit of Horatio Alger has been replaced by defeatism combined with hostility and cultural decay among the poor.”¹

The American dream is dying. “Poor people in the US are 20 times less likely to believe hard work will get them ahead than their (poorer) Latin American counterparts – with white Americans particularly pessimistic.”² “The opportunity to live the American dream is much less widely shared today than it was several decades ago. While 90% of the children born in 1940 ended up in higher ranks of the income distribution than their parents,

1 Leef, G. (2016, September 22). Resuming the American dream. *Regulation* 39(3). <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?i=d=GALE%7CA466940117&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=01470590&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7E45f03ff1>.

2 Graham, C. (2017, June 20). Is the American dream really dead? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jun/20/is-the-american-dream-really-dead>

only 40% of those born in 1980 have done so.”¹

Americans are so in despair for the American dream that many people write obituaries about it.² People mourn through *The New York Times* in misery: “When I became aware of the fact that my family was considered ‘illegal’”; “when I realized that after working 50 hours a week I was not able to save”; “when I realized just how many of my fellow Americans valued selfishness over the community, power over justice, prejudice over fairness, greed over generosity, demagoguery over science.”³

The American dream was once a shining beacon supported by American democracy. Is it extinguished? For the American people, the American dream is dying out gradually and has gone through a long struggle. For many new immigrants since 2020, their American dream died on the border.⁴

7.2 American negative energy

Americans have lost trust in the freedom of the press advertised by American democracy. Both the mainstream media and social media are full of negative public opinion.

59% of Americans believe that “journalists and reporters are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations.” 59% of Americans believe that “most news organizations are more concerned with supporting an ideology or political position than with informing the public.” 61% of Americans think that “the media is not doing well at being objective and non-partisan.”⁵

Americans are equally disappointed with social media. A CNN poll finds that “Roughly three-quarters (76%)

1 Graham, C. (2017, June 20). Is the American dream really dead? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jun/20/is-the-american-dream-really-dead>

2 *Obituaries of the American Dream (1931-2020)*. [Obituariesoftheamericandream.com](https://www.obituariesoftheamericandream.com/). <https://www.obituariesoftheamericandream.com/>

3 Opinion | Obituaries for the American Dream. (2020, November 1). *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/01/opinion/american-dream-stories.html>

4 Vulliamy, E. (2021, February 21). How the American dream died on the world’s busiest border. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/feb/21/how-the-american-dream-died-on-the-worlds-busiest-border>

5 Edelman. (n.d.). *2021 Edelman Trust Barometer*. Retrieved December 4, 2021, from <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-03/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer.pdf>

of adults believe Facebook is making American society worse. Roughly half of Americans, 49%, say they know someone they think was persuaded to believe in a conspiracy theory because of content on Facebook. That number is higher among younger Americans.”¹ According to the former Facebook employees, “1 in 8 of the app’s users report engaging in compulsive use of social media that affects their sleep, work, parenting or relationships, and the problems were perceived by users to be worse on Facebook than any other major social media platform.” The news also reveals that “Facebook services are used to spread religious hatred in India.”²

Under American democracy, media dishonesty and negative energy spread have produced another consequence—anti-intellectualism. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States in 2020. In May 2020, the American Salon News criticized that anti-intellectualism is back ...

and it is killing Americans. Anti-intellectualism has brought America into the gutter of cultural democracy. This is a morbid situation in which all opinions are treated equally (the advice of professionals such as medical care is not respected). Otherwise, they will be accused of being snobbish, pretentious, and contemptuous of the disadvantaged.³ When the media loses trust and anti-intellectualism prevails, does American democracy need profound self-reflection?

7.3 Confusion and despair for the future

Americans are losing confidence in the country’s development path and direction. The number of Americans dissatisfied with the direction of the United States has increased from 33% in 2017 to 50% in 2021.⁴ 85% of Americans believe that the United States’ political system needs

1 Edwards-Levy, A., & Agiesta, J. (2021, November 10). *CNN Poll: Three out of four adults think Facebook is making society worse*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/10/business/cnn-poll-facebook/index.html>

2 The Facebook Files – A Wall Street Journal investigation. (n.d.) *The Wall Street Journal*. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-facebook-files-11631713039?mod=article_inline

3 Masciotra, D. (2020, May 30). Anti-intellectualism is back — because it never went away. *And it’s killing Americans*. Salon. <https://www.salon.com/2020/05/30/anti-intellectualism-is-back--because-it-never-went-away-and-its-killing-americans/>

4 Quinnipiac University Poll. *Direction of the Country. Polling Report Inc.* Retrieved December 2, 2021, from <http://www.pollingreport.com/right.htm>

significant change or overhaul.¹ A 2019 Pew Research Center survey on America's vision for 2050 shows that about 73% of Americans believe the gap between rich and poor will grow by 2050. 57% of American adults believe that people aged 65 and older will have a worse standard of living in 2050 than they do today. About 59% of Americans believe the environment will worsen by 2050. 60% of Americans believe the United States will be less important in the world by 2050 than it is today. 49% of Americans say they are very concerned about the federal government's dysfunction. 48% say they are apprehensive about the ability of political leaders to solve the nation's big problems.²

As despair spread, young Americans began to choose to “lie flat.” According to a survey conducted by the Federal

Reserve Bank of New York in July 2021, 2.3% of Americans under 45 plan to leave the labor market, while only 0.9% of Americans over 45 have similar plans.³ Once upon a time, ambition was admirable. Now, choosing to quit one’s career can get 400,000 praises on Twitter.⁴

A new poll released on December 1 by the Harvard Kennedy School shows that a majority (52%) of young people believe that democracy in the US is “in trouble” or “failing.” More than half (51%) of young Americans sometimes feel depressed or hopeless, and about one in four said they had had thoughts of self-harm in the past two weeks.⁵ According to a survey released by the Pew Research Center on October 21, 2021, 85% of Americans believe that the political system of the United States needs significant changes or radical reforms. Only 41% of

1 Wike, R., Fetterolf, J., Schumacher, S., & Moncus, J. J. (2021, October 21). *Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/10/21/citizens-in-advanced-economies-want-significant-changes-to-their-political-systems/>

2 Gramlich, J. (2019, March 21). *Looking ahead to 2050, Americans are pessimistic about many aspects of life in U.S.* Pew Research Center. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/facttank/2019/03/21/looking-ahead-to-2050-americans-are-pessimistic-about-many-aspects-of-life-in-u-s/>

3 Federal Reserve Bank of New York. (2021, July). *SCE Labor Market Survey*. <https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/sce/labor#/expectations-transitions2>

4 Schragar, A. (2021, September 13). *‘Lie Flat’ If You Want, But Be Ready to Pay the Price*. Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-09-13/lie-flat-if-you-want-but-be-ready-to-pay-the-price?sref=m8HfplT6>

5 Institute of Politics. (2021, December 1). *Fall 2021 Harvard Youth Poll*. Harvard Kennedy School. <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/fall-2021-harvard-youth-poll>

Americans think that the American “democratic system” works well, and 58% disagree.¹

When work still can’t help Americans get rid of poverty, what can they expect except confusion, despair, and lie flat? The immense possibility is to get lost in drugs and shooting. Since 2000, the number of deaths caused by drug abuse and shooting has increased year after year.² In 2020 alone, the murder crime rate increased by 30% compared with the previous year, the most considerable increase in the past hundred years.³ 56.5% of the respondents said that they were

afraid of domestic riots.⁴ In the face of tragedy, Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, lamented: “We’re literally seeing it (the homicide) in front of our eyes -- at school board meetings and public events” and “people seem to have lost all civility.”⁵

In November 2020, Oregon became the first state in the United States to legalize “hard drugs.”⁶ According to the Associated Press, in 2021, 100,000 Americans died of a drug overdose. The main reasons for this tragedy were the proliferation of opioid drugs such as fentanyl and the COVID-19

1 Wike, R., Fetterolf, J., Schumacher, S., & Moncus, J. J. (2021, October 21). *Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems*. Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/10/21/citizens-in-advanced-economies-want-significant-changes-to-their-political-systems/>

2 Statista Research Department. (2021, February 18). *Number of firearm deaths in the United States from 1990 to 2018*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/258913/number-of-firearm-deaths-in-the-united-states/>

3 Howard, J. (2021, October 6). *US records highest increase in nation's homicide rate in modern history, CDC says*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/06/health/us-homicide-rate-increase-nchs-study/index.html>

4 Amirazizi, R. (2021). *America’s Top Fears 2020/2021*. Chapman University. https://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/research-centers/babbie-center/_files/Babbie%20center%20fear2021/blogpost-americas-top-fears-2020_-21-final.pdf

5 Howard, J. (2021, October 6). *US records highest increase in nation's homicide rate in modern history, CDC says*. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/06/health/us-homicide-rate-increase-nchs-study/index.html>

6 Wootson, C. R., Jr, & Peiser, J. (2020, November 4). Oregon decriminalizes possession of hard drugs, as four other states legalize recreational marijuana. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/11/04/election-drugs-oregon-new-jersey/>

pandemic that made drug addicts unable to get timely assistance and support.¹ President Biden called it “a tragic milestone” in a statement.² “Milestone” means that the harm of drugs to the American people has reached a new height, but this tragedy still has no end in sight and is still heading for the next “milestone.”

Americans’ national self-confidence has been seriously frustrated. In 2014,

only 28% of Americans regarded the United States as greatest country. Most Americans believed that America was only one of the great countries in the world, and 12% thought that other countries were greater than America. By 2019, the proportion of people considering the United States as the greatest country in the world fell to 24%. The proportion of people who believe that other countries are greater than the United States rose to 21%.³

1 Associated Press. (2021, November 17). *US Overdose Deaths Topped 100,000 in One Year, Officials Say*. U.S. News. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-11-17/us-overdose-deaths-topped-100-000-in-one-year-officials-say>

2 Biden, J. (2021, November 17). *Statement by President Joe Biden on Surpassing 100,000 American Overdose Deaths in the Past Year*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/17/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-surpassing-100000-american-overdose-deaths-in-the-past-year/>

3 Pew Research Center. (2019, December 17). *In a Politically Polarized Era, Sharp Divides in Both Partisan Coalitions*. <https://www.people-press.org/2019/12/17/in-a-politically-polarized-era-sharp-divides-in-both-partisan-coalitions/>

Question 8:

Improve national governance or lead to system failure?

The Constitution of the United States clearly states: “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union.”¹ For this purpose, the founders specified in detail the embryonic form of the initial democratic practice in the United States in the subsequent chapters of the Constitution.

However, more than 200 years have passed, and contemporary American politicians of both parties seem to have forgotten the founders’ original intention when they formulated the Constitution. The internal friction between the two parties is so severe that now in the United States, it is common for the federal government to

shut down, and it is difficult to pass a bill. Even the process and results of the presidential election, which probably best embody the democratic spirit, cannot gain the people’s general trust.²

8.1 The proliferation of “vetocracy”

In order to check and balance the power among government departments, the founders stipulated in the Constitution the President has the ability to veto, which the Congress can override.³ However, this kind of checks and balances has become the

1 *Constitution of the United States*. (1787). National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

2 Dann, C. (2021, November 8). *Significant majority of Republicans don't believe Biden's win was fair*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/meet-the-press/blog/meet-press-blog-latest-news-analysis-data-driving-political-discussion-n988541/ncrd1261306#blogHeader>

3 United States Senate. (n.d.). *Vetoes*. https://www.senate.gov/reference/reference_index_subjects/Vetoes_vrd.htm

front position of partisan struggle, which leads to frequent phenomena such as malicious objection of bills, intensified political threats, and failure of election results. “Vetocracy” has become a stumbling block to social development, and the desire for “a more perfect union” has fallen into “identity politics.”¹

Malicious objection of bills. In the day-to-day political discussions in the United States, whether the President is a “lame-duck” one is always a hot topic. If both houses of Congress are not in the hands of one party, it will be difficult for the President’s proposal to pass.² Taking the U.S. government debt problem as an example, in numerous discussions on the debt since 1959, partisan struggle has led to the shutdowns of the Carter administration five times, the shutdowns of the Reagan administration eight times, and the shutdowns of the Trump administration including a record

duration of 34 days.³ Countless bills cannot pass because of partisan struggles.

Political threats have intensified. It is nearly impossible for lawmakers to maintain party neutrality in the voting process of bills, and political threats within the party don’t make them feel easy. On November 5, 2021, when the House of Representatives voted for the Biden’s Infrastructure Bill, 13 Republicans voted for it, which immediately attracted attacks from other GOP members, calling them “must be eliminated from the party.” In fact, long before the vote on this bill, Kevin McCarthy, the House minority leader, stressed in the Republican Party not to help Biden.⁴ It reveals that when members vote on an economic development issue, they can no longer only pay attention to the rationality of the bill itself. Instead, they have to worry about their personal political safety and even personal

1 Fukuyama, F. (2014, September/October). America in Decay: The Sources of Political Dysfunction. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2014-08-18/america-decay>

2 Nagle, J.C. (2012). Lame Duck Logic. *UCDavis Law Review*. https://lawreview.law.ucdavis.edu/issues/45/4/Articles/45-4_Nagle.pdf

3 History, Art and Archives. (n.d.). *Funding Gaps and Shutdowns in the Federal Government*. United States House of Representatives. <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Shutdown/Government-Shutdowns/>

4 Zhao, C. (2021, November 8). 'Must Be Eliminated': Trump Republicans Vow to Oust GOP Members Who Voted for Infrastructure. *Newsweek*. <https://www.newsweek.com/must-eliminated-trump-republicans-vow-oust-gop-members-who-voted-infrastructure-1646725?amp=1>

safety. In 2020, personal threats against legislators more than doubled compared to 2019.¹

The failure of election results. The most ironic manifestation of “vetocracy” is that the presidential candidate publicly refuses to recognize the election results after the election results. After the 2020 presidential election results were announced, 68% of Republican voters thought Biden had “stolen” Trump’s victory in the 2020 presidential election.² Trump insisted that the election process was “far from over” and pursued further lawsuits,³ and even skipped the Inauguration.

8.2 The federal and state governments obstruct each other

The mutual obstruction between the federal and state governments leads to internal friction, impediments of federal decrees, and infrastructure plans hard to implement. The struggle between political parties has aggravated the difficulties in coordination between the federal and state governments.⁴

Competition for power and internal friction. The federal government and the state governments have apparent disagreements in the jurisdiction. Greg Abbott, the governor of Texas and then-Attorney General of Texas in 2013, once said, “I go into the office in the morning, I sue Barack Obama, and then I go home.”⁵ From social welfare rights, immigration management rights to gun control, the federal government and state governments have spent a lot of time competing for jurisdiction, and there are endless calls for independence

1 Higgins, T. (2021, May 7). *Threats against Members of Congress Have More Than Doubled This Year, Capitol Police Says*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/07/threats-against-members-of-congress-have-more-than-doubled-this-year.html>.

2 Byler, D. (2021, November 10). *Why Do Some Still Deny Biden's 2020 Victory? Here's What Data Says*. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/10/why-do-some-still-deny-bidens-2020-victory-heres-what-data-says/>

3 Breuninger, K. (2020, November 7). *Trump refuses to accept election results, says it's 'far from over'*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/07/trump-refuses-to-accept-election-results-says-it-is-far-from-over.html>

4 Bulman-Pozen, J. (2014, February 20). *Partisan Federalism: Examining the interaction of party politics and federalism*. *Harvard Law Review*. <https://harvardlawreview.org/2014/02/partisan-federalism/>

5 Rios, J. (2013, February 19). *Greg Abbott shares views with local Republicans*. Wayback Machine. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130424004833/http://www.gosanangelo.com/news/2013/feb/19/abbott-shares-views-with-local-republicans/>

in certain states or regions.¹ Ironically, both sides claimed that the other side violated the Constitution.²

The federal decree is impeded. The administrative plan of the federal government can hardly pass and implement in states where the other party is in power. Biden signed two executive orders in September, requiring U.S. government employees and government contractors to be vaccinated against COVID-19. However, as Biden's executive order was issued, Greg Abbott, the governor of Texas, immediately issued an executive order in that state to forbid any entity, including private enterprises, to implement COVID-19 vaccination mandates for employees or customers;³ Florida Governor Ron DeSantis immediately sued the Biden

administration's vaccine executive order, saying it was unconstitutional;⁴ Although the well-known Obamacare or Affordable Care Act has been passed at the federal level, there are 12 states have not passed it, almost all of which are Republican-controlled states.⁵

Infrastructure plans are difficult to implement. Both the Obama administration and the Trump administration tried to pass large-scale national infrastructure bills during their term in office, but they all failed because of the intentional obstruction from legislators of various states belonging to the opposite party.⁶ Take California's high-speed rail construction as an example, California has been preparing for high-speed rail construction for more than 25 years. Since the environmental assessment in

1 Hubbard, K. (2021, November 5). *America: Love It Or Leave It*. U.S. News. <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2021-11-05/americans-eye-secession-amid-intractable-partisan-disputes>

2 Biden, J. (2021, September 1). *Statement by President Joe Biden on Texas Law SB8*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/01/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-texas-law-sb8/>

3 Rogers, K. & Stolberg, S.G. (2021, September 9). Biden Mandates Vaccines for Workers, Saying, 'Our Patience Is Wearing Thin'. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/09/us/politics/biden-mandates-vaccines.html>.

4 Fineout, G. (2021, November 4). 'We Have Had Enough': DeSantis Will Sue Biden over Workplace Vaccine Mandates. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2021/11/04/desantis-vows-biden-vaccine-mandates-are-absolutely-going-down-1392312>

5 Brewster, J. (2020, August 5). Twelve States Have Yet To Pass A Medicaid Expansion—Nine Are Run By Republicans. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackbrewster/2020/08/05/twelve-states-have-yet-to-pass-a-medicaid-expansion-nine-are-run-by-republicans/?sh=781786fe2a80>

6 Stokols, E. (2021, March 4). After two presidents failed, can Biden actually get infrastructure done? *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-03-04/president-biden-us-infrastructure-plans-face-challenges>.

2007, more than 4,000 Environmental Impact Reports were issued between 2010 and 2020.¹ However, the project still fails to start large-scale construction until today.² At the end of 2021, after Congress passed the Biden infrastructure plan, the governor of Florida immediately objected on the grounds that this “infrastructure plan is unfair.”³

8.3 “Collapsed” disaster response

As the world’s top economic power, the disaster response level of the United States has dropped significantly in recent years. Inadequate risk prevention, slow rescue and disaster relief, and officials’ indifference constantly hurt people’s trust and pride in the country.

Inadequate risk prevention. In 2020, the forest fire in California burned 4.3 million acres of forest and released more than 100 million tons of carbon dioxide, which is equivalent to the carbon dioxide emissions of 24.2 million passenger cars for a whole year.⁴ However, the spread of this fire was not only caused by natural disasters but also the ineffective prevention and control measures, and the shortage of firefighters and equipment.⁵ The United States became the country with most cases in the COVID-19 pandemic was also closely related to the early response. “Almost everything that went wrong with America’s response to the pandemic was predictable and preventable. A sluggish response by a government denuded of expertise allowed the coronavirus to gain a foothold.”¹

Relief and disaster relief are slow.

1 Fukuyama, F. (2021, October 11). *California Dreaming II: Democracy and Vetocracy*. American Purpose. <https://www.americanpurpose.com/blog/fukuyama/california-dreaming-ii-democracy-and-vetocracy/>

2 California High Speed Rail Authority. (2021). News Release: California and Federal Government Reach Agreement - Nearly \$1 Billion in Funding Returned to the High-Speed Rail Project. Government of the State of California. <https://hsr.ca.gov/2021/06/11/statements-fy10-settlement-federal-funding/>

3 Saunders, F. (2021, November 10). *Gov. Ron DeSantis questions Florida's share of federal infrastructure dollars*. WPTV. <https://www.wptv.com/news/state/gov-ron-desantis-questions-floridas-share-of-federal-infrastructure-dollars>

4 Dooley, E.C. (2021, January 6). California's 2020 Wildfire Emissions Akin to 24 Million Cars. *Bloomberg Law*. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/californias-2020-wildfire-emissions-akin-to-24-million-cars>

5 Cart, J. (2021, July 30). *California's 2020 fire siege: wildfires by the numbers*. Calmatters. <https://calmatters.org/environment/2021/07/california-fires-2020/>

In 2017, Puerto Rico was hit by the devastating Hurricane Maria. Although the official direct death toll was 64, the research showed that the death toll related to the hurricane was at least 4,645, one-third of which was related to the “delayed or interrupted health care.”² After the disaster, there were widespread phenomena such as insufficient food and drinking water, difficulty delivering supply, and lack of medical resources, which aggravated the suffering of residents.³ During the summer tourist season in June 2021, the collapse of a 12-story beachside apartment in Florida resulted in 98 deaths. One of the essential reasons for so many deaths was that it took six days for the rescue team to remove

the ruins and officially carry out the rescue.⁴

Officials indifference. In February 2021, a snowstorm in Texas in the United States led to a large-scale power outage. Many people suffered from the cold in the record low temperature in 30 years. More than 2 million people were affected by the disaster, at least 47 people died in the snowstorm, and the electricity price in some areas even rose by dozens of times.⁵ At this time, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas chose to go on a vacation to Mexico with his family, ignoring the difficult situation of the people of this state, which led to criticism from all over the country.⁶ As a matter of fact, many reports show that the “lack of clarity in roles

1 Yong, E. (2020, September). How the Pandemic Defeated America: A virus has brought the world’s most powerful country to its knees. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/>

2 Kishore, N., et al. (2018). Mortality in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 379, 162-170. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMsa1803972>

3 Robles, F. (2018, July 12). FEMA Was Sorely Unprepared for Puerto Rico Hurricane, Report Says. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/12/us/fema-puerto-rico-maria.html>

4 BBC (Ed.) (2021, June 30) Miami building collapse: Why is the rescue effort taking so long? <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57652668>

5 Nieto del Rio, G. M., Bogel-Burroughs, N., & Penn, I. (2021, February 20). His Lights Stayed on During Texas’ Storm. Now He Owes \$16,752. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/20/us/texas-storm-electric-bills.html>

6 Cabral, S. (2021, February 17). *Texas weather: Young family 'just trying to keep warm'*. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56106536>

and expectations of governments at all levels” has been an “obstacle” for emergency response in the United States.¹ Some think that FEMA’s report expressed a central idea: don’t rely on us.²

1 Kamensky, J. (2020, November 20). Disasters Are Inevitable; Government’s Inadequate Response Is Not. *Government Executive*. <https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/11/disasters-are-inevitable-governments-inadequate-response-not/170243/>

2 Atkin, E. (2018, July 17). The Troubling Failure of America’s Disaster Response. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/149899/troubling-failure-americas-disaster-response>

Question 9:

Bring development and prosperity or disaster and turmoil to other countries?

The United States exports American democracy to other countries in the world in an attempt to transform other countries into democratic countries, only to incite chaos. This export of democracy has directly led to years of war in many countries worldwide. We are within reason to ask, is it bringing prosperity or disaster to other countries?

9.1 “Arab Winter”

Since 2004, after occupying Iraq, the United States has implemented an important strategic plan: the Greater Middle East Initiative, in order to

further promote the “democratic reform” of Arab and Islamic countries in the Middle East. However, has the democratization reform carried out by the United States to the Arab countries really brought prosperity and development?

According to the Iraq Body Count data, from March 2003 to April 2019, about 183,000 to 206,000 Iraqi civilians died of violence.¹

The “Arab Spring” since 2010 had long been praised by American media.² But today, ten years later, the “Arab Spring” has caused the Middle East to fall into a state of war year after year, which has a devastating impact on the

1 Conflict Casualties Monitor. (2021). *Iraq Body Count*. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>

2 Massad, J. (2012, August 29). *The ‘Arab Spring’ and other American seasons*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/8/29/the-arab-spring-and-other-american-seasons/>

Arab world, such as Syria and Yemen.

According to a United Nations report in December 2020, the conflict in Yemen caused about 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 deaths due to indirect reasons such as lack of food, health care services, and infrastructure.¹ The current armed conflict in Yemen has caused the biggest humanitarian disaster globally, and there are about 20.7 million people (71% of its total population) in Yemen who need humanitarian assistance.²

From March 2011 to March 2021, 350,209 people died in the Syrian conflict with known names, among whom about 1 out of every 13 victims was a woman or a child.³ Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights, pointed out: “It indicates a minimum verifiable number, and is certainly under-count of the actual number of killings.”⁴

In August 2021, American troops withdrew from Afghanistan, ending the longest war in American history.⁵ After more than 20 years of invasion in Afghanistan, what did the United States leave behind for Afghanistan? Since 2001, about 241,000 people have been killed in the war zones of Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁶ As of December 31, 2020, about 3.547 million Afghans were displaced domestically, and Afghanistan became one of the world’s largest refugee populations.⁷ The instantaneous collapse of democracy exported by the

1 UN. (2020, December 4). *UN humanitarian office puts Yemen war dead at 233,000, mostly from*. UN News. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1078972>

2 UN Children’s Fund. (2021, August 13). *UNICEF Yemen Humanitarian Situation Report - 1 January to 30 June 2021 - Yemen*. Reliefweb. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/unicef-yemen-humanitarian-situation-report-1-january-30-june-2021>

3 Office of the High Commissioner. (2021, September 24) *Oral update on the extent of conflict-related deaths in the Syrian Arab Republic*. United Nations. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27531&LangID=E>

4 Al Jazeera. (2021, September 24). *New UN death toll: At least 350,000 people killed in Syria’s war*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/24/at-least-350000-people-killed-in-syria-war-new-un-count>

5 Bowman, T. (2021, August 30). *Troops Are Out Of Afghanistan, Ending The Longest War In American History*. NPR. <https://choice.npr.org/index.html?origin=https://www.npr.org/2021/08/30/1032555046/troops-are-out-of-afghanistan-ending-the-longest-war-in-american-history>

6 Watson Institute. (2021, April). *Costs of War: Afghan Civilians*. Brown University. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan>

7 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2021, December 31). *Afghanistan*. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/afghanistan>

United States to Afghanistan surprised and shocked the world.

Is this the “Arab Spring” or the “Arab Winter”?

9.2 Refugee maker

The refugees created in the world by the democracy export of the United States constantly trigger refugee crises. For example, the largest refugee wave in Europe since World War II in 2015; in September 2021, an immigration crisis broke out on the US-Mexico border.¹ It can be said that the United States is the primary driver of the global refugee crises and a veritable “refugee maker” in today’s world.

The report *Creating Refugees: Displacement Caused by the United States’ Post 9/11 Wars* in 2020 shows

that at least 37 million people were displaced by the war launched after 9/11.²

According to the statistics updated by UNHCR in June 2021, the top five countries with the largest number of refugees in the world are Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar, and the number of refugees in these five countries (16.6 million) exceeds 2/3 of the total number of refugees in the world.³

Some of these outflowing refugee countries have been invaded for a long time by the United States waving the banner of democracy, some have been instigated by the United States for civil conflict, and some have been subjected to significant political and diplomatic pressure by the United States, which eventually led to domestic turmoil, and the nationals of these countries have suffered great disasters. On the other

1 Clemente E. H. (2021, October 27). Migrant caravan on way to U.S. grows in southern Mexico. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-10-27/migrant-caravan-heading-for-u-s-grows-in-southern-mexico>

2 Carnegie Corporation of New York (2020, December 18). *The True Costs of War: Civilian Displacement, Airstrike Death Tolls, and the Political Camouflage of Military Contractors*. <https://www.carnegie.org/topics/topic-articles/arab-region-transitions/true-costs-war-civilian-displacement-airstrike-death-tolls-and-political-camouflage-military-contractors/>

3 UNHCR. (2021, June 18). *82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced*. United Nations. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

hand, the top five countries with the largest number of refugee recipients are Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany, not including the United States.¹

By 2016, nearly 5.2 million refugees and immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other war-torn countries arrived at the European coast.² At present, with the end of the war in Afghanistan, Europe is beginning to worry about whether the refugee crisis in 2015 will repeat.³

However, the United States, a refugee maker, is not so tolerant of refugees.

In 2019, Trump, then President of the United States, decided to spend over ten billion dollars to build a border wall along the US-Mexico border.⁴ In September 2021, the refugee crisis broke out, which once again exposed the defects of the American immigration system.⁵ In addition, the United States has constantly left the thorny refugee problem to other countries in the world, increasing their burden. Of the 18,000 refugees supposed to settle in the US, only 11,880 did, completing just 66% of America's responsibility in the 2020 fiscal year.⁶

1 UNHCR. (2021, June 18). *Figures at a Glance*. United Nations. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html> The UN Refugee Agency. (2021, June 18). *Figures at a Glance*. United Nations. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

2 UNHCR. (n.d.). *Refugee Crisis in Europe: Aid, Statistics and News*. USA for UNHCR. Retrieved December 3, 2021, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/refugee-crisis-in-europe/> <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/refugee-crisis-in-europe/>

3 Amaro, S. (2021, August 18). *Europe fears a repeat of 2015 refugee crisis as Afghanistan collapses*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/18/europe-fears-a-repeat-of-2015-refugee-crisis-as-afghanistan-collapses.html> <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/18/europe-fears-a-repeat-of-2015-refugee-crisis-as-afghanistan-collapses.html>

4 Miroff, N. & Dawsey, J. (2019, September 19). Trump officials considering plan to divert billions of dollars in additional funds for border barrier. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/trump-officials-considering-plan-to-divert-billions-of-dollars-in-additional-funds-for-border-barrier/2019/09/19/52897dce-d652-11e9-9610-fb56c5522e1c_story.html

5 Villagran, L. (2021, October 1). How the Haitian migrant crisis shows flaws of a US immigration system in disarray. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/10/01/us-immigration-reform-texas-border-patrol-del-rio-haitian-migrants/5952983001?gnt-cfr=1>

6 Monin, K., Batalova, J. & Lai, T. (2021, July 8). *Refugees and Asylees in the United States*. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-and-asylees-united-states-2021>

9.3 Cause catastrophes in other countries

For a long time, a series of hegemonic and power politics acts of the United States around the world have dragged many countries into a state of war and turmoil year after year, causing their already fragile economic system to suffer heavy losses and collapse, and then resulting in economic catastrophes. The United States also frequently launches color revolutions, overthrows other countries' legitimate governments, and fosters pro-American regimes; It arbitrarily sanctions other countries, causing humanitarian disasters.

The decade-long war has had an irreversible and destructive impact on the Syrian economy, making it slide to the edge of economic collapse. According to the statistics of the World Bank, since 2010, the Syrian economy has shrunk by more than 60%, and the Syrian pound has collapsed. Before the war, the trading price of the Syrian

pound was traded at about 1 dollar to 50 Syrian pounds. However, as of January 2021, the official transaction price of U.S. dollars exceeded 1,250 Syrian pounds. Its unofficial transaction price exceeded 3,000 Syrian pounds, which is equivalent to a 300% increase in the inflation rate of consumer goods.¹ In the face of such a severe economic and social disaster in Syria, the United States further intensified its economic and financial blockade and sanctions against Syria in early 2020.²

The 20-year war in Afghanistan launched by the United States completely destroyed the entire national economy of Afghanistan. Now, although the United States has withdrawn its troops, the economic sanctions against Afghanistan are still going on. The sanctions are lasting—freezing nearly \$9.5 billion deposited by the Central Bank of Afghanistan in the United States, and constantly pressure the International Monetary Fund to suspend the 460 million

1 Alexander, B., & Ahlam. (2021, February 18). *Syria's Economic Collapse and Its Impact on the Most Vulnerable*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/syrias-economic-collapse-and-its-impact-most-vulnerable>

2 Engel, E. L. (2019, June 3). H.R.31 - *Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019*. U.S. Congress. from [https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/31/textEdmondson, C. \(2019, December 16\). Congress Prepares to Hit Assad With New Sanctions for War Crimes. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/16/us/politics/us-syria-sanctions-war-crimes.html](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/31/textEdmondson, C. (2019, December 16). Congress Prepares to Hit Assad With New Sanctions for War Crimes. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/16/us/politics/us-syria-sanctions-war-crimes.html)

dollars of emergency reserve allocated to Afghanistan. Since August 2021, the Afghan people may be facing the most dangerous moment. One-third of Afghans don't know where the next meal will come from.¹

The United States launched color revolutions in other countries in the world to overthrow and subvert the legitimate regime elected by their people, and at the same time fostered a pro-American political power in that country as the agent of American interests in the region. Take America's suppression of Venezuela as an example, from 2014 to 2020, Venezuela's economy shrank by 4/5 in just six years,² from the wealthiest country in South America to one of

the poorest countries in the world. In 2019, 7 million people in Venezuela (about 25% of its population) needed humanitarian assistance.³ 96.3% of families in Venezuela were in poverty;⁴ In 2020, Venezuela's domestic economic hyperinflation was serious, with the inflation rate reaching an astonishing 3,000%.⁵

In addition, the United States has arbitrarily imposed sanctions on other countries in the world, causing them to fall into the predicament of social unrest and national recession. The United States has a long history of imposing sanctions against Cuba, its southern neighbor, and it is also one of its most infamous cases. As of June 2021, countries or regions sanctioned

1 Guterres, A. (2021, September 13). Secretary-General's remark to the High-level Ministerial Meeting on the Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/258992>

2 Oliveros, A. (2021, October 5). Dollarization Can't Save the Venezuelan Economy. *Americas Quarterly*. <https://americasquarterly.org/article/dollarization-cant-save-the-venezuelan-economy/>Americas Quarterly(Ed.)(2021). Dollarization Can't Save the Venezuelan Economy. <https://americasquarterly.org/article/dollarization-cant-save-the-venezuelan-economy/>

3 Humanitarian Aid. (2019, April 10). *Venezuela's needs 'significant and growing' UN humanitarian chief*. UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036441>United Nations(Ed.)(2019).Venezuela's needs 'significant and growing' UN humanitarian chief warns Security Council,as 'unparalleled' exodus continues. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036441>

4 Amaya, V., Figueroa, R., Quintero, L., Díaz, Z., Meneses, C. S., Figueroa, A., Rojas, G., Granado, O., & Carrillo, J. L. (2020, October 1). *Venezuela, the face of poverty*. Alianza Rebelde Investiga. <https://alianza.shorthandstories.com/the-face-of-poverty/index.html>Alianza Rebelde Investiga(Ed.)(2020).The Face of Poverty. <https://alianza.shorthandstories.com/the-face-of-poverty/index.html>

5 Agence France-Presse. (2021, February 12). *Venezuela reports 2020 inflation of 3,000 percent*. ABS-CBN News. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/business/02/12/21/venezuela-reports-2020-inflation-of-3000-percent>

by the United States (unilaterally or partially) included Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Belarus, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, etc. Among them, the four countries sanctioned for the longest time are Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria.¹

¹ Elmerraji, J. (2021, June 30). *Countries Sanctioned by the U.S. and Why*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0410/countries-sanctioned-by-the-u.s.-and-why.aspx><https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0410/countries-sanctioned-by-the-u.s.-and-why.aspx>

Question 10:

Safeguard world peace and development or undermine international order?

American democracy is one of the democratic forms of human society, but American democracy is not the only democratic model. Not respecting other countries' national conditions, forcing other countries to adopt the American democratic model through military intervention, economic sanctions of dollar hegemony, etc., there's a reason the United States to be questioned by the whole world: Is it safeguarding world peace and development or undermining international order?

10.1 392 military interventions

Since the first foreign military intervention was launched in 1880, the United States had conducted a total of 392 foreign military interventions up to 2017.¹ In other words, since the establishment of the United States, more than 92% of its time had been in some state of war, and its peaceful time was less than 20 years.

As of October 2021, the United States still maintained about 750 overseas military bases in 80 foreign countries and colonies (territories).² The report of Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft pointed out that "U.S. bases in foreign lands often raise geopolitical tensions, support undemocratic

1 Toft, M. D. (2017, December 10). Why is America Addicted to Foreign Interventions? *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-america-addicted-foreign-interventions-23582>

2 Bandow, D. (2021, October 4). *750 Bases in 80 Countries Is Too Many for Any Nation: Time for the US to Bring Its Troops Home*. Cato Institute. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/750-bases-80-countries-too-many-any-nation-time-us-bring-its-troops-home>

regimes, and serve as a recruiting tool for militant groups opposed to the U.S. presence and the governments its presence bolsters. In other cases, foreign bases are being used and have made it easier for the United States to launch and execute disastrous wars, including those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya.”¹

The U.S. military intervention in foreign countries is increasing. After the end of the “cold war” in 1991, the U.S. military intervention in foreign countries did not decline but increased. In the 44 years from 1948 to 1991, the United States launched 46 foreign military interventions. However, in the 26 years from 1992 to 2017, the foreign military intervention of the United States quadrupled to 188.²

The United States’ foreign military intervention has been causing damage

to other countries. By 2017, the U.S. military has more than 1.3 million active personnel,³ of whom more than 450,000 are currently stationed overseas. The United States spent \$778 billion on military force, accounting for 39% of the world’s total in 2020.⁴ The United States is addicted to foreign military intervention, but it has brought endless disaster to people in other places. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa, where the United States has long been involved in the past 20 years, about one-fifth of the people still live on the edge of conflict in recent years.⁵

10.2 “The dollar is our currency, but it’s your problem”

1 Vine, D., Deppen, P., & Bolger, L. (2021, September 20). *Drawdown: Improving U.S. and Global Security Through Military Base Closures Abroad*. Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. <https://quincyinst.org/report/drawdown-improving-u-s-and-global-security-through-military-base-closures-abroad/>

2 Toft, M. D. (2017, December 10). Why is America Addicted to Foreign Interventions? *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-america-addicted-foreign-interventions-23582>

3 Toft, M. D. (2017, December 10). Why is America Addicted to Foreign Interventions? *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-america-addicted-foreign-interventions-23582>

4 Statista. (2021, May 7). *Countries with the highest military spending 2020*. Retrieved December 2, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>

5 Corral, P. & Krishnan N. (2020, March 23). *One in five people in the Middle East and North Africa now live in close proximity to Conflict*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/one-five-people-middle-east-and-north-africa-now-live-close-proximity-conflict>

Under the disguise of American democracy, the United States collected global seigniorage through U.S. dollar hegemony, reaping profits globally.

The United States uses the U.S. dollar to harvest profit throughout the world and maintains the hegemony of the U.S. dollar by devious means. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in 2009, up to 65% of the dollar was used outside the United States.¹ In more than 20 countries and regions in South America, Africa, and the Pacific, the U.S. dollar is used as the de facto currency.² When the economy is prosperous, the United States uses other countries' money to make itself rich; when the economy is depressed, the United States uses other countries' money to spread its own risks.

Use the U.S. dollar to sanction the

rest of the world. For countries that do not accept American democracy, the United States can impose sanctions on them at any time and block their economy by means of U.S. dollars and other tools. The New York Times once pointed out in an article in 2019 that the United States used the U.S. dollar as a sanctioning tool when it imposed sanctions on Venezuela, “Paralyzing (Venezuela’s) oil exports and the banking system in a matter of days.”³ Due to the long-term sanctions imposed by the United States, it is difficult for Iran to buy a new large airliner, and the existing airliners become increasingly obsolete. In the past 20 years, 20 passenger planes have crashed, and more than 1,000 people have died in the air crash.⁴

The “arrogant privilege” of the U.S. dollar provides cheap financing.⁵ Through U.S. dollars, cheap foreign

1 Goldberg, L. S. (2010). Is the international role of the dollar changing? *Current Issues in Economics and Finance*, 16(1).

2 Abadi, M. (2018, May 23). *More than two dozen countries and territories use the US dollar as currency*. Business Insider Nederland. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.businessinsider.nl/usd-countries-use-dollars-as-currency-2018-5?international=true&r=US>

3 Goodman, P. S. (2019, February 22). *The Dollar Is Still King. How (in the World) Did That Happen?* *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/22/business/dollar-currency-value.html>

4 1001 Crash. (n.d.). *20 aircraft accidents in Iran since 2000*. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://www.1001crash.com/index-page-plane_database-lg-2-plane-accident-country-iran-aircraft-history.html

5 Eichengreen, B. (2011). *Exorbitant Privilege: The rise and fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System*. Oxford University Press.

financing can be obtained to keep the interest rates of the US at a low level. Poor families in developing countries eventually subsidize the rich families in the United States.¹ Cheap financing from other countries to the United States for getting the dollars needed to support the growing volume of international transactions eventually led to the crisis.² Since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, the Federal Reserve has issued rounds of stimulus packages, leading to turbulence in the capital markets of many countries. Just like John Bowden Connally, former U.S. Treasury Secretary, said in 1971: “The dollar is our currency, but it’s your problem.”³

Use the U.S. dollar to realize long-

arm jurisdiction. Even companies that do not have business relations within the United States still have the possibility of being held accountable and punished. For example, companies that have signed dollar agreements with Iranian dealers, companies that accept telegraphic transfer dollars for non-U.S. transactions without checking the source of funds, and companies exporting products with some American components to countries sanctioned by the United States may all be investigated and punished by the American judicial department.⁴ Under the long-arm jurisdiction of the United States, the dollar, like the “American Trap,” has constantly threatened all economies.⁵

1 Richardson, G., & Zhang, C. (2013). Barry Eichengreen, Exorbitant Privilege. The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System. *OEconomia*, 3–2, 337–344. <https://doi.org/10.4000/oeconomia.314>

2 Richardson, G., & Zhang, C. (2013). Barry Eichengreen, Exorbitant Privilege. The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System. *OEconomia*, 3–2, 337–344. <https://doi.org/10.4000/oeconomia.314>

3 Hebner, K. (2007, October). The dollar is our currency, but it’s your problem. IPE. <https://www.ipe.com/the-dollar-is-our-currency-but-its-your-problem/25599.article>

4 Simon, D. W., Turlais, J. E., Guerrero, J. B., Hickerson, D. A., Husisian, G., Noller, L. M., Swift, C., Virginkar, R. A., Singelmann, O. S., Nennig, A., & Scott, J. A. C. (2020, June 4). *The Long Arm of American Enforcement: How Companies Without U.S. Operations Can Still Find Themself*. . . Foley & Lardner LLP. <https://www.foley.com/en/insights/publications/2020/06/the-long-arm-of-american-enforcementLlp>, F. L. (2020, June 4). *The Long Arm of American Enforcement: How Companies Without U.S. Operations Can Still Find Themselves Facing U.S. Law and Regulatory Enforcement*. Foley & Lardner LLP. <https://www.foley.com/en/insights/publications/2020/06/the-long-arm-of-american-enforcement>

5 Pierucci, F. (2019). *The American Trap: My battle to expose America’s secret economic war against the rest of the world*. Hodder.

10.3 Hegemony, arrogance and bullying

The international image of the United States as hegemony, arrogance, and bullying has reached a new peak during Trump's presidency. But the image of America's bullying was not positive before Trump.

As early as 2009, a survey of the world's 20 most populous countries showed: "since Obama became the President of the United States, people's feelings for the United States have not fluctuated much. In 15 of the 19 countries (excluding the United States), most people believe Washington has bullied other countries with its powerful military threat. According to the poll, in 17 of the 19 countries, the United States is seen as not complying with international law."¹

The hegemony, arrogance, and bullying of the United States do not appeal to the people at home and cause resentment from other countries. According to a survey released by the Pew Research Center, only a minority of people in many economies, including the United States, believe that American democracy sets a good example for other countries and regions around the world.²

In this spring's Global Attitude Survey, the Pew Research Center asked 18,850 adults in 17 economies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, and South Korea, by telephone and online, about their views on American society and politics. According to the results of the survey, 57% of respondents from outside the United States said that the American democracy "used to be a good example but has not been in recent years";

1 Tully, A. (2009, July 7). *International Poll Finds U.S. Still Viewed As World's Bully*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. https://www.rferl.org/a/International_Poll_Finds_US_Still_Viewed_As_Worlds_Bully/1771375.html

2 Timsit, A. (2021, November 2). *'Very few' believe U.S. democracy sets a good example, global survey finds*. Washington Post. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/02/pew-us-democracy-poll/>

another 23 percent said the United States had never been a good model of democracy in other countries.³

Therefore, we cannot help but ask: when the United States' democratic model is raising widespread doubts from its own people and other countries around the world, is it to maintain world peace and development or undermine the international order by constantly imposing American democracy to other countries?

³ Wike, R., Silver, L., Fetterolf, J., Huang, C., & Moncus, J. J. (2021, November 1). *What People Around the World Like – and Dislike – About American Society and Politics*. Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/11/01/what-people-around-the-world-like-and-dislike-about-american-society-and-politics/>

Conclusion

“The United States is heading into its greatest political and constitutional crisis since the Civil War, with a reasonable chance over the next three to four years of incidents of mass violence, a breakdown of federal authority, and the division of the country into warring red and blue enclaves.”¹ On September 23, 2021, political scientist Robert Kagan authored an elaborate commentary in *The Washington Post*, pointing out the current crisis of American democracy.

Polls also suggest this potential crisis. According to a PBS survey published in July 2021, 81% of Americans believe American democracy is under serious threat.² Young people’s satisfaction with democracy has also reached a new low. 55% of the millennials are dissatisfied with democracy, and they

are losing confidence in it; this is not only in the United States, but also in Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, France, Australia and the UK.³ Few believe that American democracy, at least in its current state, can serve as a good example for other countries.

Many facts show that, in the name of “democracy,” the only ones in the United States that can reflect their will are Money-crazy, Gun-crazy, White-crazy, Media-crazy, Milita-crazy, and Drug-crazy. It is not the people who make the decisions. There is no democracy with these six “masters” in this country. American political practice makes American democracy a “minority democracy,” a “money-controlled democracy,” a “corrupted democracy,” a “democracy destroyer,” a “world bully,” an “international rule

1 Kagan, R. (2021, September 23). Our constitutional crisis is already here. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/23/robert-kagan-constitutional-crisis/>

2 Vinopal, C. (2021, July 2). *2 out of 3 Americans believe U.S. democracy is under threat*. PBS NewsHour. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/2-out-of-3-americans-believe-u-s-democracy-is-under-threat>

3 Foa, R. S., Klassen, A. J., Wenger, D., Rand, A., & Slade, M. (2020). *Youth and Satisfaction with Democracy: Reversing the Democratic Disconnect?* Bennett Institute for Public Policy at University of Cambridge. https://www.cam.ac.uk/system/files/youth_and_satisfaction_with_democracy.pdf

trampler,” and more.

However, the United States, despite its own democratic shortcomings, is engaged in “democratic diplomacy,” dumping its claimed democratic model, irrespective of the needs of various countries, disregarding the society of each country, disdain the principles of each country, and not supporting the goals of each country, which fully reflects the fallacy of the premise, framework, principle, and purpose of its “democratic diplomacy.”

Democracy is a common value of all humanity. There is no universal democratic model in the world. Democracy is a rich and diversified path independently chosen by the people of all countries, rather than a

single routine forced to be imposed upon others.

We urge that the U.S. government ask itself these ten questions when holding the so-called “Summit for Democracy”:

Is American democracy a democracy for the majority or a democracy for the minority? Does it ensure checks and balances or lead to abuse of power? Does it improve people’s well-being or increase their suffering? Does it defend freedom or hinder it? Protect human rights or violate them? Promote unity or lead to division? Realize dreams or create nightmares? Improve national governance or lead to systemic failure? Bring development and prosperity to other countries or disaster and turmoil? Maintain world peace and development or undermine international order?



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Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China (RDCY)

Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China (RDCY) was established on January 19th, 2013. It is the main funding program that Shanghai Chongyang Investment Group Co., Ltd. donated to Renmin University of China and established the education fund to operate.

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