THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

"The object of the Monitor is to injure no man, but to bless all mankind."

– MARY BAKER EDDY

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Digging into currents of thought, not just current events

Many journalists consider profiles one of their favorite writing assignments. Reporters spend hours interviewing fascinating figures, drawing out insightful details to give readers a window into how influential people think and act.But can a reporter write a profile of an *idea*? At the Monitor, we are interested as much in ideals and endeavors as we are in events. We watch for ways to report on the currents of thought that impact the news.

That's why you'll find a profile of a legal concept known as the unitary executive theory in the pages of this week's magazine.

Several months ago, reporter Henry Gass and I began discussing a story about this theory, which developed in the 1980s as a constitutional rationale for a strong presidency. Since then, presidents from both political parties have tested how much power the Constitution grants those in the role.

By Chelsea Sheasley
Deputy National Editor

The unitary executive theory doesn't make daily headlines. But it is part of a major debate underway in the United States about government checks and balances. It plays a part in cases the U.S. Supreme Court took up this term regarding whether the president can fire officials at the Federal Reserve and the Federal Trade Commission.

Rather than write a piece better suited to a law review, Henry, who covers the high court for the Monitor, set out to use the storytelling tools of a profile – examining background and character – and applying them to an intellectual framework. He has crafted an engaging look at how unitary executive theory developed, rose in prominence, and impacts politics and law today.

You'll also find other articles in this issue that focus on ideals. Contributing writer Lorela U. Sandoval takes us to the Philippines, where locals are debating what a peaceful, safe approach to nuclear power looks like. In London, senior global correspondent Mark Sappenfield assesses where the Brexit movement stands a decade after the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. ▪

Ukraine's NATO neighbors grapple with drone spillover

As Ukraine stepped up its attacks on Russia in recent weeks, the war has spilled over into NATO territory with increasing frequency, prompting allies to grapple with what, exactly, they owe one another in a time of war.

Jammed and spoofed by both the Russian and Ukrainian militaries, drones laden with explosives have strayed off target, occasionally crashing and causing fires in countries on the alliance's eastern flank. In some cases, NATO fighter jets have scrambled to shoot them down.

Staunch Ukraine supporters, Europeans along the Russian border have long been vocal about Ukraine's right to defend itself, and about the blame Moscow bears for starting the war and the majority of incursions in the course of it. NATO members last year recorded 18 Russian airspace violations, for example – three times as many as in 2024, according to a February study.

But Ukraine's increasingly aggressive battle strategy is forcing Kyiv's front-line neighbors to grapple with the spillover effect it is having on them – even as they are aware that posing the question plays into Russian narratives designed to divide the alliance.

"When Ukraine is as forward-leaning as it is right now, it can put NATO countries in a troubling position," including creating "significant political pressure and tremendous anxiety," says Kristine Berzina, senior fellow in defense at the German Marshall Fund of the United States in Washington.

Eastern European officials want to keep their citizens – not to mention voters – safe from drones and threats of Russian retaliation. They also want embattled Ukraine to win the war, which would be to their benefit as well.

They might tell Ukraine to "cut it out," and to use the resources to instead conduct these strikes on the front lines or "more tactically relevant targets," says Benjamin Friedman, policy director at the Defense Priorities think tank in Washington. But he adds that Kyiv likely won't listen, unless the United States or one of the "big countries" like Germany pushes the matter.

Kyiv lately seems "willing to offend allies more than in the past," Ms. Berzina says. "But they are also being more successful."

– Anna Mulrine Grobe / Staff writer

Business leaders urge Mamdani to spur investment

In his first five months in office, New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani began delivering on some of his campaign promises to make the city more affordable for its residents. He secured state funding for a free childcare program for 2-year-olds. He appointed board members who could freeze rents on rent-regulated buildings. He redesigned bus routes and unveiled plans to open five city-run grocery stores.

Yet with warning signs flashing about the city's economy, Mr. Mamdani is facing questions about his larger economic agenda –

particularly when it comes to his relationship with the business community and whether he is focused enough on spurring growth.

A minute-long video the democratic socialist mayor posted in April promoting a new pied-à-terre tax on non-primary residences worth more than $5 million drew strong blowback from business leaders. Citadel CEO Ken Griffin, whom Mr. Mamdani singled out in the video, threatened to move his investment firm to Miami. At the same time, Mr. Mamdani's calls to raise income and corporate taxes have gone nowhere in Albany.

And Mr. Mamdani has yet to appoint a permanent leader to run a key city agency long tasked with promoting job creation by encouraging private investment with tax breaks and other incentives.

Private sector employment in the city still has not rebounded to prepandemic levels, and unemployment is higher than the national average. Companies announced thousands of layoffs last year and are warning of more to come, as artificial intelligence is widely adopted.

Mamdani aides say the mayor understands he will need to work with the business community to tackle the city's problems. Making New York more affordable for working people means not only finding ways to lower costs but also creating better-paying jobs and growing the city's tax base.

"In order to tackle the challenges New York City has faced for a long time, including affordability, everybody who loves the city is a partner in that work," says Julie Su, the city's first-ever deputy mayor for economic justice, in an interview.

Many of the headwinds New York is facing are due to forces outside of Mr. Mamdani's control. He has no influence over things like interest rates, tariffs, or immigration policy. Still, there are steps Mr. Mamdani can take that could have a significant impact on the city's fiscal health.

"You can have a big impact on how people view where they're going to grow. People are never going to leave here entirely, but they will make decisions to grow elsewhere," says Steven Fulop, president and CEO of the Partnership for New York City, a business group.

– Aaron Short / Contributor

In Trump's second term, financial gain a defining feature

On matters of personal and family money, President Donald Trump appears to be playing by a different rule book from other presidents – and even from his own first term in office. By his own words, he feels little pressure to restrict family business dealings simply because of his role in government.

A tide of actions reflects the trend:

Investors have pumped vast sums into Trump family members' business interests. Projects such as the White House ballroom are being funded by donors who have dealings with the government. Agencies have granted no-bid contracts to Trump-friendly firms. And in the 19 months since his election, the personal fortunes of the president and his family have swelled.

To President Trump's detractors, it's unprecedented self-enrichment and corruption, or at the very least a failure to follow norms upheld by past occupants of the Oval Office. To defenders, including his Cabinet, staff, and base supporters, the criticism is politically motivated, aimed at punishing a president who they say is transparent in his dealings and follows all applicable laws.

While Mr. Trump's first term had its share of headlines about conflict-of-interest questions, the amounts of money involved have surged in Term 2, notably in cryptocurrencies and other relatively new business interests for the Trump family.

"The number of entanglements, the volume of money, it's staggering," says William Howell, dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Government and Policy in Washington.

But Mr. Trump's financial gambits still face some constraints. Under pressure from Congress – including a number of Republicans – as well as from courts, his administration appeared to back down this month on the creation of a nearly $1.8 billion "anti-weaponization fund" designed to compensate those he says were mistreated by the federal government.

The administration rejects the view that the Trump presidency is rife with conflicts of interest, calling critics' attacks unfair.

"This is the same, tired narrative that Democrats have pushed against President Trump, his family, and his administration for a decade," says Anna Kelly, White House principal deputy press secretary, in a written statement to the Monitor. "President Trump only acts in the best interests of the American public – which is why they overwhelmingly re-elected him to this office, despite years of lies and false accusations against him and his businesses from the fake news media. There are no conflicts of interest."

– Linda Feldmann / Staff writer

Netanyahu's image as 'Mr. Security' wanes in election season

The scene in a new campaign ad is instantly recognizable to Israelis as a reference to the attack by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023. The camera zooms out from a food-laden family dinner table, with half-filled beverage glasses – but no one is in the bullet-riddled, smoldering home.

The political message of the ad, put out by a prominent Israeli opposition figure, is clear: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is failing to keep Israelis safe – and it is time for new leadership.

Mr. Netanyahu has led the conservative Likud party for most of the last three decades, and is Israel's longest-serving prime minister. He currently heads a government that is widely recognized as the most hard-line, right-wing coalition in Israel's history. Now, the reputation that this prime minister has spent years cultivating as "Mr. Security," the core of his political appeal, is under assault.

And yet, Mr. Netanyahu remains a political force, analysts say, with outsize skill in creating disparate but highly effective partnerships that help him maintain a grip on power even as his popularity wanes.

Israel is in election season, with voting to be held by Oct. 27. Opposition politicians, including former army chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot – whose Yashar party released that campaign video – are quick to remind Israeli voters that the Oct. 7 attack happened on Mr. Netanyahu's watch; that the prime minister's often-repeated vow to achieve "total victory" in Gaza has fallen short; and that Mr. Netanyahu is giving in to pressure from Washington to let up on Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shiite militia in Lebanon.

"In the north, we are losing faith," says Daniel Dorfman, a pizzeria owner in a town along Israel's northern border with Lebanon.

He says shelling and drone attacks from Hezbollah that resumed in March are making the whole region unlivable.

Mr. Dorfman says he voted for Mr. Netanyahu's party in the past, because he liked the prime minister's ideology and leadership stature. But now, he is thinking about voting for the party of Naftali Bennett – a right-wing contender for the prime minister role – or perhaps the party of Avigdor Lieberman, another longtime right-wing rival to Mr. Netanyahu.

Along with many Israelis, Mr. Dorfman says the prime minister still needs to take responsibility for failing to prevent the Oct. 7 attack.

– Shoshanna Solomon / Contributor
and Dina Kraft / Special correspondent

In Utah, growing pushback over a city-sized data center

As data center disputes rage across the country, with communities pushing back against mammoth facilities that require chunks of energy, water, and land to fuel the international artificial intelligence race, few places can compare with the debate happening in the northwestern corner of Utah.

Locals and scientists say the Stratos Project, backed by celebrity Canadian investor Kevin O'Leary of "Shark Tank" fame, stands out not just for the way in which it was approved, but also for its size. Initially planned to sprawl across 40,000 acres (the size of Washington, D.C.) in Box Elder County, the project would consume up to 9 gigawatts of electricity, which is more than double what the state of Utah uses per year. Mr. O'Leary has boasted that it would be one of the biggest data centers in the world.

The approval process was fast-tracked by a special state commission and unanimously approved by the three-person county commission in early May. Many locals say they have had no opportunity for input. In response, Republican officials in the state have softened their previous full-blown support for the project.

Gov. Spencer Cox issued an executive order requiring "careful consideration" of data centers' environmental impacts. Utah Senate President Stuart Adams, who chairs the special commission, called for a 75% reduction in Stratos' acreage footprint.

Mr. O'Leary has responded that he would cut the footprint of the project in half, removing about 20,000 acres from his plans.

But this has done little to quell pushback. Scientists say a compromise over acreage does little to alleviate concerns over the ecological impacts that such a project would bring to the Great Salt Lake Basin, a nationally renowned site facing a megadrought.

"It's performative," says Robert Davies, a physics professor at Utah State University, of the promised acreage reduction. He has concluded from his own calculations that the 9 gigawatt project would require only 5,000-7,000 acres.

Even still, he says, the energy usage would be 20 times more than what is used by "hyperscale" data centers.

Dr. Davies has also found that such a project could raise the nighttime temperature in the area by up to 12 degrees, which he says would be "transformative."

"This would be one of the largest single-site heat sources on the entire planet," he adds, "[and] that includes volcanoes."

"[Mr. Adams] did this for political reasons," Mr. O'Leary told The Salt Lake Tribune. "He had to. What other choice did he have? He had to answer to all these people."

– Story Hinckley / Staff writer

Endangered species of shark makes a comeback

Just when seals thought it was safe to go back in the water... In the early 2000s, great white sharks started returning to their ancient seal-hunting waters off Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Now, the dusky shark has also reappeared in the area.

The latter has been close to extinction because of intentional hunting and accidental catches in fishing nets. Credit the National Marine Fisheries Service for the sharks' growing populations.

Conservation laws have also revived gray seal populations, which, in turn, enticed great whites, another protected species, to the Northeast.

Turns out Massachusetts seals are popular on the dusky shark takeout menu, too. "It was a big discovery for us," Demian Chapman from the Center for Shark Research at the Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium in Sarasota, Florida, told ABC News.

– Staff

NUMBERS IN THE NEWS

1.3
MILLION

The number of jobs across the European Union that are at risk due to the Iran war, according to a new EU economic assessment that European Commissioner Roxana Mînzatu shared in early June. In the EU, the conflict has endangered jobs in energy-intensive industries, decelerated growth, and led to an increase in energy costs and inflation.

19.7%

The share of households earning under $50,000 annually that have reported a shortage of food, and children missing meals, in the first half of 2026. This figure is up from 16% in 2025 and comes as grocery prices increased by 2.9% from 2025 to 2026.

550

The number of new police officers who will be hired at the New York City Police Department this year, bringing the total force to 35,555 officers. The new hires come at a time when the department is outpacing attrition, meaning more officers are joining the department than leaving.

1,700

Years of history that have been unearthed in a groundbreaking archaeological dig under Notre Dame in Paris as the city prepares to renovate the square in front of the famous cathedral. Dubbed by French media the "dig of the century," the project has excavated hundreds of objects, from a fourth-century coin engraved with the face of Emperor Constantine to medieval pottery with mysterious red markings.

$0

Cost of an ice cream for children who visit Maddy's Ice Cream and More truck in Gardner, Massachusetts. When a boy was unable to pay for his ice cream, owner Madyson Silvagnoli wouldn't let him leave empty-handed. When the incident went viral online, donations to her business streamed in from around the world. Now, each child who visits her ice cream truck will receive free ice cream, says Ms. Silvagnoli.

– Victoria Hoffmann / Staff writer

Sources: Euronews, ABC News, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, New York Daily News, The Associated Press, "Today" show

OUR WORLD

Kremlin deepens ties with Kabul

On the sidelines of its inaugural International Security Forum in late May, Russia signed a defense pact with Afghanistan's Taliban-led government. Moscow wants to prevent the kind of instability that emanated from Taliban-run Afghanistan in the late 1990s, spurring civil strife in former Soviet states in Central Asia and Russia's mainly-Muslim republics in the North Caucasus. As the war in Ukraine grinds on, and relations with Europe worsen, Russia hopes ties with the Afghan government will ensure peace on its southern flank. Last year, Russia was the first country to recognize the Taliban leadership as Afghanistan's government.

– Fred Weir

A win for Chinese workers in the AI era

In a trend seen as a victory for labor protections in China, courts there have ruled that efficiencies in the use of artificial intelligence can't be the sole reason for firing workers. A court in the eastern city of Hangzhou said in late April it was illegal for a tech company to fire a worker whose quality-control job had been replaced by AI, according to the financial news outlet Caixin. The Hangzhou decision comes after a December 2025 ruling against a Chinese mapping company. High unemployment, especially among urban young people, is a politically sensitive issue in China.

– Ann Scott Tyson

"There's so much dust."

That's what a farmer in Madagascar said to the Financial Times about a facility there that extracts a rare earth mineral for export to China. People living near the mine accuse a subsidiary of the mining group Rio Tinto of causing environmental damage from the extraction of ilmenite – used to make titanium and found in paints – and monazite, a rare earth mineral used in high-tech manufacturing. Rio Tinto has disputed the allegations. British firm Leigh Day, representing more than 6,000 Madagascan locals, says it plans to file a lawsuit this year unless a settlement is reached, according to the FT.

– Matthew Bell

"It probably was a communication system."

But archaeologist George Nash told the BBC that this was just one theory to explain the mysterious art recently rediscovered in a South Wales cave. The art is a set of 10 red horizontal lines, first found in 1912 in a cave in Swansea and for decades thought to be a natural phenomenon. Now, archaeologists using high-tech tools have confirmed that the markings date back more than 17,000 years to prehistoric humans and represent the oldest rock art in northwestern Europe.

– Matthew Bell

NEWS: GLOBAL CURRENTS

The legal theory testing the boundaries of presidential power

The story of how a constitutional theory grew in prominence reveals the evolving American debate about the presidency.

By Henry Gass / Staff writer

As young lawyers in the Reagan administration, future Supreme Court justices Samuel Alito and John Roberts entered an executive branch convinced that a powerful president could rescue the country after a humbling decade defined by Watergate, defeat in Vietnam, and runaway inflation. What the administration promised most of all was an answer to a generation of Democratic majorities in Congress frustrating Republican priorities.

The early 1970s saw Richard Nixon break new ground in his assertions of presidential power. He refused to spend an estimated $18 billion in funds appropriated by Congress. He authorized secret bombings of Cambodia. During Watergate, he sought to shield executive branch officials from congressional and judicial scrutiny with sweeping claims of executive privilege.

In the face of these moves by the White House, the other branches of government pushed back. Federal lawmakers passed new laws limiting the president's ability to impound – meaning withhold or delay – funds appropriated by Congress, and to enter military conflicts without approval from Congress. A suite of federal laws strengthening executive branch transparency and oversight also passed in the late 1970s. The Supreme Court rejected the administration's claims of executive privilege and presidential immunity.

It was in this context that Ronald Reagan entered the White House as president in 1981, bringing with him a slew of young, conservative lawyers. These included not only the two future Supreme Court justices, but also figures who would go on to found conservative legal organizations such as the Federalist Society.

Reagan's lawyers, alongside ideologically aligned law professors and think tanks, developed an intellectual framework for establishing the executive branch as above and apart from the other branches of government. The result: an expansive new vision of the separation of powers, underscored by a concept that emerged

known as the "unitary executive theory."

Broadly, the theory holds that the Constitution gives the president of the United States complete power over the executive branch, including personal authority over domestic and foreign policy, such as the ability to unilaterally remove government officials and enter military conflicts. The term soon popped into presidential vocabulary. Reagan used it six times in official statements and President George H.W. Bush 41 times. (Reagan Attorney General Edwin Meese frequently referenced the theory's ideas. "Leaders in both branches have increasingly recognized that institutionally Congress is ill-suited to lead and that therefore a relatively strong presidency may be necessary," read a 1986 report that Mr. Meese commissioned.)

Once a theory supported by a minority of jurists and legal minds, the unitary executive theory has shaped a succession of presidencies from both political parties. Over the past 17 months, Donald Trump has sought to push this theory's view of presidential power further than any president in history.

"A lot of what Trump has done has been done before, but the magnitude is different, and it presages a new normal for presidencies going forward," says Saikrishna Prakash, a professor at the University of Virginia School of Law and author of the book "The Living Presidency."

"The direction has been there for 20 or 30 years," he adds, "with modern presidents showing no hesitation to act unilaterally to implement their agenda in a host of ways that would have been unfathomable 100 or 200 years ago."

The rise of the unitary executive theory is part of a grander story – the gradual rise of presidential power more broadly. Proponents argue that the trend represents a return to original intent; critics claim it threatens the separation of powers designed by the framers to preserve individual rights and democracy.

This constitutional power struggle has always existed. The Trump era is testing how far Congress, the courts, and the public are willing to empower the president to be the country's singular problem-solver.

This month, the Supreme Court is expected to rule on several cases that touch on the extent of the president's hold over the executive branch, and the power the executive holds relative to Congress and the courts. Those include whether Mr. Trump can fire a governor of the Federal Reserve or a commissioner of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), agencies that Congress established to have semi-autonomy from the presidency.

With Justice Alito and Chief Justice Roberts on the high court – alongside Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, who both served in the George W. Bush administration – some court watchers anticipate that the unitary executive theory will influence some major upcoming opinions.

Yet the Supreme Court in recent months has also set limits on President Trump's executive power. The court ruled against his signature tariff policy in February and posed sharp questions to the government's lawyer during oral arguments this spring over whether Mr. Trump's executive order narrowing the definition of birthright citizenship is constitutional.

All power to the presidency?

How power should be divided among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government has defined the American experiment, with power swinging pendulum-like between the branches without ever vacillating too far in one direction.

Is the pendulum now swinging too far toward the executive? The rise of the unitary executive theory – amid other unilateral Trump actions accepted by Congress and the courts – suggests as much, according to critics.

Proponents of the unitary executive counter that it is part of a new equilibrium. The theory counters the growth of what they call the administrative state, the broad array of federal agencies, such as the FTC, created by Congress to operate independently – some say without accountability – within the executive branch. Another argument posits that a powerful, nimble president can protect the national interest faster and more effectively than the other branches.

"We're definitely in a phase where the unitary executive is the dominant theory," says John Yoo, who worked in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel during the George W. Bush administration.

"It's a natural response to the concern that the administrative state has become too independent and too powerful and governs too much of American life," adds Professor Yoo, who now teaches at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

But the theory also "ignores that the framers were deeply committed to checks and balances," says Erwin Chemerinsky, who is dean of the School of Law at Berkeley.

"If you're increasing the power of the president, you're decreasing the power of Congress," he adds.

Critics also point to what Article II of the Constitution doesn't say. The document vests "the executive power" in the president, but does not use the term "all the executive power." Article I,by contrast, vests "all legislative powers" in Congress.

But, the theory's supporters note, the Constitution was crafted at a specific moment in U.S. history – after a 10-year experiment with the Articles of Confederation. Those articles created a weak central government with no separate executive branch (a product, at least in part, of the Founding Fathers' fear of monarchical rule). State constitutions of the time, meanwhile, often put most power in state legislatures, with some states allocating executive power to a council of individuals.

"There's a shift in thought from 1776 to 1787," when the U.S. Constitution is beginning to be ratified, says Professor Prakash. "By 1787, the most successful state constitutions are the ones who have a powerful executive check on the legislature."

Ultimately, the framers of the Constitution decided for a "unitary" executive, meaning an executive branch led by a single person, not a "council" of people.

And the framers still established checks on the president, especially when compared with a monarch, says Professor Yoo. The president is elected, and subject to impeachment and removal, for example. Presidents also don't have the power to collect tax revenue and spend it how they see fit.

The American Revolution "was not anti-executive [power]," he adds. "It was anti-King George and anti-British empire."

"That's why the Constitution ... restored a lot of executive power to what it had been. Because the framers thought that all of these experiments that had occurred after the Revolution had failed," Professor Yoo continues.

Succession of presidents pushes the boundaries

Donald Trump isn't the first president to experiment with the boundaries of executive power. Strong exertions of such power have waxed and waned throughout American history. A president pushes the envelope, then Congress and the courts rein him in.

Often, these shifts to greater executive power have occurred

during times of crisis, such as war and economic collapse.

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, citing war powers, suspended habeas corpus and ordered a naval blockade of Southern ports before Congress had officially declared war. After the war, when President Andrew Johnson vetoed congressional Reconstruction legislation he viewed as too hostile toward the South, the House impeached him.

Facing the successive crises of the Great Depression and World War II, Congress approved many of President Franklin Roosevelt's sweeping policy goals. In creating new agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, for example, the legislative branch gave the executive greater control of domestic economic policy.

In addition to working with Congress, Roosevelt also took unilateral executive power to new heights. He issued more than 3,700 executive orders during his unprecedented four terms – including his infamous order to intern U.S. citizens and noncitizens of Japanese descent after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Mr. Trump has also pointed to crises as he has flexed his powers as commander in chief, including unilaterally authorizing extrajudicial airstrikes against suspected drug boats in international waters, and waging war on Iran. Domestically, the president has cited other emergencies in an effort to exert even broader power, such as justifying mass deportations by proclaiming that the U.S. is being invaded by a drug cartel, and declaring a national emergency to justify a global tariff regime.

The Supreme Court struck down that tariff regime in February. For the most part, however, the high court has been deferential to Mr. Trump's assertions of executive power and privilege. The personal backgrounds of most of the court's six conservative justices help explain the rise of this vision of a more powerful, and unitary, executive branch.

A generational clash

When Mr. Roberts and Mr. Alito joined the Reagan administration in the early 1980s, "there was a strong conventional wisdom in the '70s that the presidency had become too strong, and that Congress had become ineffective in checking its powers," says Mark Rozell, dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University in Virginia.

On the other side, he adds, "It was common among conservatives of the 1980s [to think] that congressional reforms in the 1970s that constrained executive powers had gone too far."

When these conservative lawyers began work in the Reagan administration, the balance of power hadn't felt balanced to them. From the 1950s to 1981, Democrats had complete control of Congress, frustrating the policy goals of several Republican presidents.

During this period "Republicans [began to see] the presidency as the defender of conservative power," says Mitchel Sollenberger, a political scientist at the University of Michigan, Dearborn.

"By the time you get to the Reagan administration," he adds, "you get this full-blown focus on executive power."

What resulted was a clash of generations on the ideological right that paved the way for the unitary executive theory to reach new heights under the Trump administration.

A key case arrived in 1988, in which a Supreme Court justice elevated the unitary executive theory.

The case, Morrison v. Olson, concerned a federal law that empowered the attorney general to appoint an independent counsel to investigate, and potentially prosecute, government officials. The law had been part of Congress' post-Watergate effort to strengthen oversight of the executive branch. But, the Reagan administration asked, did that law violate the separation of powers? Did it allow Congress to wield executive branch authority?

In a 7-1 decision, the justices said it did not. In a lone dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia delivered what is now thought of as the first articulation of the unitary executive theory in a legal opinion. The independent counsel statute, he famously described, is not a wolf in sheep's clothing but a wolf that "comes as a wolf."

The vesting clause of Article II, he wrote with emphasis, "does not mean *some* of the executive power, but *all* of the executive power" belongs to the president.

"Since the statute vests some purely executive power in a person who is not the President of the United States it is void," he concluded.

The majority in Morrison, led by conservative Chief Justice William Rehnquist, disagreed.

To claim that every executive branch official "must serve at the pleasure of the President and be removable by him at will," wrote Chief Justice Rehnquist, "depends upon an extrapolation from general constitutional language which we think is more than the text [of Article II] will bear."

The outcome in Morrison highlighted a generational divide, wrote Jeffrey Rosen, a law professor and CEO emeritus of the National Constitution Center, in a 2008 law review article:

"Conservatives who came of age during the New Deal era and its immediate aftermath viewed the presidency as a harmful institution, while those who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s viewed it as preferable to an overreaching Congress."

By 2006, the unitary executive theory had gained a few more votes. In a case that year, the court ruled in a 5-3 decision that military commissions set up by the George W. Bush administration to try detainees held at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba were illegal. Justices Alito and Scalia joined a dissent written by Justice Clarence Thomas that said the majority opinion "openly flouts our well-established duty to respect the Executive's judgment in matters of military operations and foreign affairs." (Justice Alito, who joined the Court that year, had been peppered with questions by senators about his views on the unitary executive theory during his confirmation hearing.)

Today, Justice Scalia's solo dissent in Morrison "would be embraced by a majority of the justices," says Professor Chemerinsky.

From the Bush White House to the Roberts court

Similar to the Reagan formula, the Bush administration's assertions of executive power in the war on terror would be advanced by a cadre of young, conservative lawyers who are now shaping the separation of powers.

One of those lawyers was Professor Yoo, who as deputy assistant attorney general from 2001 to 2003 authored a series of legal memos arguing that, under an expansive view of presidential power in wartime, what were often called "enhanced interrogation techniques" were legally permissible.

Justice Gorsuch, Mr. Trump's first appointment to the Supreme Court, spent a year in the Bush Justice Department defending the torture of terror suspects, as well as their detention without charge at Guantánamo Bay.

Mr. Trump's second appointment to the court, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, worked as a lawyer in the Bush White House, an experience that he has said gave him a deep appreciation for the daily

challenges facing the president.

"The job of the president is extraordinarily difficult," he said during a 2015 speech. "Every decision seems to be between really bad and worse."

Between Republican administrations, which cited the unitary executive theory, Democratic presidents also embraced unilateral presidential power, despite those presidents not openly referencing the theory. President Bill Clinton, for instance, continued to have the White House review all proposed agency regulations and allowed an independent counsel statute – the law at issue in the Morrison case – to expire. He also deployed U.S. troops to Bosnia without congressional authorization.

In 2014 – which he dubbed his "Year of Action" – President Barack Obama, frustrated by congressional inaction, leaned into unilateral decisions. In a series of executive orders, he raised the federal minimum wage, shielded the children of unlawful immigrants from deportation, and implemented fuel-efficiency standards for automobiles. "I've got a pen, and I've got a phone. And I can use that pen to sign executive orders and take executive actions and administrative actions that move the ball forward," he said that year.

Justice Kavanaugh joined the court in 2018, and a series of decisions expanding presidential power have followed.

That year, the court had upheld Mr. Trump's travel ban – an executive order issued to restrict entry to the U.S. for nationals of a half-dozen countries in Africa and Asia, as well as Venezuela. The law at issue in the case "exudes deference to the President in every clause," wrote Chief Justice Roberts in the majority opinion.

In 2020, the court delivered a victory that unitary-executive supporters had been waiting decades for. In Seila Law v. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the court broadened the president's power to fire the directors of independent executive branch agencies without cause.

Chief Justice Roberts penned the majority opinion in that case, too. "The President's power to remove – and thus supervise – those who wield executive power on his behalf follows from the text of Article II," he wrote.

The chief justice's writings on the unitary executive before he became a judge are few and far between – one memo he wrote in 1985 took a dim view of the president's impoundment authority – but the high court's recent promotion of broad presidential power has been written by his hand. This includes the court's biggest separation-of-powers decision so far this decade: the ruling on presidential immunity in Trump v. U.S. in 2024, in which he warned against "enfeebling" the presidency, writing that "the system of separated powers designed by the Framers has always demanded an energetic, independent Executive."

"If anyone has been driving this train, it's the Roberts court," says Professor Yoo. "All Trump is doing in these cases is quoting the Roberts court back to itself."

Looking ahead

This summer, the court is expected to strike down another precedent interfering with the president's removal power. The 1935 ruling in Humphrey's Executor v. U.S. barred the president from firing without cause the leaders of independent agencies with bipartisan boards.

Yet this year could also reveal an outer boundary to presidential power that the Supreme Court will not push beyond.

That boundary has already been marked in one case. In February, the Supreme Court struck down Mr. Trump's emergency tariffs regime as an unlawful misinterpretation of a Nixon-era statute. The justices also sounded skeptical of Mr. Trump's claim that he can reinterpret the birthright citizenship clause of the 14th Amendment to exclude the children of unlawful migrants. The court also questioned Mr. Trump's attempted firing of a member of the Federal Reserve's board of governors.

And while the unitary executive theory has gained traction amid a polarized Congress and a friendly judiciary, Professor Prakash of the University of Virginia thinks that voters have also had a hand in making the president seem like the singular representative for the U.S. government.

"We vote for [presidents] who've promised things they have no authority to implement," he says. "If we have an inflated expectation of what the president can do it's not surprising that the president then acts on those inflated expectations." ▪

MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

This country in Latin America went green years ago

Uruguay bet big on renewables and pulled off a genuine energy transformation. Other nations might learn from its success.

By Constance Malleret / Contributor

Less than two decades ago, Uruguay was facing a predicament that would feel familiar to people in many countries today. Global oil prices were spiking. The small but growing country's economy now depended on more imported fossil fuels to meet rising demands for electricity.

The weather at the time wasn't helping either. Drought conditions in 2008-09 meant that Uruguay's hydropower plants were falling short. Power outages were a problem, and so was the skyrocketing price of electricity for consumers.

The situation was "a nightmare," says Ramón Méndez Galain, the man who was tapped by the government in 2008 to lead Uruguay out of the crisis as energy secretary.

Dr. Méndez, a particle physicist with years of experience working on nuclear energy technology, "was the closest thing to a nuclear engineer in the country."

"I rapidly understood that this was not the solution for us," Dr. Méndez says. Thanks in no small part to his vision, renewables became the focus of Uruguay's remarkable energy transformation.

These days, up to 98% of Uruguay's electricity comes from a combination of wind, solar, hydropower, and biomass. The nation of about 3.4 million people even exports surplus energy to neighboring Argentina and Brazil.

Discussions around energy transitions today tend to frame the move as an environmental issue, but in Uruguay in the 2000s, the concern was primarily energy sovereignty. The country's green transformation could hold some clues for others looking to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, as a newly volatile energy market due to the Iran war drives up oil and gas prices in the United States, Europe, and beyond.

"It was a tsunami," says José Cataldo, a professor at the University

of the Republic in Montevideo who was responsible for the country's pilot wind project in the early 2000s. "We added 1,500 megawatts of wind power," he says. That is roughly enough energy to power almost every household in Uruguay.

Renewables drive economic growth

Part of what made this transition possible in Uruguay was the consensus among its four main political parties. An agreement brokered in 2010, when José "Pepe" Mujica was president, ensured that energy policy would not change with each new government.

"This was the most important, the definition of a long-term state policy," says Marcelo Mula, vice president of the Uruguayan Association for Renewable Energy (AUDER).

Uruguay's success is replicable in other countries, he says, if they can establish the same kind of broad political agreement. But that is no easy feat.

"Each country has a driver that makes [adopting renewables] interesting beyond the climate issue," says Dr. Méndez, who founded a nongovernmental organization that advises other governments about how to follow in Uruguay's footsteps. Mexico, for example, is heavily reliant on imports of natural gas from the U.S.

Under Dr. Méndez's leadership as energy secretary from 2008 to 2015, Uruguay ended its dependence on fossil fuels for electricity production by investing in renewable energy plants, especially wind turbines. On a recent windy weekday, for example, 56% of the country's electricity was coming from wind power, 13% from solar, 17% from biomass, and 14% from hydropower.

The switch to renewables brought down the costs of electricity production, created 50,000 new jobs, and more recently attracted companies looking to reduce their emissions, such as Google.

"The transition [had] a tremendously positive impact on the whole economy, not just the power sector," says Dr. Méndez.

But the positive impression was not universally felt when the move toward renewable energy began. For Dr. Cataldo, who worked on mapping Uruguay's wind potential before anyone thought renewables were an option, the biggest challenge was changing people's minds.

"There were some meetings where people would look at me with a face that said, 'This guy is crazy,'" he remembers.

Adriana Inthamoussu, born in the 1970s, remembers the blackouts in Uruguay's past. "We had to go to bed early," she recalls while waiting to plug in her car – a Chinese model – at an electric-vehicle charging point near Montevideo's La Rambla promenade. "That doesn't happen anymore."

"It was something brand new"

Uruguay helped set the conditions for renewable energy plants to compete with traditional energy sources by adapting policy and government regulations. Most of the new investment came from the private sector, as the state didn't have the resources to fund a $7 billion transition.

Private companies built the wind farms and signed contracts to sell power to the state-owned utilities company, UTE, which controls electricity distribution here. Long-term contracts at fixed prices helped make the arrangement attractive, Mr. Mula says.

"It was something brand new. Uruguay didn't have the knowledge of how to build such big wind and solar farms, but we did in just a few years," explains Mr. Mula, who worked for UTE during the first years of the transition and later co-founded an energy consultancy.

A common barrier to adopting renewables worldwide is the intermittent nature of solar and wind power. Batteries are one way of getting around this. But Uruguay took another route, by combining diverse energy sources and using its established, and more consistent, source of hydropower as a "big battery," says Mr. Mula.

"We use biomass, wind, and sun the whole time. If there is no wind or sun, we use the reserves from the hydroelectric dams. If for some reason, there isn't any water, our third backup is the gas-fired power plants," he says.

Uruguay's energy wins do come with costs for consumers. Ms. Inthamoussu, who's back charging her EV, says she sees the clean electricity matrix as something positive. But she also has a common complaint about her electricity bill: "At home, I pay more than 4,000 pesos [$100], it's extremely expensive."

That is because the government decided not to pass on the entire reduction in energy costs to consumers. Instead, it is keeping UTE's revenue as a source of state revenue.

Uruguay is now going through a second energy transition: adding more solar power, decarbonizing its primary energy matrix, and working toward producing new clean energy sources, such as green hydrogen. Yet on the streets of Montevideo, where EVs are ubiquitous, most Uruguayans aren't fully aware that their country is seen as a model internationally.

"I know we have [hydroelectric] dams, and when you head out of Montevideo, you can see the big turbines, but I don't actually know how efficient they are," says Keila Trinidad, a real estate agent who drives an electric car because it's cheaper.

But that is why renewables make sense, argues Dr. Méndez. Even before the Iran war, they were much cheaper than fossil fuels, he says – and that is what people really care about. ▪

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

The Philippines weighs the costs of nuclear power

In a seismically active archipelago with high electricity prices, what does a "peaceful, safe, and secure" approach to nuclear power look like?

By Lorela U. Sandoval / Contributor

Together with their two children, Ruel Concepcion and his wife, Emily Fajardo, live a technologically modest life, owning a few electric fans, a rice cooker, and other basics. Yet their monthly electricity bill can consume up to 58% of the money Mr. Concepcion makes driving people around Mariveles, a tourist town at the tip of the Philippines' mountainous Bataan Peninsula.

Filipino families face some of the highest electricity rates in Asia, and like many breadwinners, Mr. Concepcion is struggling to make ends meet, especially as the Iran war drives up costs of food, fuel, and other essentials.

One potential solution to the country's energy woes sits a short drive north of here: the long-shuttered Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP).

Built in response to the 1973 oil crisis, the plant was beset by corruption and safety issues from the start. The government officially closed BNPP's doors shortly after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, and

has never commissioned another plant since.

But in recent decades, Manila has sought to reincorporate nuclear power into its energy portfolio to lower electricity prices, reduce the country's reliance on imported coal and oil, and meet clean energy goals. It's even in talks with a Korean company about the feasibility of reopening the BNPP. The public is warming up to nuclear, too – after decades of staunch opposition, a 2024 survey commissioned by the Energy Department found that more than 70% of Filipinos trust nuclear power as a reliable source of electricity, and many support rehabilitating the BNPP.

Given their monthly expenses, one might expect the Concepcion family to be among that majority. Instead, they join environmental activists and church leaders pressing the country to reconsider its return to nuclear power, especially if it means sidelining other forms of renewable energy or jeopardizing public safety in an archipelago vulnerable to earthquakes and typhoons.

"What are the social costs, what are the environmental costs, economic costs?" says Aaron Pedrosa, head of the legal team of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice. "If we want to learn the lessons of the other countries, we must also contextualize it by looking at our own experience, our own vulnerabilities."

Geopolitical tensions and energy security

The Philippines has the third-most expensive residential electricity rates in Asia – and ranks 48th globally, according to 2023-2025 data released by GlobalPetrolPrices.com, a trusted international research firm. It follows Singapore and Japan.

That's partly due to energy privatization and the logistical challenges of transferring energy from one island to another. But like many island nations, the Philippines is also heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels, with coal accounting for nearly 60% of its power generation and about 90% of the coal coming from Indonesia. "The Philippines suffers because it is a fossil-fuel poor country," says Mark Cojuangco, a member of Congress and a staunch advocate of nuclear energy. "It's not acceptable to be that dependent. Nuclear relief fits a strategic solution."

That's why he spearheaded the Philippine National Nuclear Energy Safety Act, which President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed into law late last year. The act paves the way for creating an independent regulatory body to ensure the country's compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency standards and "facilitate the peaceful, safe, and secure uses of nuclear energy." Proponents hope the move – also known as the PhilAtom Law – will boost public trust and grease the wheels of foreign investment.

Mr. Cojuangco has advocated for reopening the BNPP, and has proposed other areas where authorities could green light the construction of a new plant, including in his own province of Pangasinan. Whatever route the Philippines chooses, officials say it will take more than a decade to bring a nuclear power plant online.

Still, lawmakers believe embracing nuclear energy is essential to unshackle the Philippines from volatile global energy markets. Representative Cojuangco remembers how the Philippines government scrambled to send delegates to Indonesia in 2022 when Jakarta temporarily suspended all coal exports to secure its domestic supply. He also worries about standoffs between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, which threaten the safe transport of essential fuel supplies through disputed waters. A blockade by Beijing would result in an "automatic brownout," he says. "The defense burden on our navy is huge."

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has offered a preview of what such a blockade could look like, raising fuel costs to the point that the president declared a national energy emergency – and once again exposing the Philippines' vulnerability.

To be sure, nuclear isn't the only solution on the table. Some activists note that small, community-run hydro and solar projects have allowed off-grid communities to weather the crisis surprisingly well. The Department of Energy announced recently that it would fast-track 22 renewable projects to help shore up the country's energy supply.

But these aren't perfect fixes. Geothermal and wind energy require expensive infrastructure, and hydro dries up in the summer.

"Renewables are good, but they are intermittent," explains Alvin Caparanga, a chemical engineer and the dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Mapua University in Manila.

Nuclear power plants are far more efficient, relying on relatively small amounts of enriched uranium – which can be compressed into pellets and stockpiled on-site – to produce vast amounts of power.

"Nuclear is the most energy-dense source, so is advantageous in times like this," says Carlo Arcilla, who recently retired as director of the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute.

Safety and environmental concerns

Nuclear power has faced strong opposition from religious leaders in the predominantly Catholic nation.

While the Catholic Church takes no official position on nuclear energy, bishops and priests across the archipelago have stressed the need for ecological stewardship, and a moral responsibility to prioritize human life over profit. In a recent statement against a proposed power plant in Pangasinan, Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan and other church leaders warned that there is "no secure, long-term solution for radioactive waste that remains deadly for thousands of years."

The Diocese of Balanga, which serves the Bataan peninsula, has been just as unwavering in its resistance to rehabilitating the BNPP, as has Ms. Fajardo, who volunteers with KaBaRo-KaisaKa, a local organization advocating for women's rights, environmental protection, and social change.

She wants the Marcos administration to address the immediate energy crisis by removing taxes on oil products and allocating funding to stabilize gas prices. Long-term, she wants to see leaders focus on implementing the Renewable Energy Act of 2008. "We have a big potential source here, especially solar energy," she says.

Despite her family's sky-high electric bills, she considers the BNPP project a nonstarter. Citing reported defects in the plant's original construction and the Philippines' location on a major geological fault line, she worries about creating a multigenerational crisis like the one seen in Ukraine.

But Dr. Arcilla, a geologist whose expertise is in nuclear waste disposal, says nuclear power has come a long way since the Chernobyl disaster. Whether they use the existing BNPP facility or build a new plant from scratch, "what we are planning here in the Philippines is something that has a containment structure. It's a Western design," he says.

Indeed, as the momentum around nuclear energy grows, so does the opposition – which is good, says Gayle Certeza, convener of the nuclear advocacy group Alpas Pinas, because at least there is public conversation.

For her, a responsible use of nuclear energy is when it powers the majority of households with "reliable, clean, and cheap electricity." She doesn't have anything against renewables, but she believes solar

and wind can't replace coal.

Since 2019, her group has coordinated with universities around the country to try to spread this message. "It's usually the older people who have the primal fear of nuclear power, as opposed to the younger ones who are more tuned in to science and technology," Ms. Certeza says.

And in the academe, there is a growing demand for nuclear science education. Pending approval from the Commission on Higher Education, Mapua University will offer a graduate program in nuclear science by August 2026, according to Dr. Caparanga.

Dr. Arcilla, meanwhile, says the country already has qualified engineers for the job, including some who have been working on the construction of nuclear power plants abroad and are willing to bring these skills home.

When asked if the Philippines is prepared to reintroduce nuclear energy, Dr. Arcilla is confident: "It's been more than ready," he says. ▪

KINGSTON UPON HULL, ENGLAND

A decade on, British voters agree Brexit hasn't panned out

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union was partly about sovereignty, but the country doesn't feel freer. Pre-Brexit malaise appears to linger.

By Mark Sappenfield / Senior global correspondent

Tim Rix can remember being full of hope. It was some nine years ago, and his hometown of Kingston upon Hull was thriving.

As the United Kingdom's then-latest City of Culture, a new energy crackled from its art museums to its waterfront. Bit by bit, a bygone past of salt-seasoned fishermen and creaking trawlers was being reimagined as trendy lofts and tapas bars.

Looming over all was Brexit, and for many here, Mr. Rix included, that was a good thing. Some 68% of area residents voted to leave the European Union. As a local businessman, Mr. Rix saw opportunity in a future free from Brussels' shadow.

But today, as the 10th anniversary of the June 23, 2016, vote nears, Mr. Rix can't help but wonder what it was all for. Polls show some sense of buyer's remorse across the country, with a majority now wishing Britain could return to how things were before. Yet here in the city known universally as Hull, that sentiment comes across less as buyer's remorse than as deep-seated despondence.

The broad impression that Brexit has failed to deliver virtually any of its promised benefits is not really about Brexit itself. It is about the sense that Britain is on a dramatic downhill slide, and nothing voters have done has been able to stop it.

Ten years ago, Brexit was as much a wake-up call as a referendum on EU membership – sent straight to the heart of business-as-usual in Parliament. Then came COVID, a stream of weak and unpopular Conservative governments, and now an unpopular Labour government. Through it all, the political dirge continues: costs rise, public services falter, the economy stagnates.

Mr. Rix complains so much about the government, he jokes, that his son started bringing his dog to work because it was the only one willing to listen to him. In that way, Hull is emblematic of voters' increasing frustration that the country is not on a new path. While support for Brexit has cooled, the fervor for change that fueled the historic vote most certainly has not.

"It's not about Brexit, it's a much bigger picture," says Mr. Rix from his corner office with a commanding view over Hull's transformed harbor. "I have never known so many people across the political spectrum who say we need a reset."

Brexit, in some ways, was just the beginning. "We might go through a lot more chaos before we get out the other end of this," he adds.

A Brexit that didn't deliver?

The Monitor visited Hull nine years ago as post-vote negotiations for Brexit got underway. We returned recently to talk to many of the same people and to get the temperature of a city that viewed Brexit with such promise.

The national picture is becoming clearer. Polls show that some 55% of Britons would undo Brexit. But if Hull is any indication, this is not a rekindled affection for the EU. It is a result of dashed hopes.

How much Brexit was ever really about the EU is debatable. But EU organizations in far-off Brussels made a compelling target. "Most people have no interest in things like EU treaties," says Simon Lee, a senior fellow at the Centre for British Politics at the University of Hull. "It was about blaming Brussels when the real problem is in London."

The Brexit slogan "Take back control" struck a deep chord. But 10 years on, there is little sense that Britain has taken back control of anything at all.

When asked how much progress Brexit has made, Paul Salvidge doesn't hesitate: "Zero progress."

It is a statement of arresting candor. Mr. Salvidge, after all, was chair of the United Kingdom Independence Party, or UKIP, which was created to bring Brexit about. He was a primary figure in Hull's successful pro-Brexit campaign. Sitting in a Hull café, his jacket, tie, and unbuttoned collar suggesting a casual propriety, Mr. Salvidge remembers how it was: volunteers shimmying up lampposts to put up marquees, and residents asking him for posters they would immediately put in their windows.

"We seemed awash in resources," he says fondly, speaking not of money but of an equally precious political capital: energy.

But politicians in Parliament frittered away the opportunity, he says. They thought the voters made a mistake and tried to make nice with the EU even as they were leaving it. "If you are a collaborative negotiator, you get hammered if you are up against a competitive negotiator," says Mr. Salvidge, himself a freelance negotiator. "The EU was in competitive mode, and we were in collaborative mode."

As a result, "my view is that we haven't even started yet," he says. Britain got all the bad and none of the good – "BRINO," or "Brexit in name only." "What we're doing by the back door is handing a lot of power back to the EU."

What is important is the principle, he says. Britain is better off outside the EU, where it has more control over its own affairs.

Brexit's bite

But that has come at a cost, says Mike Ross, chair of the Hull City Council. The lack of EU funding has left a hole. For example, Hull Kingston Rovers, one of Hull's two rugby Super League teams, renovated its stadium with EU money before Brexit. Now, such a move would be impossible. "The funding scheme following Brexit

just wasn't there," he says. "We aren't able to do it in quite the same way now."

Still, thumbing its nose at others is a cherished Hull tradition. The city had to build its own train service to London because it is on the way to nothing else, and is not particularly close to any other major cities. Perched on England's North Sea coast, its fishermen once got into an economic war with Iceland over fishing rights.

"There's a bit of a chip on our shoulder," says Neil Hudgell, a prominent local lawyer connected with Hull KR. "It has given us an energy at times, but it also feeds into a persecution complex."

Brexit has brought out a darker side, too, say others.

Russ Litten stops abruptly on his walk down Spring Bank and points to the side of the road. That was where rioters pulled a driver out of his car to beat him up. Not far away, a wall of flaming tires kept police at bay as people threw bricks at a local mosque.

The 2024 riot against immigrants, "that shook me," says the local novelist and spoken-word musician. Mr. Litten had always rather liked Hull's attitude: a mentality that embraced those who didn't want to follow the crowd. But he is convinced that Brexit was a tipping point, normalizing intolerance.

Much of the support for Brexit, after all, came from a sense that immigration was out of control. In some ways, observers say, Brexit has made it worse. Where before migration was inside the EU and comparatively orderly, now, Britain lacks the same sort of European assistance it once had. That has made stemming the current international migration – mostly coming across the English Channel – that much more chaotic.

But Brexit, Mr. Litten says, validated a culture of grievance. "It has gradually taught people it's OK to be a racist and to shout the first dumb thing that comes into their head."

No quick fixes

Not far away at a local diner, Mr. Litten falls into conversation with neighbors about Brexit. Jess Hogg talks about how her daughter has seen open racism in her workplace and how a friend of Nigerian heritage was berated the day after the Brexit vote. The mindset of some in Hull, Ms. Hogg says, seems to be, "My life is terrible, so who can I blame for it?"

If anything, this is perhaps the most indelible lesson of the decision to leave the European Union. Through Brexit and repeated elections, British voters have sought change through every means possible and not gotten it. To historian Dr. Lee, pointing the finger at immigrants was as misguided as pointing it at the EU.

"The problem has very little to do with migrants crossing the channel," he says.

"They want quick fixes, but there are none to be had," he says. "This kind of reinvestment would take a generation."

Different people point to different solutions. Some say government is too large, others too small. But all agree that Britain needs a plan and leadership. Time and again, Brexit shows, attempts to find quick fixes have failed.

Looking out his third-story window, Mr. Rix can just about see the contours of an answer. Across the harbor, women in sunglasses sip £4.50 ($6) matcha lattes as servers dressed all in black flit among tables. Where once warehouses tended to the fishing vessels and their catch, now the cobbles and redbrick facades lend theaters and bistros a bohemian air.

That was only possible because Hull came together when it was named a City of Culture. "I was not convinced to start with, but I had my eyes opened," says Mr. Rix.

It has been hard to maintain that momentum. Sometimes, it has felt impossible. Looking back, he says, Brexit was not the problem, nor maybe even the solution. What Britain needs is more of that spirit.

"It created a group of people that started to come up with ideas of what you could do to change the dial for Hull," he adds. "That shows what could happen when everyone works together." ▪

THE EXPLAINER

The challenges to passing the next farm bill

Sticking points over costs and priorities are complicating lawmakers' efforts to pass expansive legislation, a process that's grown more cumbersome.

By Story Hinckley / Staff writer

Every five years or so, Congress passes a new farm bill: a big collection of laws that guides agricultural policy within the United States. The bill covers every part of the food cycle in the U.S., from when seeds are planted to when Americans sit down at the dinner table.

There are three main areas of the bill. The commodities section includes several safety-net programs, such as crop insurance, and guarantees prices on some crops to help farmers manage a risky industry. The nutrition section, which has become the largest share of the farm bill over the past few decades, includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. And the third section covers the environment, dedicating money toward conservation programs that encourage farmers to remove land from agriculture production, plant "cover crops" that improve soil quality, and grow buffer strips between farms and waterways.

Throughout the years, these three sections have helped build a big enough coalition of legislators – who represent rural, urban, Republican, and Democratic areas – to get the sweeping, expensive farm bills passed. But this big-tent approach hasn't been enough to supersede the increased partisanship in Washington. After the 2018 farm bill expired in 2023, Congress kicked the can down the road for a new bill, passing one-year extensions in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

This year is shaping up to have its own challenges. The U.S. House passed the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 at the end of April, and the bill is now under consideration in the Senate. Legislators face a deadline of Sept. 30, when the most recent extension expires. Many also face pressure from constituents – midterm elections are a little over a month later.

"It's never been easy to pass a farm bill," says Patrick Westhoff, who recently retired from leading the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, "but it's gotten more complicated to get them done."

Q: How has the farm bill changed over time?

Farm bills have defined U.S. agriculture for almost a century. President Franklin Roosevelt signed the first farm bill, the Agri-

culture Adjustment Act of 1933, as part of New Deal programs to provide relief during the Great Depression. To address overproduction and increase crop prices, the federal government paid farmers to actually grow less food; they also bought up crop surpluses and gave that food to hungry Americans. And to prevent another dust bowl, which was caused in part by farming practices that didn't protect soil, the bill encouraged soil-conservation programs.

The legislation has grown in size and scope since the 1970s. Crop insurance, which made up almost 9% of the cost of the most recent farm bill in 2018, has become increasingly common. In 2024, 89% of acreage of the eight major U.S. crops (barley, corn, cotton, oats, rice, sorghum, soybeans, and wheat) was covered by insurance through the Federal Crop Insurance Program, more than double the acreage protected in 1990. That protects farmers from financial losses due to weather and price changes. Farmers can buy insurance policies at a subsidized rate through this federal program, which compensates them for losses from either below-average production yields or revenue.

But the biggest expansion has happened within the nutrition assistance sector of the bill, which now makes up almost 80% of the farm bill's price tag. SNAP, which was first included in the 1973 farm bill, has steadily expanded, and then increased dramatically in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall program cost doubled between 2019 and 2022. In 2025, nearly 1 in 8 Americans received SNAP benefits.

Q: What is different about the 2026 farm bill?

The One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB), the huge spending bill that President Donald Trump signed into law last summer, "was a mini farm bill in some ways," says Vincent Smith, director of agricultural policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. The OBBB includes a $56 billion expansion in safety-net programs, not only increasing the number of acres eligible, but also raising the price tag. Among other measures, the legislation adds $6 billion to the crop insurance program and raises guaranteed prices for major commodities by 10% to 20%, so the baseline floor price of soybeans, for example, went from $8.40 a bushel to $10.

Dr. Smith sees the investment in certain commodity crops as a way for Republicans to hold on to their rural seats in Congress. Proponents of subsidy programs, however, say that these investments encourage farmers to invest in a business that is subject to volatile market and environmental shifts. U.S. wheat stocks, for example, are set to be at their lowest levels since the 1960s, thanks to fertilizer shortages due to the Iran war and widespread drought.

The OBBB balanced boosted spending on the farming pillar of the farm bill with cuts to SNAP in the nutrition sector. Although SNAP is currently funded 100% by the federal government, the OBBB is set to have states be partially responsible for the program beginning in 2028 if they have high rates of improper payments. (In both 2023 and 2024, about 10% of SNAP payments were for incorrect amounts or should not have been distributed.) The act is also set to shrink the size of the program by increasing work requirements for eligibility, and making some noncitizens, such as refugees and asylees, ineligible.

These OBBB-led changes to agricultural policy have made it an "unusual year" for farm bill negotiations, says Parke Wilde, a food economist at Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, given "that so much major policy has happened outside the farm bill."

Q: What's next for the 2026 farm bill?

Despite the farm bill's big-tent ethos that has made this sweeping legislation possible, delays have become more regular. The 2008 farm bill took more than a year to enact, the 2012 farm bill was eventually passed in 2014, and what was supposed to be the 2023 farm bill is now the 2026 farm bill.

Although the 2026 farm bill passed the narrowly divided House 224 to 200, with 14 Democrats voting in support, there are several potential sticking points in the Senate, where it needs 60 votes to pass. Some Senate Democrats have voiced opposition to the legislation largely because of the OBBB-induced SNAP cuts and new cost-sharing regulations, threatening the bipartisan compromises that have long underpinned farm bills.

"I used to tell my students that one of the joys of following farm bill politics is that it's less partisan than other areas of American policymaking," says Dr. Wilde. "But that also isn't true this year." ▪

REPORTERS ON THE JOB

DENVER

Sarah Matusek

AI told me to join a gun club. So, I did. I had asked an artificial intelligence chatbot for help: How can I meet more sources in law enforcement? The app fired off several ideas. Most were virtual, such as following online forums. But the app also suggested hanging out at a gun range, so I joined one in April. Learning about gun culture has helped beyond my initial goal, especially when I recently wrote about a gun-trafficking case. The staff is kind, safety-minded, and patient with my questions, as I weigh different-caliber rounds in my hand. ▪

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

Sophie Hills

Before a town-hall event for California gubernatorial candidate Tom Steyer, reporter Sophie Hills joined what journalists call a "gaggle." These are group conversations between reporters and a candidate or politician. And back on Capitol Hill, Sophie told me, they are competitive events. "People are literally throwing elbows," she says.

The California version was different. Mr. Steyer stood on the taped "X" that his staffers had prepped, and reporters stood quietly and respectfully 10 feet away. When staffers asked for the first question, everyone was quiet. "I was looking around, wondering what was going on," Sophie says. ▪

– Stephanie Hanes / Print editor

LVIV, UKRAINE

Howard LaFranchi

Our reporters take the same path every time they travel to Ukraine to cover the war. They fly to Kraków, take a taxi to the Polish border, cross by foot into Ukraine, and then hail a taxi to Lviv to take a train to wherever they plan to meet the Monitor's fixer-interpreter and driver. The first time Howard arrived at that Ukrainian taxi lot in August 2022, he was drawn to "a middle-aged man with a white brush cut and warm smile," Howard says. The driver's name was Igor, and Howard never expected to see him again. Instead, nine trips later, Igor has become a reassuring and essential part of each reporting trip. The two don't speak the same language, so they use Google Translate. These days Igor will check in

via WhatsApp while Howard is covering the war, and even when he's safely back home: This Easter, Howard received a pretty card from Igor. "I can't remember why I was drawn to him, but I'm glad I was. It feels there is someone watching out for me." ▪

– **Sara Miller Llana** / International editor

DOHA, QATAR

Taylor Luck

A pro tip from a foreign correspondent: Always buy flexible airfare, and never check in until the last minute in case you need to cancel your flight. Taylor Luck was recently reporting in Qatar, with plans to interview a top foreign ministry official after a news conference between the Qatari prime minister and Turkish foreign minister. He also had a flight to the United Arab Emirates a few hours later. Taylor waited patiently as the presser went on, and the clock ticked. He changed his flight to a later time, only to see the official whisked away with his Turkish counterpart. Taylor headed to the airport for his later flight, when he got a phone call that the interview was back on. "We turned the car around in rush hour traffic in Doha," he says. Five minutes away from the venue, it was canceled again. He raced back to the airport and made the flight, grateful he hadn't rebooked it since flights have been less frequent due to Iranian drone attacks on the UAE. Another pro tip from a reporter covering war: flexibility and grace. "These officials have very intense schedules," Taylor says. "I know if they could secure a time, they would." ▪

– **Sara Miller Llana** / International editor

PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

EVANSTON, ILL.

For trainees at Curt's Café, the menu is full of possibilities

Young people get more than a job at this nonprofit eatery. They receive support, stability, and the skills to help them envision a new future.

By Stephanie Cook Broadhurst / Contributor

A trainee named Brian works in the kitchen of Curt's Café, tossing spices like a master chef. While he experiments with a recipe for grilled-chicken chipotle, he reflects on the three months he has spent in the café's job-training program. It is clear he has discovered a passion for paprika – and a generous dash of hope.

"The key is to make it smoky and ... sear it [in] a very hot pan," says the 19-year-old, moving swiftly around the crowded space. (For privacy reasons, Brian asked that his last name not be used for this story.)

Three years ago, he was searching for direction as he sat in a jail cell after breaking into his uncle's home. When Brian's mother arrived at the police station, she was in tears. "From that day on, I knew I had to become a better person," he says. He realized, "This is not who I want to be."

After the charges were dropped, Brian spent several months sleeping on friends' sofas. That was when he learned about the nonprofit Curt's Café through a local organization, Connections for the Homeless. "Curt's helped change my mind, and it helped change my heart," Brian says. "I'm on the straight path."

Investing in relationships

Susan Trieschmann founded Curt's Café in Evanston, Illinois, in 2012 to provide job and life-skills training for young people ages 15 to 24. A second café opened nearby in Highland Park in 2019. More than 600 students have completed the cafés' 500-hour program, with many graduates going on to finish high school or find jobs.

Some students are trying to leave gangs. Many have arrest records or are experiencing hardships, which can make it difficult to find employment, says Tanya Jenkins, the nonprofit's executive director. New students meet with a social worker, who addresses basic needs and "will get them connected with resources," Ms. Jenkins says.

Youth intervention programs such as Curt's tend to have strong success rates because they offer supportive "wraparound" services, says Dallas Wright, an assistant director at Northwestern University's Center for Neighborhood Engaged Research & Science, an organization that partners with Chicago communities to provide data on public safety.

"They're able to meet participants' needs in the most thorough way that they can," he says. "There's ... very targeted, very high investment in personal relationships."

Less than 5% of the students who had been incarcerated before working at Curt's have returned to prison. The national recidivism rate is over 80% within 10 years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Over the past decade, Illinois has invested significantly in intervention-based youth programs, violence prevention, and workforce training.

Students at Curt's not only learn how to make an omelet or run the cash register; they also learn skills such as conflict resolution, anger management, and how to handle their finances. One year, they learned about the history of graffiti and painted a mural on the side of the Evanston café.

They take field trips to trade schools and colleges, while receiving help with preparing résumés and finding jobs. Curt's also provides tutoring to help some students earn GED diplomas.

"It's about opening up the possibilities," says Joshua Rovner, senior research analyst with The Sentencing Project, a Washington-based organization that studies alternatives to youth incarceration.

"Unconditional love"

As sunlight streams through the café's large front windows, customers sit on plush sofas choosing from menu items such as kale chicken Caesar wrap and French toast. Local art creates a patchwork of color on an exposed-brick wall, while a painted bench rests in the corner. Warmth is felt not just in the hot soups and freshly baked pastries, but in the café's purpose.

"We just want to make sure that they're supported," says Bri Consalvo, the café's manager. "This is a place to learn."

That means giving employees some extra grace, she says. Sometimes, a student is late to work because "it's clear it's been a rough night – maybe they slept on a train," she says. In those cases, she tells them to lie on the couch and rest for a bit while staff members get them breakfast.

For many students, Curt's provides a kind of stability they have never had before, Ms. Jenkins says.

"Our students can always come back," she says. "It doesn't matter when they complete the program. They've got a place" at Curt's.

Ms. Trieschmann, who left the nonprofit in 2022, came up with the idea for Curt's after working with an organization that helps former criminal offenders reintegrate into society and make peace with those they have harmed. At first, she couldn't find investors for the café, so she took out a second mortgage on her house – and got to work.

Curt's was founded on the principle of unconditional love. "Unconditional love gives you an opportunity to see beautiful things," Ms. Trieschmann says.

Occasional challenges, including theft at the café, have tested that sentiment.

"I would not punish anybody," she says. Instead, she gathered her crew in a circle. "We would talk about the harm caused when people, you know, take money in a group that's supposed to be trustful of them."

"Being a team"

On this bright morning, Curt's is buzzing with conversation and community. A customer strolls in for her carryout order. She smiles and leaves a generous $10 tip on a roughly $30 tab. Ms. Consalvo says it's common for neighbors to chip in extra.

Beyond practical skills, students acquire something deeper: a sense of dignity.

"I've seen students learn to make eye contact and say 'hello,'" says customer Steve Morton. "You see that they are gaining confidence."

After students complete 500 hours, there is a graduation. At a ceremony March 28, café staff members, friends, and fellow students form a semicircle around graduates, offering words of encouragement.

Joshua Herrera, who found Curt's through his probation officer, smiles as he receives his certificate. "Without all of you guys, being a team, I wouldn't be here," he says. "Thank you."

Back in the kitchen, Brian ladles chicken noodle soup into a bowl. He says that after graduation, he plans to complete a culinary program through Chicago's nonprofit Westside Health Authority and focus on fusion cooking. He's also compiling a cookbook of recipes he has created. "Any type of art or expressive feeling, you can taste it in my cooking," he says. ▪

EDITORIALS

Revised data can cool climate debates

As summer arrives in the Northern Hemisphere, parts of Europe and North America are seeing record-high temperatures. Yet as the mercury rises, an update on the worst-case scenario for global warming calculated in 2011 shows that forecast is no longer likely.

Known as RCP8.5, this projection was modeled at a time when greenhouse gas emissions had risen by 30% in one decade. Today, RCP8.5 has "become implausible," said a study published in April. The reason? Worldwide advances in energy conservation and technologies, such as solar.

"The good news is that we did not follow the most dramatic emission pathway," Detlef van Vuuren, the study's lead author, told The Associated Press. But, he cautioned, "the risks of climate change have not disappeared."

Neither has the heated debate over global warming's causes and impacts.

Referencing the study, U.S. President Donald Trump used strong language in a social media post last month to claim that researchers had been wrong in their projections all along.

But fanning the embers of the climate debate obscures larger lessons behind the retiring of the worst-case scenario.

This move points to how governments, businesses, and individuals have adapted policies, products, and consumption. And it highlights scientists' curiosity, use of better data, and willingness to adjust hypotheses. (The updated calibrations also jettisoned the previous model's best-case scenario as not being attainable by 2100.)

The complexities of climate research hint at a need for more nuance and balance in sharing and reporting findings. As The New York Times noted in May, the RCP8.5 estimates, even though considered less likely, tended to be "a big focus and got more attention."

The new study, the Times said, "has raised questions about whether some of the risks of climate change have been poorly communicated or overstated in years past and how best to think about those risks going forward."

To Andrew King, a University of Melbourne scientist and study co-author, updating the scenarios does not imply "failed modelling" or a climate hoax. He underscores the need to revisit assumptions and changing circumstances (such as rates of renewable energy usage), while using continually improving climate models.

The best view of the new updates is that they increase knowledge and understanding, and provide a hopeful opening for heated debate to be replaced with respect and reason. In turn, that can fuel the expectation of finding solutions to climate challenges. ▪

Dignity's role in ending wartime rape

In 21 conflicts around the world, sexual violence as a tactic of war "surged" last year, according to a new United Nations report. In one conflict – Sudan's civil war – such atrocities are "a defining feature," used to stoke fear between ethnic groups, as explicitly stated by perpetrators.

In Africa's third-largest country by area, preventing conflict-related sexual violence or helping survivors has been difficult. The fighting is now in its fourth year, and Sudan has become the world's direst displacement crisis.

"Many women and girls fleeing the conflict only sought help after reaching neighbouring countries," the report stated, "which underscores the importance of assistance in all phases of displacement."

Some progress has been made, other than documenting cases of such violence. Last year, the government in Khartoum renewed its commitment to prevent sexual violence, assist survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable. The International Criminal Court is investigating gang rapes and other crimes. Aid workers identify places with the most-pressing needs, helping reduce immediate harm, strengthen resilience, and empower survivors.

Some foreign support is reaching local women's groups to provide "safe spaces" for protection and care services. The aid often provides secure bathing facilities, lighting in settlement camps, and dignity kits with basic hygiene supplies.

The U.N. report urges that global solutions to conflict-related sexual violence focus on the "dignity of victims and survivors," sending a message that survivors are worthy of justice rather than social stigma.

"Sudanese women are leading humanitarian efforts in the country," one U.N. office stated in April. "They are providing lifesaving assistance to women, children, and families ... delivering food, medical care, psychosocial support, and protection services, often in areas inaccessible to international actors."

The message of dignity for survivors might be starting to counter a tendency for them to feel shame. Social media campaigns by the Sudan Family Planning Association have led to a surprising result: Survivors have directly responded to the campaigns to seek resources for support.

Such successes help beat back the false notion that wartime rape is inevitable. ▪

Armenia's journey toward redefining itself

Though smaller than most U.S. states, landlocked Armenia plays a key geopolitical role at the crossroads of Eurasia. With few natural resources, it is aiming to recalibrate global relations and become a tech and finance hub. So, its June 7 elections were keenly watched in next-door Azerbaijan and Turkey, as well as Iran, Russia, Europe, and the United States.

The ruling Civil Contract party garnered 49.8% of the vote, while the two main opposition parties together took in 33.1%. The degree to which both sides find common ground will determine how fast and how far this former Soviet republic can move out of history's long shadow of ethnic conflict and external interference and toward regional cooperation and progress. The memory of mass killings by Ottoman Turkish rulers some 110 years ago runs deep. More recently, the loss of lives and territory after three wars with Azerbaijan has compounded a sense of persecution.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, first elected in 2018 (after nonviolent anti-corruption protests), has sought to reshape both politics and perceptions of identity.

"The page of hatred should be turned," Mr. Pashinyan told supporters when he first took office. The task, as he sees it, is not to restore a lost past but to build a future-focused "Real Armenia." Or "Realistic Armenia," as an analyst dubbed this approach, describing it as "exchanging traditional fears and resentment for more pragmatic policies."

Mr. Pashinyan has pursued relations with Turkey, peace with Azerbaijan, and ties to the West to counter Russia's influence.

Last August, Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to work with the U.S. to build a transport corridor along Armenia's southern border (which adjoins Iran). Tehran is not pleased about U.S. involvement. But the route is expected to generate regional benefits by easing trade with Turkey and Central Asia.

In April, Turkey's president acknowledged "our shared pain" over the violence of 1915-1917. In May, its vice president attended a summit in Armenia. There is talk of reopening borders. Both sides "seem to be reaching for a way for people to live with ... memory, rather than inside it," John Paul Rathbone of the Financial Times observed recently, hailing this "peacemaking ... as a minor miracle in a troubled world."

But Armenians have mixed feelings about the peace-for-land deal with Azerbaijan, with 44% supporting it and 41% opposed. And some still lean toward Russia, as evidenced by voter support for the two Moscow-aligned parties.

The country's reelected prime minister has urged Armenians to weave a civic identity that is disentangled from ethnicity and ideals "left over from the past." This requires a change of thought, a readiness to leave old markers for new signposts.

"The only formula for being viable," Mr. Pashinyan has said, is through "reflection, self-reflection, the ability to change and transform." ▪

READERS RESPOND

Immersed in verse

It's not often that a piece brings tears to my eyes, but "A springtime discovery," Todd R. Nelson's essay in The Home Forum in the May 18 issue of the Weekly, managed it.

I share a lifelong love of poetry that began with a seventh grade awakening. While working in higher education, I got to know several special young people. At graduation time, I would give them a chapbook inscribed with a wish that they would always have time for poetry. I hope that some of them are still reading it.

Chris Clark
Saugatuck, Michigan

A master piece on masterpieces

I love, love, love the American Visionary Art Museum and am so happy you visited it and produced the In Pictures photo-essay, "A collection of works, and quirks, of art," in the May 25 Weekly.

I just happened upon the museum one day in 2023 while visiting Baltimore. On a long walk, I spotted the unusual facade from a hillside nearby and was drawn to discover what this place was. I found it delightful and inspiring.

Not knowing when I'll be able to travel 500 miles to see it again, I was thrilled to read this story.

Susan H. Wall
Portland, Maine

THE HOME FORUM

Backyard bird rescue

For this writer, an encounter with nature during nesting season brings home lessons of persistence, loyalty, and wonder.

It's concert season. For us, that means a stroll around the block comes with an a cappella chorus of cardinals, robins, sparrows, and whoever else wants to chime in. Oak canopies set the stage for this music fest that starts after the snow has melted, and runs until the cicadas hum in late summer.

One breezy June evening, I was washing dishes and cracked open the window to listen. Right on cue, the kitchen filled with an ensemble of whistles and wheedle-wheedles to accompany the

tempo beat of my pan scraping. Forget Spotify – I had Blue Jay Bach to keep me going.

But as I leaned in to chisel off a layer of fried egg spackled to the frying pan, I heard an off-key solo: vocal and persistent. A budding soprano, perhaps? No, something felt discordant, out of place. Glancing out the window, I noticed two blue jays perched on the low-hanging branches of a newly planted tree in the neighbor's yard. One was belting it out while the other sat motionless, harmonizing softly.

A moment later, I noticed one jay still had not budged. Now, the other jay was fluttering about, picking frenetically at the branch, trying to pry something loose with its beak. Were they making a nest?

While on safari in South Africa years ago, I learned about the weaver birds. These nimble, golden-plumed architects have high standards for nest-making and thread their roosts into circular hanging baskets on the tips of branches. I once witnessed a female weaver inspect and tear a nest to shreds, much to the dismay of her mate, who had crafted an elegantly woven orb, in my opinion. "Not good enough!" she probably thought. If either mate deems that a weaver's nest is not woven tightly, the builder must start again from scratch. Perhaps the blue jays had gotten word of this.

But when I peered closer at the tree next door, I saw the jay was snagged in string, maybe a fragment left over from the sapling's transport and planting earlier that spring. It had likely been gathering supplies for nest-making before getting caught. I've heard that blue jays mate for life, and the flitting friend was simply trying to rescue its mate, tugging and pulling at the twine tendrils.

I was struck by the dedication and persistence of this bird's feathery companion – not to mention the clever tactics it employed to try to free its friend, attempting through swoops and aerial maneuvers to "untie" the knot. The bomb-diving blue jay wasn't giving up. When it became clear this wasn't an easy fix, I called our neighbor, who was away, and offered to help. The local animal rescue wasn't available, either, so now it was up to my husband and me.

"By all means, save the bird!" our neighbor implored.

We grabbed a ladder and a toolbox and walked over to the tree, donning goggles and gloves for protection. We gently trimmed off the small branch holding the bird and carefully laid it, along with the jay, on the ground to examine the tangled twine.

Only a delicate cut would work. I retrieved our fine-tipped crafting scissors, used for felting and lace detailing, and we carefully snipped the string off the bird's talon. Then we stepped back. The jay was stunned and lay motionless on the ground. We backed away farther. Then a moment later, swoosh, off it flew to join its mate. Our first bird rescue had been a success!

A few weeks later, I noticed more blue jays soaring and beetle-looping around branches in pairs. They had probably been there all along, but I started paying closer attention. I like to think our songbirds built a strong nest together, with twigs and grass instead of twine – one the weaver birds would approve of.

Nature teaches us simple lessons when we pause and look up. I was struck by the bird's loyalty and steadfast persistence. Like the blue jays, when we get "stuck," we can lean on a friend for help. Or just keep singing until a total stranger shows up with a ladder. ■

– Stephanie Cook Broadhurst

POETRY

FIREFLIES

Light from their
Lamps floods the
Grass along the
Small dark hill
In front of us,
Each low to
The ground, landing,
Blinking and repeating
On, then off.
I'm told there
Are 25 species
In this area alone,
Each displaying its
Own shape and
Sending its own
Signal and finding
Its own place
At differing heights
Among the thermals
Of night air.
It's all highly
Organized, I'm told ...
Yet tonight to
My untrained eyes
It seems incoherent,
A crowd moving
Without form or
Purpose. There must
Be something here
That they like.
Bringing light to
The dark, my
Wife replies:
Yes, each other.

– William Young

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

The healing power of Soul

Many religious traditions teach that some form of spiritual essence or consciousness exists in a physical body and then continues on after death. And yet, with all our scientific research, we have no material evidence of the existence of such a soul, no evidence of one entering or leaving a body, no tested theory about its mechanism, and no evidence of its immortality. How do we explain that?

Christian Science approaches these concepts in a unique and spiritually scientific way. It teaches that Soul is God, Spirit, so Soul must be spiritual and eternal because God is. Also, there can be only one Soul because there is only one God. The belief of many souls is as implausible as the belief in many gods. The First Commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

The founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures": "Soul and Spirit being one, God and Soul are one, and this one never included in a limited mind or a limited body" (p. 335). And: "Man is not a material habitation for Soul; he is himself spiritual" (p. 477). What animates us, therefore, is not an internal soul, but the endless reflection of an eternal, all-encompassing God.

Human birth and death have nothing to do with man's spiritual, eternal life, created and maintained by Soul, God. Death cannot be the avenue for spiritual paradise, because as God's creation we forever exist in His perfection. Understanding Soul helps free us from a fear of death, enables us to celebrate our immortality, and heals.

Christ Jesus fed a multitude of people with just five loaves and two fishes. This was entirely natural to the thought filled with the understanding of God as Soul. Such healing works are only possible because there is one infinite Soul that we all reflect, which could never be confined to a human body. We, too, can be fed and healed through realizing the power of Soul, and understanding that we reflect Soul.

Cherishing that thought healed me of a skin disease that had been spreading. A family doctor examined me and said there was no known cure for this condition, and it was something I'd have to live with. He provided some hygienic guidance, but it proved to be useless.

Then one night I prayed, thinking very deeply about God as my Father-Mother. I felt warmed by the thought that my spiritual Parent loves me infinitely, and that as a child of God, I reflect His spiritual perfection, which can't be contained or suffer within a human body. The next morning I awoke to find that the affected skin had very naturally fallen away and given place to completely clean, fresh skin. And that was the end of the problem.

The Bible says, "Thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning" (Job 11:17). The more we understand God as Soul, the more we will see, as I did, the reality and power of these words.

– Scott L. Schneberger

CULTURE

In a digital age, typewriter superfans hold the keys

Meet the clickety-clack clique: Old-school ribbon-and-ink machines have a devoted – and growing – following.

By Victoria Hoffmann and Mackenzie Farkus / Staff writers

Michelle Geffken's color-filled home, in a leafy neighborhood by the Boston area's oldest arboretum, is a veritable museum for typewriters. The machines, of all shapes and sizes, are scattered throughout the house. There's a transportable Corona 3 folding typewriter, and a typewriter once owned by famed Red Sox player and coach Bobby Doerr. In the dining room, Ms. Geffken displays what she lovingly calls the "Candy Shop": three typewriters, painted in vivid hues.

Ms. Geffken authors Paper Blogging, a blog curated for writers and other creatives, where she describes herself as a "nature artist, home educator, and collector of vintage typewriters." She has been enthralled with the machines since her teens, she says, when, inspired by Dorothea Brande's 1934 manuscript "Becoming a Writer," she borrowed a hand-me-down electric typewriter from her mother's office.

It was, she says, love at first clack.

And she is far from alone in this attraction. Since Ms. Geffken began collecting typewriters in earnest in 2017, the number of enthusiasts for the ribbon-and-ink machines has skyrocketed. For instance, when Ms. Geffken joined the Antique Typewriter Collectors group on Facebook in 2019, it had about 7,000 members. Today, it's a digital gathering space for more than 53,000 typewriter enthusiasts who regularly share tips on repairs and typewriting projects. Other online typewriting communities on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, and TikTok have seen growing numbers.

Some within this typewriter community say their interest is part of a larger cultural shift away from digital devices: that in a world overwhelmed by cellphones, laptops, and other screens, there is a growing space for the old school and analog – from landline phones to Walkmans.

But typewriters, they also say, are just noisily enjoyable.

"I used to think of it like a racehorse ready to jump out of the starting gate. You turned it on, and it just kind of hummed: 'Let's go, let's go,'" says Ms. Geffken. "And boy, was it so much fun."

The original rollouts

Ms. Geffken started collecting typewriters after visiting a pop-up participatory art exhibit at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum that featured the machines. Called "Type Bar," the exhibit had passersby type out letters in public; it also displayed a few old typewriters. As she listened to the familiar sound of words being slammed onto paper, she couldn't help but think of her own past experience with typewriters – and earlier.

The first documented typewriter is from 1575 Italy, when Francesco Rampazetto, a printer and publisher, invented the *scrittura tattile*, a machine that left imprints of letters on paper. More than

250 years later, politician and inventor William Austin Burt patented the "typographer." He invented the machine to help handle the amount of paperwork that his job as a surveyor entailed.

The Sholes and Glidden Typewriter went on sale July 1, 1874, at a base price of $125. And in 1878, the Remington No. 2 rolled out, with a special function for both uppercase and lowercase letters. The typewriter industry took off around the world, continuing until the 1980s, when home and office computers became more common.

The last major manufacturer of typewriters in the world — Godrej and Boyce, located in Mumbai — closed in 2011. (In 1897, Ardeshir and Pirojsha Godrej, the company's founders, chose Mumbai as their company's location because it was both their hometown and the financial capital of British India.)

Today, a handful of smaller manufacturers still exist, but collectors often warn about their quality due to the use of cheaper materials such as weak plastics and thin metals. Most typewriters are now purchased secondhand.

Richard Polt, a professor of philosophy at Xavier University, says today's resurgence of typewriters is "a break" or "a form of resistance" from technology.

"The more digital technology grows, the more a certain subpopulation is going to turn to analog technology — just to take a break [from screens] or as a form of resistance," he says. "A good solid 1% of the American population would enjoy and benefit from using a typewriter, and that's millions of people."

Lucas Dul, owner of Typewriter Chicago, is one of these millions. He's a typewriter enthusiast, purchasing and learning to repair typewriters himself over the past 12 years.

He has many ways of using typewriters, he says. He types out ideas for novels and short-form poetry on the machines. He uses them to journal his thoughts. And sometimes, Mr. Dul says, he and a friend will sit on the sidewalks of Chicago, offering to type poetry for strangers passing by.

Free from distractions

Mr. Dul says that typewriters offer a distraction-free experience for writing that's organic and within the user's control.

"You're not distracted by the machine itself. It's not going to correct your spelling or correct your grammar. There are no emails, no pop-ups, nothing," says Mr. Dul. "Everything that we have nowadays is disposable. It's very complicated; it's very connected. And people are looking for a way to get away from screens."

The 2016 documentary "California Typewriter," which has remained popular with the typewriter crowd, documents the growing interest in analog technology. That's on display in Grit Matthias Phelps' class at Cornell University.

Ms. Phelps, a senior lecturer for the Department of German Studies, instructs her students to complete at least one test or writing assignment per semester with only a typewriter. It is her way, she says, of finding an alternative to screens and sidestepping artificial intelligence.

Her students love it.

Yunxi Han, a senior studying landscape architecture, used a typewriter for the first time in Ms. Phelps' class. Ms. Han was taken by the feel of the keyboard and the sounds the slider made when shifting to the next line of her paper. Though she found the switch from digital technology to analog technology unfamiliar, she also found it a relaxing break from screens and laptops. "It's just interesting to be off-screen and then focusing on the thing that you can really touch," says Ms. Han, who graduated in late May.

Many students asked for more typewriter assignments. Ms. Han began to look at websites where she can buy a secondhand typewriter of her own. ▪

BOOKS

Spies relied on their pedigrees to evade suspicion

Scions of wealthy families in Britain, the men known as the "Cambridge Five" wreaked havoc on U.S.-British intelligence missions, agent networks, and lives.

By Bryn Stole / Contributor

Antonia Senior's "Stalin's Apostles" opens with two small airplanes humming their way from a British base in Cyprus across Iron Curtain countries to western Ukraine in May 1951. A handful of trained anti-communist Ukrainians parachute into the Carpathian Mountains, outfitted with radios, weapons, and vague messages of support for fellow partisans thought to be operating somewhere in the woods below.

The mission was destined to fail: Soviet secret police were expecting the drop, tipped off by a mole close to the top of the Anglo-American spy machine: Kim Philby. Philby headed a group of upper-crust Brits who had spent years betraying secrets to Moscow after being recruited as idealistic leftists at Cambridge University. Many of them had been members of a secret society known as the Apostles.

Within weeks of the Ukraine drop, the "Cambridge Five," as the spies came to be known, would break apart. Two of Philby's oldest friends, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, defected to Russia and a cloud of suspicion hung over the remainder, Anthony Blunt and John Cairncross. Once word leaked out, the public was transfixed by how these scions of wealthy families could become traitors serving Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

The scramble to ferret out the rest of the Cambridge spies, recounted in the book's final third, is the narrative highlight, with British spyhunters scouring clues as Philby tries desperately to throw them off the trail.

But Senior's comprehensive account of perhaps the 20th century's most famous spy ring focuses above all on the human cost of their betrayals, including the three squads of Western-trained Ukrainian nationalists dropped into the mountains on that May night.

Some of the parachutists were eventually hunted down and killed; what happened to the rest remains unclear, but just one managed to escape back across the Iron Curtain. The Cambridge Five supplied Soviet intelligence with information on top-secret plans by American and British covert operatives to cultivate armed resistance at the edges of the Soviet empire. The spies' efforts at least partly led to the capture and deaths of scores of agents and partisans – many of them anti-communists from Eastern Europe who were fighting for independence.

Senior – a writer of historical fiction, a podcaster, and a book critic for The Times of London – acknowledges the appeal of com-

munist idealism in Depression-era Britain. She also recognizes how a sense of the injustices of British imperialism and a horror at the rise of fascism in Europe helped draw the Cambridge Five to the Soviet cause.

But "Stalin's Apostles" is not a sympathetic account, and Senior has no interest in understanding the appeal the Soviet project held for the young spies. She is clearly outraged by the public's attraction to the Cambridge Five – with their mix of upper-class elegance, intrigue, and youthfulness. The writer spends much of her account looking to smash any hint of romanticism around the spies.

"Framed solely as a heist on a staid establishment, the Five's crimes have become easy to underplay, even to glamourise," she writes in the introduction. "But there were forgotten victims of their treachery."

Stalinism is fiercely depicted in all of its brutality, while the Cambridge spies come off as grotesque, gin-drinking monsters. Maclean and Philby were beastly to the women in their lives. Burgess, often portrayed as an amusing, booze-soaked rascal and sexual libertine, once tried to enlist the Soviets to assassinate a good friend (they declined).

In one particularly acidic passage, Senior describes the deaths of a pair of hapless Lithuanian agents delivered straight into the clutches of the Soviet secret police and imagines, lurking in the shadows, "a gleeful Philby."

"Stalin's Apostles" offers a lively – if polemical – account of Stalin's consolidation of a vast Soviet empire, and how a fire hose of secrets from the Cambridge Five aided his maneuvering. Maclean, for instance, was able to pilfer direct personal correspondence between successive U.S. presidents and British prime ministers from his perch at the British embassy in Washington.

In another jaw-dropping passage, Senior describes the spy John Cairncross simply scooping decrypted messages off the floor at the legendary Bletchley Park code-breaking operation, stuffing them down his trousers, and heading off to meet his Soviet handler.

The Soviets could scarcely believe how outclassed the Western allies were in the espionage game. Soviet spymasters, buried under reams of classified documents stolen by the Cambridge Five, simply could not accept the truth that the Americans and British largely failed to place their own moles in the Kremlin. As Philby remembered with a laugh years later: "The Russians kept asking for the names of British agents in Russia, and I kept on telling them: 'There aren't any.'"

The clubby world of mid-century Britain – what Senior dubs "the chapocracy," where good manners, good breeding, and a good wit counted for everything – helped shield them for years despite numerous slipups and obvious red flags, such as alcohol problems and communist ties. "It was simply inconceivable that such a fellow could betray his country at such a time of bleak peril," Senior writes of one of the men.

Their pedigrees also helped shield them from severe consequences once the spy ring collapsed. Philby, clearly implicated but with only top-secret evidence against him, was shunted off to Beirut, where he found work as a journalist for several prominent publications. There, in 1963, an old friend named Nicholas Elliott tried to coax him once more to confess his betrayal.

"I used to look up to you, Kim," Elliott told Philby. "My God, how I despise you now." ▪

IN PICTURES

Bringing the sea's bounty to the Sahara

Story by Marta Saiz / Contributor

TINDOUF PROVINCE, ALGERIA

Every year, Damba Mohamad drives 800 kilometers (about 500 miles) from Rabouni, the administrative center of the Sahrawi refugee camps in southwestern Algeria, to the city of Zouérat in northern Mauritania. There, he buys croaker or hake fish to bring back to Rabouni and resell it in the camps.

He makes the long trek because it is otherwise hard for people in exile to eat what they once could freely catch 50 years ago. The Sahrawi people were expelled from their land in 1975, when Spain withdrew from its former colony of Spanish Sahara, and Morocco began occupying the vast territory. More than 170,000 Sahrawis now live in the camps in this harsh desert region, where summer temperatures can exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

With seafood so difficult to secure, an unusual project was launched seven years ago: At a farm in Esmara, a locality within the camps, farmers raise red and black tilapia in ponds that hold about 48,000 fish. Most of the harvest goes to feed people living in the camps, including those at the hospital.

Biologist Jadiya Nafe clearly recalls the day the farm was inaugurated, on Feb. 28, 2019. "We wanted to show that even in these conditions, opportunities can still be created," she says.

▪ *This article was produced with support from a Connect for Global Change grant from Lafede, which advocates global human rights.*

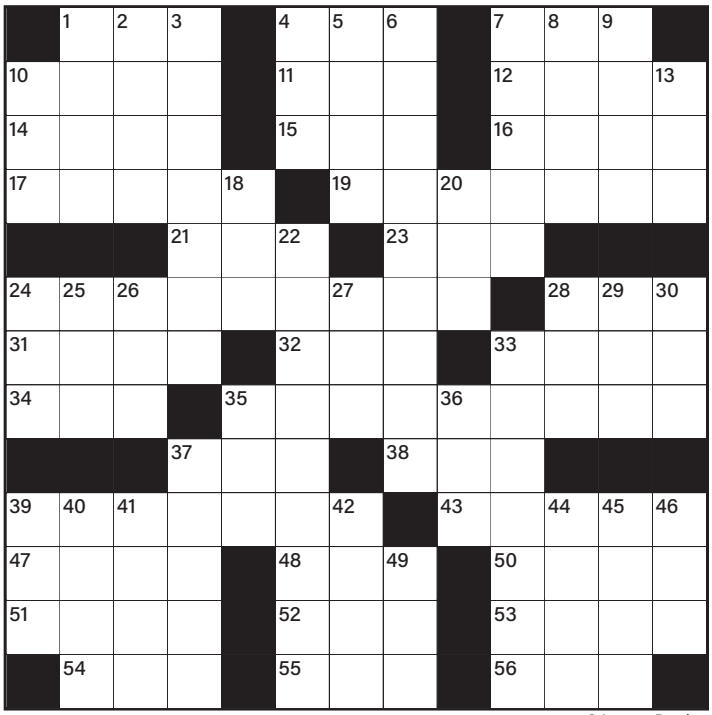
Crossword

ACROSS

1. Prickly seed casing
4. Ewe's mew
7. Data descriptor
10. Acoustic measure
11. Frequent, to Keats
12. Caddie's offering
14. Bereft of rain
15. Candy log
16. Very serious
17. Arise from sleeping
19. Purplish pink
21. Co. captain
23. Mongrel dog
24. Office connection?
28. Ford or Lincoln, but not Bush
31. Dedicated compositions
32. Over the top
33. Crosby's road companion
34. Garden-shop container
35. Colonized
37. Water gate?
38. Ninth mo.
39. Went into hiding
43. Forest clearing
47. Japanese sashes
48. Cul-de-___
50. Dash of panache
51. Pigs' homes
52. Take a wrong turn
53. Breeding stallion
54. Senate approval
55. The limit, proverbially
56. ___ story

DOWN

1. Do drilling
2. Curriculum component
3. Cuts down
4. Comic Saget
5. Great distance
6. Just plain awful
7. Rodeo entrant
8. Operatic crowd-pleaser
9. Plant suffix
10. Aging gravitation
13. Miss given?
18. ___ annum
20. Have some dinner
22. They're well-armed
24. Balloon-breaking sound
25. Scene
26. Resident animal
27. Prune
28. Rollaway
29. Dr. Zaius, e.g.
30. Scarlet or crimson
33. Ill-fated
35. Rocket's departure site
36. Drumstick
37. Girl's name
39. Move like a rabbit
40. Wedding-vow directive
41. Quarterback's protection
42. City planners' concern
44. Low vocal range, maybe
45. Paint hastily
46. Denouement
49. Honk or hoot



			9		8			
							6	5
6						1		4
7		6		3			1	
3	8		5					
		1				6		
			4					
					7			
	9	8	3			2		

Sudoku difficulty: ★★☆☆

Crossword and Sudoku solutions

4	9	6	1	5	3	8	7	2
2	1	3	6	8	7	5	4	9
5	6	7	4	9	2	8	3	1
9	2	1	8	7	4	6	5	3
3	8	4	5	1	6	7	9	2
7	5	6	2	3	9	4	1	8
6	3	9	7	2	5	1	8	4
8	7	2	1	4	3	9	6	5
1	4	5	9	6	8	3	2	7

How to do Sudoku

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in each column, row, and three-by-three block.