

THE ECHO

Integrity knows no excuse



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Issue — 1

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Letter from the Editor in Chief

Dear Readers,

I'm excited to welcome you to the inaugural issue of The Echo for 2025! This edition marks the beginning of what we hope will become a platform for student voices, curiosity, and creativity to come together in print.

Within these pages, you'll find a mix of international and national news, school events, sports highlights, op-eds, and special interest pieces — each written with care, perspective and passion. Our goal is simple: to inform, engage and inspire our readers while capturing the pulse of CHIREC and the world beyond it.

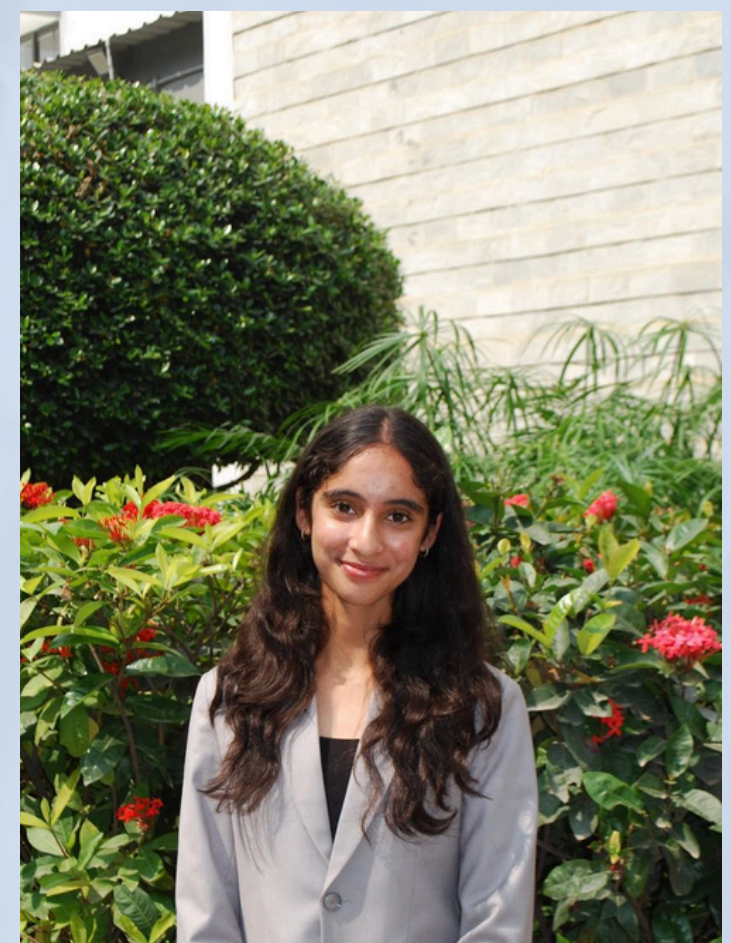
As Editor-in-Chief, I couldn't be prouder of our editorial board and contributors, whose dedication turned countless ideas and drafts into the final version you're reading now. This issue would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Masthead — from design and marketing to tech, photojournalism and journalism — and the constant guidance and support of Alka Ma'am. For this, I'm immensely grateful.

May these pages remind us that every voice has a story worth telling — and every story has the power to make a difference.

Happy Reading!

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Editor-in-Chief



Hasthead



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The Norris-Piastrri Rivalry: IS MCLAREN PLAYING FAVOURITES?

M.S Meenakshi

The team dynamic between Lando Norris and Oscar Piastrri of McLaren's Formula 1 team is starting to look ominous, with fans drawing parallels to the Hamilton-Rosberg rivalry during their time at Mercedes from 2013 to 2016.

Team dynamics in Formula 1:

Ideally, when a rookie enters a team that's housed another driver for a longer time, the preference falls toward the senior driver, and most of the time, he's the one leading in the championship race. However, when the rookie is the one standing on top, prioritizing becomes a major dilemma for the team. Do they stay loyal to the veteran and risk the rookie's chance at a driver's championship, and subsequently, their chances of a Constructor's championship? Or do they take the bold step and risk the veteran's trust to stand with the leading rookie?



McLaren's situation:

When Oscar Piastri joined the McLaren team in 2023, replacing Daniel Ricciardo, it was expected that Lando Norris, who was with the team since 2019 would be favoured over the rookie. However, Zak Brown, CEO of McLaren, stated quite confidently that both of them would be treated the same, a decision overturned later on due to conflicting interests (which brought Netflix much to say in the documentary, Drive to Survive).

While Norris was expected to be the leading driver, Piastri quickly rose as the 2023 season's most popular rookie, with an impressive record of two podiums and ending almost every race in the top 10, bringing home quite a lot of points. Combined with Norris's performance, the team, despite a rough start, was on track to improving in the 2024 season. This was proved true by Norris's first ever win in Miami, followed by Piastri's first in Hungary, along with several podium positions secured by both drivers.



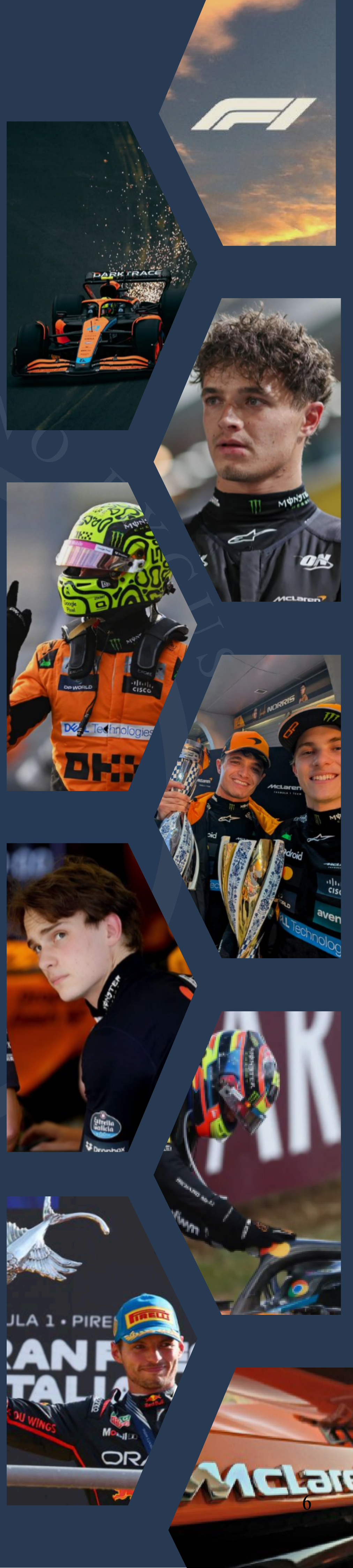
That win at the Hungarian Grand Prix, however, was not only a landmark in Piastri's career but the beginning of a rivalry between the teammates. Piastri's win was attributed to team orders that forced Norris to let him pass, reclaiming his position as race leader. Although there was no hostility between the drivers, the race forced McLaren to reaffirm their stance backing Norris, the championship leader amongst the two. The catch here was that Piastri, quite surprisingly, was able to catch up with Norris in no time, securing more points and even winning another race that year.

The rookie's rising success has only been amplified in the current season, with Piastri taking the championship lead over his teammate Norris and the four time world champion Max Verstappen.

This left McLaren at yet another impasse: Continue favouring Norris, or show more support to the leading driver of the team? And can the drivers work together by putting aside ambitions for a world championship to win the Constructor's championship?

The 2025 Italian Grand Prix at Monza put this very question to the test. With polesitter Max Verstappen was in the lead, and both McLaren drivers were fighting to overtake him, with Piastri holding off Ferrari's Charles Leclerc as well. On lap 45, Piastri pitted and managed to keep his place in third; but Norris's pitstop in the following lap proved to be marginally slower due to an issue with one of his tyres- placing him in third and moving Piastri up to second.

That was when the team made the decision to request Piastri to give the position back to Norris, allowing him to pass and thereby putting him back in third position, a decision Piastri was not satisfied with on radio. The team retaliated by reflecting on Norris's cooperation in a similar manner during Piastri's maiden win at the 2024 Hungarian Grand Prix. Eventually, Piastri complied and gave the position back to Norris, and both the McLaren's finished in P2 and P3 with Max Verstappen winning the race.



Looking at it either way, McLaren as a team got those points. But when it came to the drivers, the one position difference caused Norris to close the gap further between him and his teammate in the championship race, which could've been avoided if not for the team's orders to switch positions.

This only set the bar higher for both drivers in the Azerbaijan Grand Prix, set right after Monza, which, admittedly, did not go well for either of them. Both of them qualified below the top 5, though within the top 10, a stark contrast to the past few races.

The race went worse, with Piastri crashing within the opening lap, and Norris losing his position to Isack Hajdar, falling to P8 with the deployment of the safety car. Although he managed to regain his position at the end of the race, the P7 did little for his opportunity to close the gap between him and his teammate in the championship standings.



The way forward:

With only six races left for the season, tensions are riding at an all time high. What's clear though, is that pressure will be at an all time high this year with a close championship battle between two McLaren drivers, with the drivers themselves admitting it, as well as Zak Brown- who stated in the first half of the season that: "We fully expect them to cross swords again at some point. I know it won't be deliberate, because that's when the trouble starts. There will be racing incidents between them during their time at McLaren, we're aware of that, and so are they."

Piastri admitted, earlier this season, that: "The pressure is only going to increase from here. When we get to the latter part of the year, that is when the pressure will ramp up."

As we near the end of the 2025 season, perhaps Piastri's prediction might prove to be true, and Brown's, not so much. The real question here is: Will this inevitable rivalry remain in its amiable stance as it is now? Or will it escalate into something more?

American Eagle Ad Campaign: IS THE OUTRAGE REAL OR SIMPLY A CHANNEL FOR POLITICAL CONSUMERISM?

Mahima Rao



“Sydney Sweeney has great jeans”. The wordplay on American Eagle’s ad campaign featuring star Sydney Sweeney caught a lot of attention for all the wrong reasons with critics saying it had eugenic undertones. The ad, featuring Sweeney smiling into the camera and quipping, “Genes are passed down. My jeans are blue,” quickly sparked boycotts, memes, and moral debates across social media.

The real story, however, isn’t the ad but rather the reaction because what’s happening in our feeds right now says a lot about where political expression has gone in 2025.

When companies like American Eagle use celebrities to sell not only denim but an identity and when we, as consumers, reject or embrace those brands, we’re not just reacting to fashion - we’re making a moral or political statement.

The late cultural theorist Fredric Jameson once described “late-stage capitalism” as an era where everything - culture, politics, and even identity - has become a product. In that system, we don’t just consume for necessity or pleasure; we consume to express who we are.

So why are we channeling so much passion into shopping decisions? That’s because increasingly, it feels like where the power truly is. In today’s day and age we’ve been stripped of real political agency: voting often feels powerless due to rampant corruption and protests feel inaccessible. This has led people to pour their values into consumerism by boycotting problematic celebrities and moralising their shopping carts.

Zygmunt Bauman, the sociologist behind Liquid Modernity, argued that this shift isn’t accidental, it’s systemic. When protest feels ineffective and voting feels abstract, buying (or boycotting) becomes the most tangible form of agency left.

That’s what researchers call “political consumerism”: using economic choices to express ethical or social values. It’s why you might avoid a fast-fashion brand after hearing about labor conditions or buy from a company that supports sustainability. It feels like action, and in many ways, it is - but is it real power?



That's the paradox: we turn to consumption because it's accessible - anyone with a wallet can participate - but it also reinforces the same market structures that caused the disempowerment in the first place. It's a protest that happens within the system, not against it.

Sydney Sweeney's American Eagle ad campaign didn't start a culture war - it revealed one already in progress. The internet's obsession with whether she "got it wrong" shows how moral discourse has migrated to the marketplace.

In this sense, the backlash to the Sweeney ad is both sincere and symptomatic: people are doing what they've been trained to do - express outrage, signal virtue, and spend (or refuse to spend) accordingly.

None of this means that consumer choices don't matter. Money drives culture, and companies absolutely respond to public sentiment but if all our energy stays trapped in the marketplace, we risk confusing moral clarity for moral capacity.

Choosing what to buy is one kind of voice but organising, volunteering, voting, and building community remain the kinds of action that actually shift power.

So maybe the better question isn't whether to boycott a jeans brand, but why we feel that boycotting is the only meaningful choice left.



Women Histories:

CLASS, CULTURE, AND CLOTHING

Diya Thummu

Ever since cavemen first crafted skirts out of leaves, fashion has been a constant presence in human life. Paradoxically, it is not static but rather governed by the perpetual change in trends. The deep-rooted human instinct — a desire to self-express — gives fashion its importance. Each piece of fabric tells a tale, each thread is an unseen force, and each style is a quiet rebellion against oppression. Let us undo these seams to get a glimpse of the past.

Across the world, aristocratic classes followed common trends. They adorned themselves in lavish clothes made of expensive materials such as silk, velvet, and satin, while royalty wore even richer fabrics, embellished with rare furs like ermine. Fur was worn as a lining by those who could afford such luxury. The working class, however, stuck to simple clothing made of materials such as wool and linen. Clothing differed not only by material but also by purpose. The higher social classes wore clothing as a spectacle; their attire served an ostentatious purpose. In contrast, the attire of the working class was designed for practicality; they dressed for utility.



This clothing distinction, however, was not just a natural economic phenomenon but was also backed by legal implementation. Sumptuary laws dictated how different social classes led their lives — i.e., what they wore, ate, and owned. These laws governed Greece, Rome, pre-revolutionary France, Tudor England, and many other societies. Specifically regarding clothing, these laws regulated the materials and styles that could be worn depending on a person's social status. For instance, in medieval France, they also limited the number of clothes a person could purchase based on their rank.

These lines blurred with the coming of Industrialization. As goods became cheaper due to mass production, it became easier for the working class to mimic the styles of the upper class. Therefore, clothes were no longer an indicator of class but rather became an expression of self.



In the later half of the 18th century, France began its revolutionary legacy. During this time, the sans-culottes, working-class revolutionaries, gained prominence. The words 'sans-culottes' translated to "without knee breeches." They opposed the aristocratic elites who wore fancy knee breeches and were identifiable by their long trousers and red caps. Fashion for them was no longer just style — it was a revolutionary statement.

This wasn't the only time fashion was used as a form of protest. Earlier, women were seen as docile and dutiful, and this social perspective was reflected in their clothing. In America and many parts of Europe, they wore tight corsets, which inhibited proper blood circulation and weakened the spine. Their long skirts restricted movement and swept dirt from the floor, leading to poor hygiene and illness. What was meant to achieve a graceful figure took a heavy toll on their health.

The suffrage movement was a harbinger of a new era, and in every country's movement, fashion became a tool. Women discarded corsets and embraced the bloomer outfit — a loose-fitting skirt over trousers. They dressed in more practical clothing and opposed 'traditional women's fashion.' Due to the world wars, upper-class women no longer used fashion to distinguish themselves from lower classes; they began wearing simpler clothes, blending fashion across classes.

Even in India, fashion was used to oppose colonial rulers. Khadi clothes became a symbol of resistance. Mass-produced textiles imported from England were burnt and boycotted. Clothes were either self-made or bought from Indian manufacturers.

In conclusion, fashion is not just blindly following the latest trends. It is history, art, and cultural expression. Tales were passed down from one generation to another, not just through oral storytelling but also through the clothes we wear. Each trend, each style, is inspired by and inherited from those who came before us.



CHIREC Fiesta 2025: CELEBRATING INDIA'S FOLK HERITAGE WITH “FOLK-UTSAV”

Naisha Singhee

In the 21st and 22nd of August 2025, CHIREC International once again came alive with colour, creativity, and culture as one of the most prestigious school events in the school circuit- CHIREC Fiesta returned this time under the vibrant theme “Folk-Utsav.” The two-day event was a grand celebration of India’s rich folklore, combining literature, theatre, music, and more!

The 2025 edition of the fiesta was the result of a seamless collaboration between the Cultural and Literary Committees, led by their respective Heads and Deputy Heads, alongside the Head Boy and Head Girl. Under the guidance of our ever-supportive event coordinator, Ruchira Ma’am, we spent weeks planning every detail- from conceptualising the theme and reaching out to schools, to inviting chief guests and managing logistics.

We created detailed spreadsheets to track registrations, delegated tasks among council members, and ensured that the decor reflected the beautiful essence of Folk-Utsav- vivid, traditional, and full of spirit. The entire process was a true reflection of the teamwork and collaboration present within CHIREC International School.

In the days leading up to the event, the collaboration between the Cultural and Literary Committees was unmistakable. Together, we curated a lineup that beautifully captured the diversity of artistic expression. It wasn’t just a competition- it was a celebration of India’s artistic legacy, blending the written word, rhythm, and performance into one cohesive experience.



Over the two days, CHIREC Fiesta hosted a diverse range of events that brought out students' creativity and eloquence:

For Rhymes and Reasons – Poetry Recitation

Acclaimed Declaim – Declamation

In a Gist – Short Story Writing

What's on Your Mind? – Extempore

In Your Own Verse – Self-Composed Poetry

Speak Up! – Debate

Euphonious – Contemporary Western Singing

Everyday I'm Shufflin' – Fusion Dance

Garnish It – Non-Stove Cooking

Playing Picasso – Painting Competition

Each event reflected the creativity, wit, and passion of young participants from schools across the city. The competitions were both spirited and inspiring- reminding everyone why art, literature, and performance remain such vital parts of learning and expression.

A special highlight of the event was the presence of our esteemed Chief Guest, the renowned film director Sandeep Reddy Vanga, best known for his acclaimed works, including Animal and Kabir Singh. His presence added a cinematic flair to the celebration and inspired students with his words on creativity and originality.

By the end of the first and second day, as the final performances concluded and the awards were announced, there was a shared sense of pride among all who contributed.

As Cultural Deputy Head, being part of the core team that brought this vision to life was a truly rewarding experience. The event stood as proof that when creativity meets collaboration, the results can be nothing short of extraordinary.



Russia, India, and the EU:

CONFLICT OR COOPERATION? THE LINES ARE BLURRED

Nandita Rao



The EU speaks of shared values with India, yet responds with sanctions and appeals for loyalty. Is it a display of power disguised as diplomacy? With the advent of September 19th, 2025, the European Commission proposed its 19th package of sanctions against Russia, suggesting that Indian entities could be impacted as a result. The aim was to squeeze Moscow's access to critical technologies like AI and geospatial data, which aid in weapons production. This move came just two days after the EU revealed its intention to prioritize strengthening its relationship with India. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphasized that now is the time to focus on "reliable partners" and "double down on partnerships rooted in shared interests and guided by common values." She added, "With our new EU-India strategy, we are taking our relationship to the next level."

In light of this, it's important to ask: Why is Europe so insistent on India? A continent whose economy is nearly five times the size of India's is clearly working hard to keep India on its side. One reason is India's role as the world's second-biggest arms importer after Ukraine in 2024, which makes it a massive market for European defense manufacturers. But beyond trade, Europe also sees India as a potential way to hedge against its declining global influence. Particularly, the EU views India as a counterweight to China and as a key partner to help maintain its strategic relevance, particularly given the U.S.'s increasing focus on Asia. Europe hopes that by building a stronger relationship with India, it can retain some geopolitical power, while hoping India will align with Western interests, without officially being part of the Western fold.

Exports Surge

The country's defense exports expected to cross ₹20,000 crore in FY 2023-24

Defence Exports (Value in ₹ crore)



Note: Data as of March 8, 2023



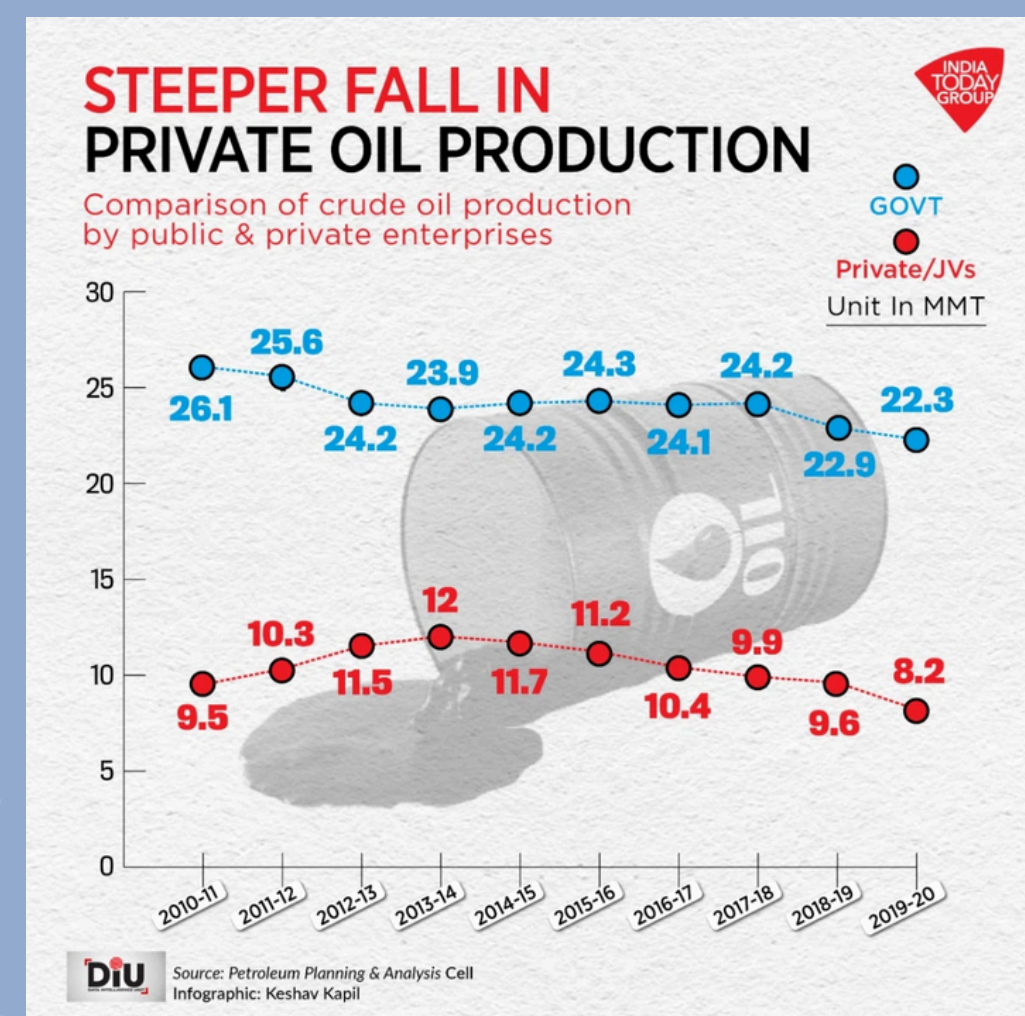
However, as the EU and the U.S. align their policies on sanctions against Russia, former President Trump reportedly urged the EU to impose up to 100% tariffs on India — a move that the EU has not participated in, stressing that such decisions are for them to make. Instead, Europe appears to be adopting a more nuanced approach: its goal is to draw India away from Russia’s influence through trade agreements and enhanced strategic cooperation, rather than alienating it with tariffs.

The tensions between the West and India are also evident in the military and energy sectors. While the EU is “looking forward” to fostering a closer relationship with India, it expressed its “deep concern” over the Indian military’s participation in Zapad 2025, a large-scale military exercise held in Russia and Belarus from September 10–16. India sent a 57-member contingent from the Kumaon Regiment to join the drills, which involved around 40,000 soldiers. While several NATO countries had participated as observers in the past, India's involvement in a Russian-led military exercise raised alarms in the West.

The West has also voiced unease over India’s purchase of Russian oil. While the EU itself was the largest consumer of pipeline gas in August 2025, it criticized India for continuing to buy oil from Russia, with the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, accusing India of being one of the primary funders of Russia’s war in Ukraine in his recent speech at the UNGA. Adding to this, in July 2025, the EU sanctioned an Indian refinery that was refining Russian crude, preventing it from selling to Europe. This highlighted the tension between Europe’s desire to isolate Russia and its reliance on India’s refining capabilities.



In response to these criticisms, India has repeatedly stressed that its oil trade with Russia does not violate any international laws.. While they are open to and even looking forward to working with the EU, they do it with the opinion of not having to discard their national interests and economic security. The country's domestic crude oil production peaked in 2011 and has been declining ever since, making it necessary for India to secure substantial imports to meet its energy needs. By importing Russian crude oil, refining it, and then exporting the petroleum products, India essentially allows Europe to access some of the oil that would otherwise be embargoed. This arrangement means that Europe, which has imposed sanctions on Russia, is indirectly circumventing its own sanctions through its reliance on India's oil refineries.



The reality is that India's oil refineries, whether public or private, are independent entities that decide where to buy crude based on factors like price, supply security, and export rules. According to Ajay Srivastava, a former Indian trade official and head of the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), these refineries do not need approval from the government to source oil from Russia or any other country.



As the EU and India continue to navigate this complex relationship, Europe's desire to draw India closer and India's determination to preserve its autonomy in matters related to its national security seem to be in divergence. While Europe seeks a stronger partnership for geopolitical and economic reasons, India's stance remains firmly rooted in safeguarding its own national interests. The question remains whether these tensions will ultimately prove insurmountable or whether a balance will be found.

Global Security Order

AND ITS EVOLUTION FROM TREATY OF VERSAILLES TO NATO

Diya Thummu

Let us spin the clock's hands in reverse and start our journey on 28th June 1919.

The hounds of war came to rest, bodies were buried and sins laid drenched in blood. At the palace of Versailles an important peace treaty was being signed. Thus, the Treaty of Versailles marked the end of the First World War. It entailed territorial losses for Germany, the demilitarisation of Rhineland and creation of the League of Nations to resolve future disputes. But this coin flipped to reveal a darker side. Due to lack of sanctions and backing of great powers like the US, it proved to be a vision of idealists rather than pragmatists. It sowed seeds of resentment in the heart of Germany which nourished dangerous ideologies such as Nazism. Thus, what was set up as an effort to guarantee peace, destabilised the very order it was meant to secure.



The catastrophic destruction of World War II and the clear failure of the League of Nations prompted world leaders to fundamentally rethink the architecture of global security. It paved the path for a new international order. With the death of Hitler's tyrannical reign came the birth of the United Nations (UN). It is designed to be more inclusive and practical than earlier structures. The UN was intricately set up to respond to acts of aggression through collective military action, resolve disputes through the International Court of Justice, and carry out peacekeeping missions across conflict zones. It promotes global cooperation and at the heart of it is the United Nations Security Council. It gave permanent membership to 5 major political powers- Russia, US, UK, France, and China. It also equipped them with veto power to ensure that they would take part in this order rather than undermining it. The UN became a global stage for dialogue and diplomacy. It ushered in a new age of global security.

The wartime alliance between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union quickly deteriorated after 1945 due to deep-seated ideological differences. The US championed liberal democracy, open markets, and individual freedoms, while the Soviet Union promoted a Marxist-Leninist model of state. As both superpowers emerged from the war with immense military and economic strength, the global balance of power shifted from a multipolar system to a bipolar one. This led to a Cold War which ultimately put a leash on the effectiveness of the UN.



As the Cold War intensified, 12 founding members established the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). It is a unique model compared to modern day security structures as it is based on alliance rather than global cooperation. Its essence is enshrined in Article 5, which states that an armed attack against one member would be considered an attack against all. NATO shifted the path from collective security to collective defence, and this new route has an ambiguous destination.



In conclusion, the global security order is a culmination of diplomacy, strategy, and global cooperation. The Treaty of Versailles, was without a doubt, a fragile effort to maintain peace. With the creation of NATO, the future is marked by a question mark. Is the route we're taking a twisted path towards a new future? Or is it a circular path back to the past?

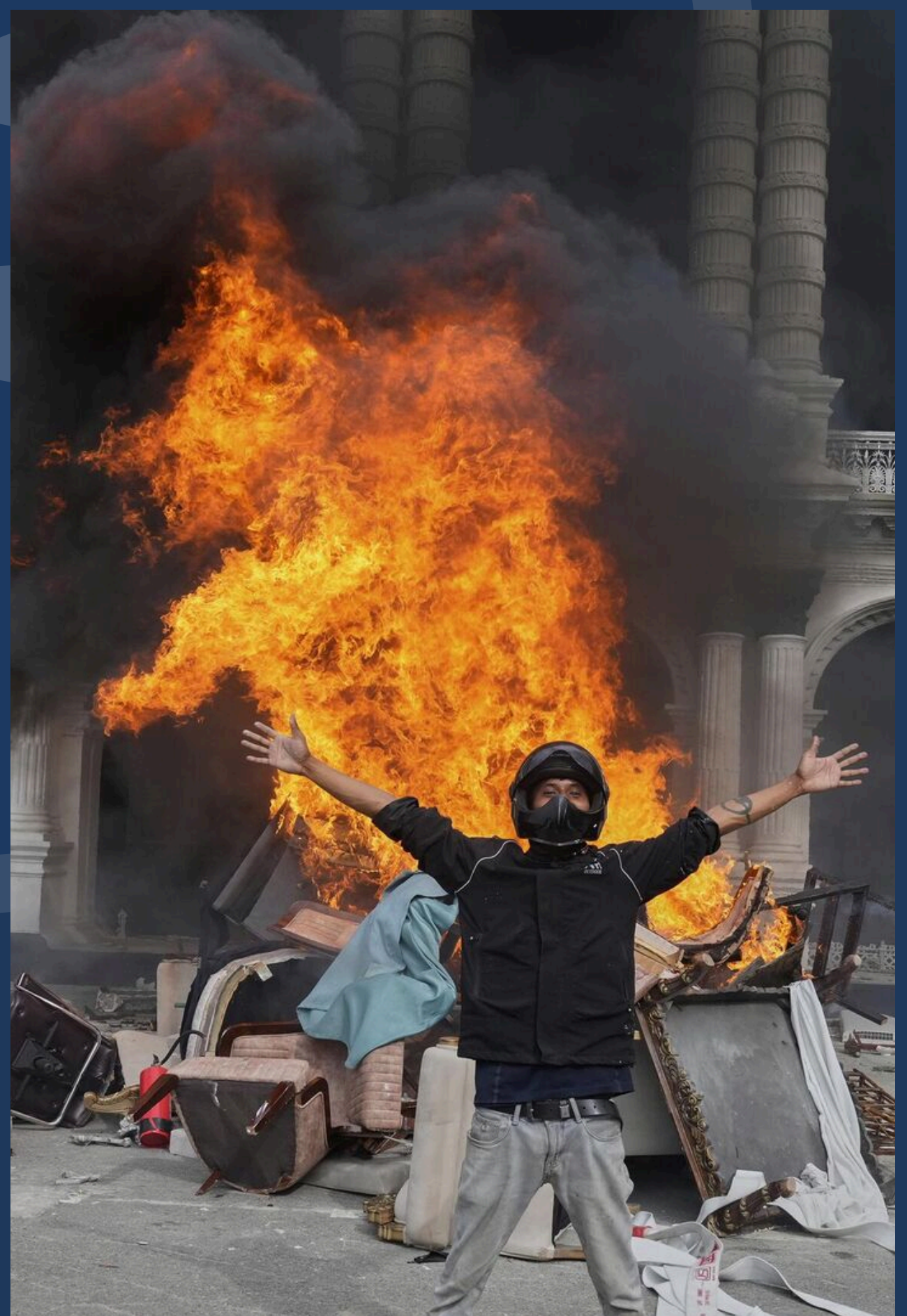
When the Land Of The Mountains Roared: NEPAL'S GEN Z UPRISING

Aditi Parashar

As riots tore through the streets of Nepal, the roar of an enraged Gen Z shook Kathmandu to its core. The capital city became a battlefield stained with blood — a level of violence unseen in decades. How could a nation ranked third most peaceful in South Asia as of 2024 on the Global Peace Index now be plunged into such chaos, marked by the deadliest unrest of the decade? To unravel this tragic descent, we must journey back several decades — to the pivotal year of 1990.



Democracy in Nepal came with the advent of a mass protest movement that forced King Birendra to end the “Panchayat” party-less autocratic system in 1990. This led to the restoration of multiparty democracy and the enactment of a new constitution. What followed was the Nepalese Civil War from 1996 to 2006, which significantly reduced the power of the ruling monarchy and transferred authority to parliament and political parties. This shift paved the way for Nepal to become a federal democratic republic in 2008. Since then, Nepal has cycled through twenty-seven prime ministers, each averaging barely a year in office.



Tensions began to simmer more visibly when, in 2023, the government imposed a ban on TikTok on charges of fomenting communal disharmony.

The ban was lifted nearly a year later, when the app agreed to register with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in line with new social media rules, invest in digital literacy efforts, and moderate language used on its platform, the Communications and Information Technology Minister announced.



In 2025, the government issued multiple notices to other tech companies, but none complied. On August 28, 2025, the government gave a seven-day ultimatum following a Supreme Court order that mandated all online and social media platforms—whether of domestic or foreign origin—be registered with the competent authority before operating, and that mechanisms be in place to evaluate and monitor undesirable content. When the deadline passed on September 4, the Government of Nepal shut down 26 social media platforms, including Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, Reddit, Signal, and Snapchat.

The ban on popular social media sites caused confusion and frustration across the country. While it was framed as an issue of national security and content moderation, the ban raised concerns over press freedom and disrupted the tourism industry. More critically, it affected how families of Nepal's vast diaspora—29 million strong—communicated with relatives working abroad, prompting widespread disapproval.

Two days following the ban, on September 6, activist Sudan Gurung, founder of Hami Nepal, a non-governmental organization, issued a call on his Instagram: “Do not stay silent. Do not stay home. Bring your friends, your family, your courage, and your voice,” urging young Nepalis to gather and join “a movement for justice.” Other youth groups followed suit. On September 8, Gurung announced the launch of a Discord channel titled “Youths Against Corruption” as a central communication hub for protest coordination. Similar calls to action were echoed by other youth leaders.





A group of Generation Z activists and students obtained permission from the District Administration Office, Kathmandu, to hold a peaceful protest against the government's decision to ban social media, rampant corruption, and political nepotism. The office approved a peaceful gathering outside the prohibited zones between Maitighar Mandala and New Baneshwor, starting at 09:00 NST.

Soon, young people arrived in Kathmandu in droves, carrying placards. Some held megaphones, chanting slogans against corruption. Others sang and danced. A short film showed skateboarders rolling alongside the crowd as it moved toward Parliament. A youth leader declared that protestors would not destroy public property, commit arson, or even leave behind trash — only raise their voices peacefully.

Within hours, the crowd had swelled to thousands, many wearing their school and college uniforms. It was their first act of organized resistance against the state. One powerful symbol of the protest was the Jolly Roger flag from the Japanese One Piece series, representing the pirate captain's mission to "liberate oppressed people and fight the autocratic World Government."

As in earlier Indonesian protests, the flag came to symbolize globally connected Nepali youth rebelling against a corrupt government.

Soon, however, chaos erupted. A few protestors stormed Parliament. Tear gas and water cannons proved insufficient. In a dramatic escalation, security forces resorted to rubber bullets and live ammunition. By nightfall, nineteen protestors were confirmed dead across the country.

On the evening of September 10, as chaos threatened to fill a growing political vacuum, 7,586 young Nepalis voted on the "Youths Against Corruption" Discord channel for a leader to head an interim government. Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki emerged as the top choice. Following this, Nepali President Ram Chandra Paudel —on the recommendation of youth representatives—appointed Karki as Prime Minister of an interim government. On September 12, Karki took charge and recommended the dissolution of the House of Representatives, one of the protestors' key demands. She was given six months to conduct parliamentary elections.



Amid the mayhem, protesters began targeting key public buildings such as the Karnali Provincial Assembly, the Survey Office, the Province Treasury and Controller Office, the Chief Minister's residence, and the ward offices of Birendranagar municipality wards 2, 3, 6, and 11.



In terms of private property, the homes of various Nepali officials include Nepali Congress Vice President Purna Bahadur Khadka, his brother are amongst few.

Additionally, the party offices of the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and CPN (Maoist Centre) were reduced to ashes. In Jumla district, the party offices of the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML were also damaged.

Beyond the 19 structures that were fully destroyed, 15 others sustained partial damage, and five incurred minor damage. Government officials were also personally targeted. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bishnu Prasad Paudel was reportedly beaten and chased through the streets of Kathmandu by a mob. Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his wife, Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, were assaulted in their home. Former Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal's wife sustained serious burn injuries and had to be flown to India for treatment. The private residence of the outgoing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli—who officially resigned on September 9—was torched by protesters, prompting his resignation letter.

In the midst of this tragedy, an important question arises: Why did Gen Z do this? And what were they hoping to achieve?

According to protesters, their movement had three primary goals:

First, for the government to lift the social media ban, which has now been done.

Second, to end what they call “corrupt practices” by government officials.

Third, to stop the rise of “Nepo Babies” — a term that gained traction on social media in recent weeks as videos of the lavish lifestyles of political families went viral. Protesters argue these individuals enjoy power and privilege without merit, living off public money while ordinary Nepalis struggle.

So what did they expect from the movement? For one, they hoped for a new generation of leaders, such as Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah, a former rapper, and Rabi Lamichhane, a political figure who was one of the inmates freed from Nakhu Jail amid the protests. Many believed these leaders would understand and address the real needs of Nepal's youth.

Ashok Raj Sigdel, issued a statement accusing demonstrators of taking advantage of the crisis by damaging, looting, and setting fire to public and private property. He further warned that if unrest continued, all security institutions, including the Nepal Army, were prepared to take control of the situation.

Most recently, on September 24, President Ram Chandra Paudel issued an ordinance to amend the Voter Roll Act (2016), paving the way for Gen Z voters to be enrolled on the electoral list — a key demand of the youth-led uprising.



Absolutely — here's a tighter, more concise version of the same paragraph that keeps all the key pro-monarchy arguments and includes the 2023 protests, while trimming any fluff or repetition:

In recent years, especially during political instability, a growing number of Nepalis have expressed support for restoring the monarchy. In 2023, thousands marched through cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara waving national flags and portraits of former King Gyanendra, demanding the return of the crown. For many, the monarchy symbolized national unity, cultural identity, and stronger leadership — a stark contrast to the political chaos that has followed its abolition.

Supporters argue that under royal rule, Nepal experienced more stability, less corruption, and a functioning bureaucracy. The king stood above party politics, offering continuity in governance and acting as a moral anchor during times of crisis. In their view, the republic has failed to deliver on its promises, and a constitutional monarchy could bring back a sense of order and direction — not as a return to autocracy, but as a stabilizing force in a deeply divided nation.

That being said, the events of September 2025 will be remembered as a turning point in Nepal's recent history. What started as a protest over digital restrictions quickly grew into something far larger — a nationwide expression of frustration over corruption, free speech and equality.

While some of the demands have been met, it remains to be seen whether these changes will lead to lasting shifts in governance. For now, Nepal moves forward, uncertain but undeniably changed. However one thing is for sure, that the events of September 2025 will leave a mark deeply etched in the history of Nepal, a turning point and sequence of events that the future generations will hope to build on.



India's 30% Crypto Tax: WHY YOUNG INVESTORS ARE STILL TRADING

Kriti Rudraraju

India's introduction of a flat 30% tax on gains from Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs), including cryptocurrencies, was a landmark decision in the 2022 Union Budget. This stringent tax regime, coupled with a 1% Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) on all transactions above a set threshold and the inability to offset crypto losses against any other income, was primarily an attempt by the government to generate Revenue and Legitimize.

By taxing VDA gains at the highest slab rate, treating them akin to speculative income like lottery winnings, the government established a clear revenue stream and, crucially, legally recognized the asset class for taxation purposes, falling short of a ban but signifying official cognizance.

It also aimed to deter speculation and increase investor protection: the high tax rate and the inability to set off losses were punitive measures designed to discourage high-volume, speculative trading, which authorities viewed as high-risk, especially for new and young investors. Another function on the TDS is to create an audit trail and enhance transaction transparency to counter money laundering and tax evasion.

However, despite one of the world's strictest crypto tax frameworks, young Indian investors - a demographic that constitutes a significant portion of the country's crypto user base - have shown resilience and a continued appetite for trading.



The allure of cryptocurrencies lies in their potential for exponential, albeit volatile, gains that could significantly accelerate wealth creation in a way bank deposits and even equities can't. This serves as a powerful draw for younger people seeking to outpace inflation and achieve financial independence sooner.

Moreover, young investors see crypto as an emerging, foundational asset class and are keen to secure early exposure, a long-term perspective that supersedes the immediate tax hurdle; they view the underlying blockchain technology and decentralized finance (DeFi) as the future of the global financial system.

The global crypto market today is dynamic, with developments like the rise of institutional adoption and the approval of Bitcoin ETFs in other major economies providing a continuous sense of legitimacy and momentum. Indian investors, many of whom are digitally savvy, remain tuned into this global sentiment. While the 30% tax was designed to temper enthusiasm, for a generation prioritizing high-growth digital assets, the potential rewards and conviction in the technology outweigh the financial friction imposed by the tax regime.

Reading is Political

THE OVERLOOKED ISSUE OF MODERN STORYTELLING

M.S Meenakshi

Social media is buzzing with the latest controversial statement: “Reading is, and always has been, political”, with the prime focus being themes in George Orwell’s 1984, and Ray Bradbury’s Fahrenheit 451. Here’s the catch: The question being posed shouldn’t be “Is the act of reading political?”, but rather- “Why is reading considered political? And why would people assume otherwise?”

Firstly, what do we consider political? The general public definition, where the word is associated with political activity in a country, that’s generally subconsciously linked to corruption? Or the formal definition of decision making, often related to public policy? In this context, it would probably be a mix of the two, where a ‘political’ book is considered to be one that speaks of a government activity either directly or indirectly and views ideas and opinions in relation to public policy.

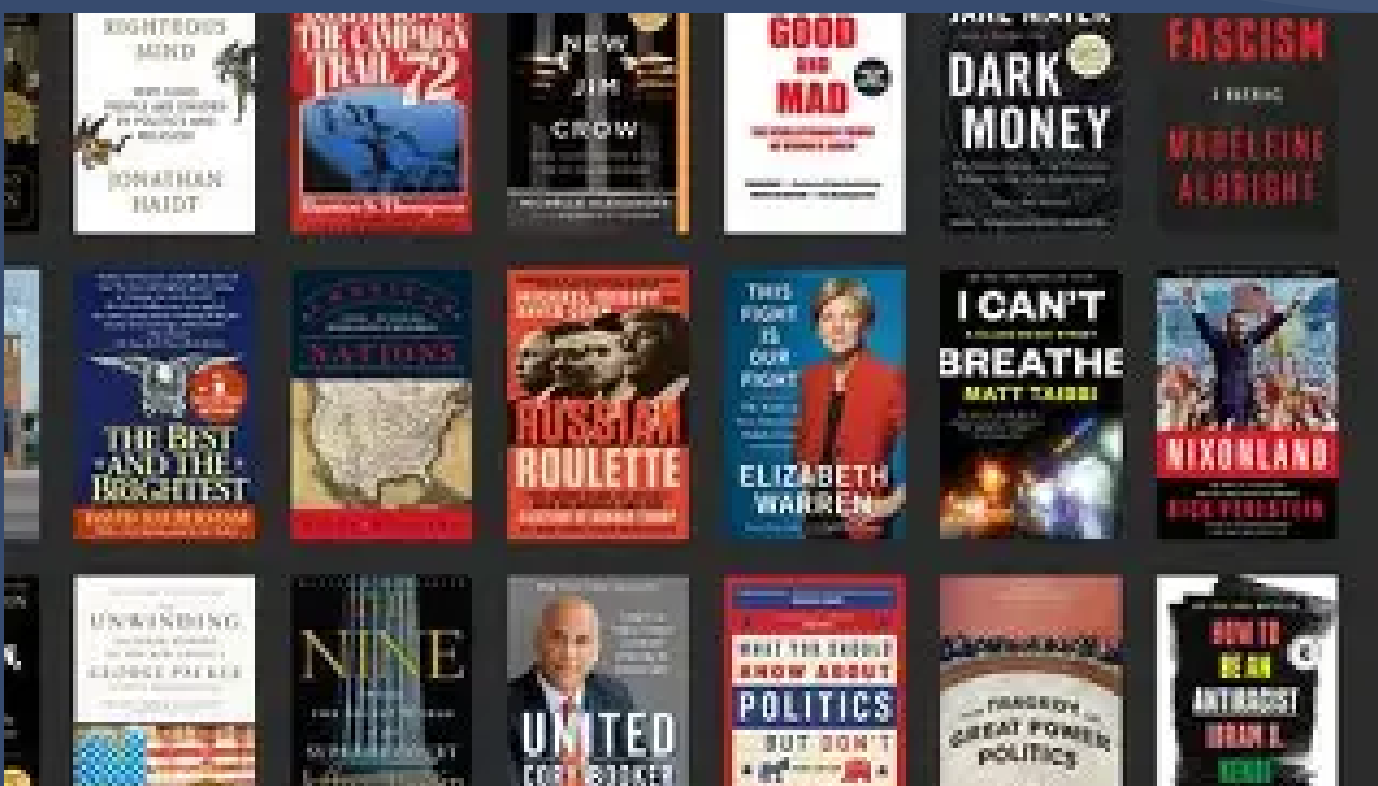
It’s quite common to hear adults chide their kids to ‘read more’, often dismissing fiction as ‘lesser’ than non fiction or academic books, believing that children learn less from fictional books than from other genres.



This sentiment seems to be shared by those who claim that they read books that are ‘not political’, tending to stick to light fictional tales that they assume are completely detached from societal reflections.

This assumption, is of course, not entirely correct. The act of being literate itself is something that’s been a resistance to oppression, as seen throughout history. Reading was access to not just education, but to power, freedom, and liberty of personal life choices. Being able to read and write automatically placed a person in a higher status, and that pattern continues to be seen even today, where literacy is held in high regard.

So how does this connect to the dismissal of fiction?

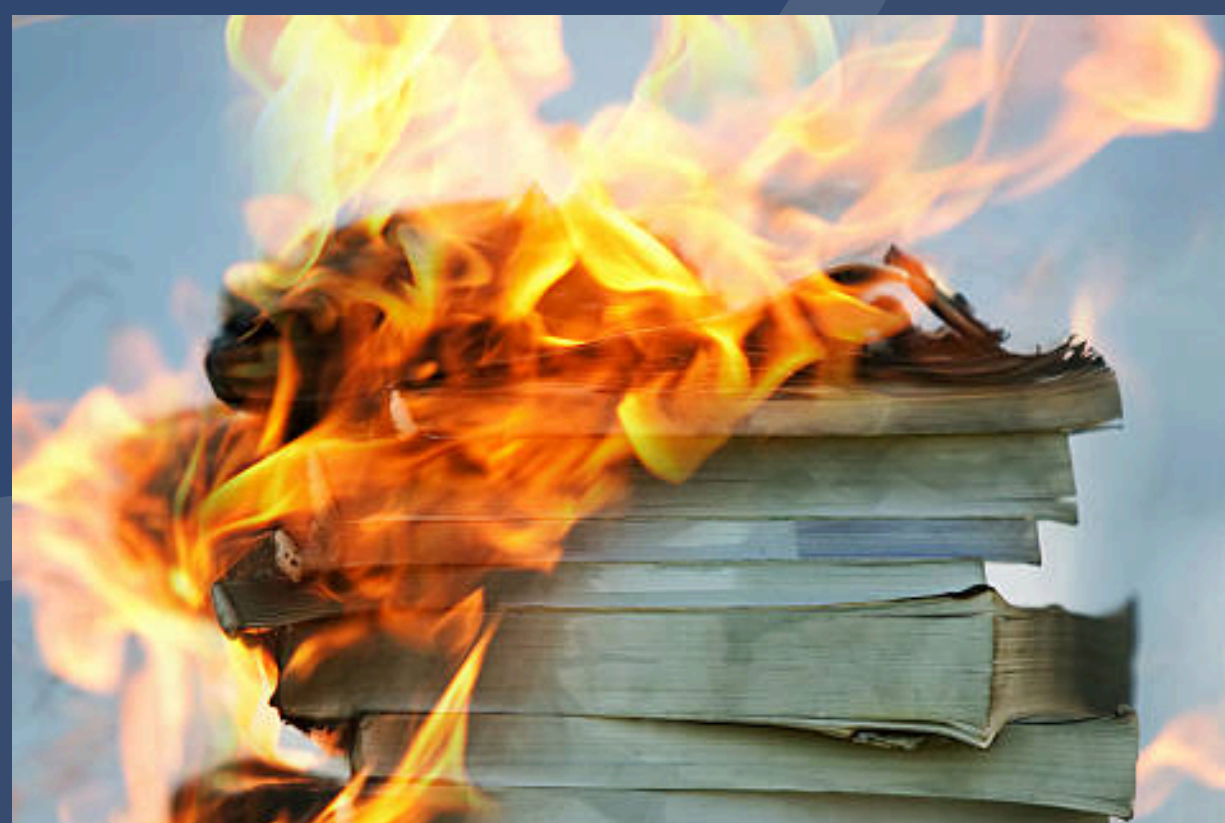
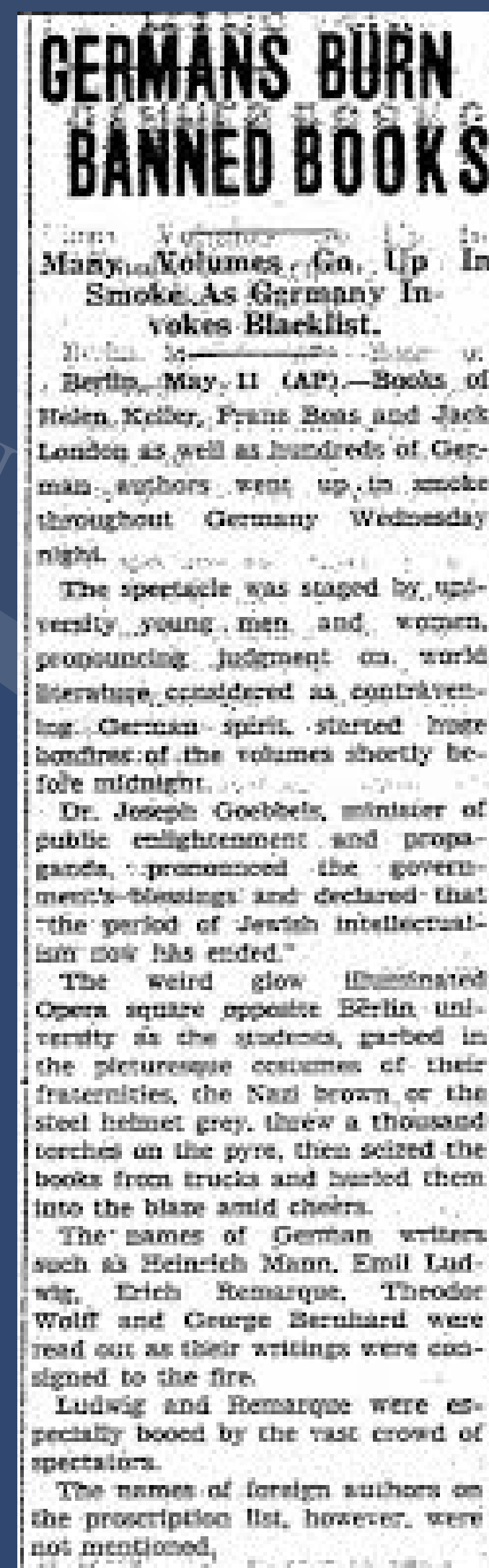


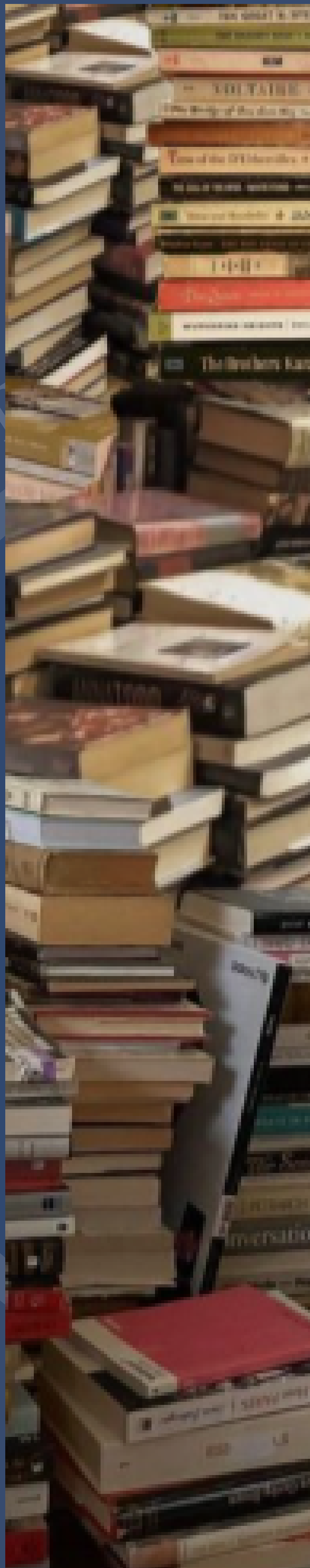
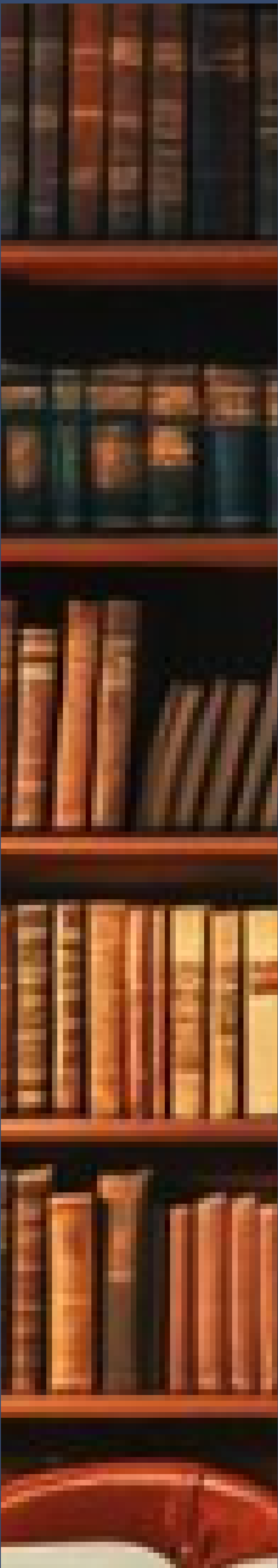
Part of it is in coordination with how these books are marketed as something meant for people who 'don't like reading', leading to their categorisation as books for those who are 'less intelligent'.

However, many of these books often reflect themes of human behavior, oppression, and rebellion. This brings in the question: How is that any different from books like 1984, or The Handmaid's Tale?

There are two popular theories for this- One being the simplicity of language in which they're written, and the second, the timeframe of their publishing. Books that are traditionally considered 'political' or having political themes are seen to have been published in either the 19th or 20th century, moving into the early 21st century as well, so they're quite old. This affects their use of language and tone as well, since books are written, primarily, for an audience, and thus cater to their interests. People's perceptions of societal matters and their taste in entertainment is constantly changing, so it's natural that writers adapt to reading trends in order to sell their books, while trying to spread their ideas as well.

The books on 'Bookstagram' and 'Booktok', for instance, are marketed as 'non-political' and aimed toward people who don't like reading. However, books like The Fourth Wing, The Cruel Prince, or Caraval are, in reality, reflective of themes revolving around power, control, freedom, self expression, trust, loyalty, and betrayal; just written in a different manner.





The issue lies not in the books themselves, but the way they are perceived. When only certain parts of a book are popularised, people tend to, consciously or subconsciously connect that particular part to the entire plot of the book, often leading to its dismissal as 'shallow' when it may be anything but.

Of course, there are critics that will argue that one cannot possibly compare literary masterpieces to fast selling novels meant for the general public to enjoy rather than think about the intricacies of what the author truly wanted to say through the book, but that raises serious questions on what the parameter is for a work to be considered a 'literary masterpiece' and whether it's fair to put down the quality of another book for being written in a different tone altogether. There's also the concept of individual preferences and factions of thought that comes into play, making this distinction even more difficult.

But at the end of the day, the fact remains that reading is, and always will be, political, regardless of what book a person picks up (with certain exceptions). Whether or not they decide to dwell on the writing and its meaning is up to the person, not the writer. What makes a book truly 'political' in public definition is not the author's intent but rather the reader's perception. Otherwise, all books are political, in more ways than one.

The Rise of Stan Culture:

ARE FANDOMS MORE POWERFUL THAN POLITICIANS?

Sharvina Srivastava

Stan culture — short for ‘stalker fan’, popularized from Eminem’s song Stan (2000) — describes hyper-devoted, often parasocial fan communities or ‘fandoms’ with excessive intensity and emotional investment. Such communities often result in certain celebrities and figures having a cult-like following, granting them deep influence. For instance, “Swifties” (Taylor Swift fans), “ARMY” (BTS fans), and “Beyhive” (Beyoncé fans) tend to be devoted to an extreme often unseen even in politics. With such dedicated following and cultural relevance, the question arises: are fandoms more powerful than politicians?



ORIGINS OF STAN CULTURE & FANDOMS

The original Stan story was a tale of caution: an unstable, homicidal fan consumed by obsession. Over time, the negative connotation of the term softened into slang used to describe loyal fans — who called themselves ‘stans’ with honour instead. However, fandoms predated Twitter, with Beatlemania (for the Beatles) in the 1960s and Trekkies (for Star Trek) in the 1970s.

This shows that avid and excited fans have always existed; the only thing new is the internet — and this changes everything. The internet connects millions of people with shared interests instantly, letting them assemble like disciplined armies united under one common goal, or rather, person. It has provided tools to fandoms with a scale and speed no previous fan base has ever held.

MOBILIZATION POWER

In 2020, BTS took a stand against racial discrimination and donated 1 million USD to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In parallel, BTS’s ARMY matched their donation via coordinated movement and crowdfunding within 24 hours.

Compare this to politicians, who must schedule rallies, draft press releases, and push for legislation through committees before making official statements or moves. Because fandoms are decentralized, fast, and global, they outpace traditional political mobilization.

However, this may not always be positive if the coordinated effort lacks good intentions — though this issue also persists with corrupt politicians.

EMOTIONAL LOYALTY AND IDENTITY

Fandoms are often sustained through parasocial relationships — one-sided emotional bonds with their idols. To fans, a simple livestream or Instagram story feels like a personal interaction, building a deeper connection. That intensity surpasses the transactional nature of politics, where voters often feel detached or cynical. A stan's identity is fused with the fandom itself: to criticize the idol is to insult the fan personally. This loyalty explains why stans defend idols so fiercely online and sustain campaigns for months or years — something politicians struggle to achieve outside election season.

Furthermore, this deepened connection is often imitated by politicians: tweets, Instagram stories, and more personalized 'content' are all designed to mimic the fandom and stan effect.



LIMITS OF FANDOM POWER

Despite these strengths, fandoms are not governments. They cannot pass budgets, control armies, or legislate laws; their influence is only cultural and symbolic, not institutional. A trending hashtag cannot substitute for a healthcare policy — but this limitation is also their strength. Operating outside formal politics, fandoms are free to disrupt, pressure, and reframe debates without being tied down by bureaucracy.



At the end of the day, fandoms may not be “more powerful” than politicians in the traditional sense of governance. Power today is subjective and can be measured less in formal authority and more in terms of mobility, attention, and time. Perhaps power is the consequence of taking action and commanding forces — or performing goodwill under the pretense of influence. It is all in the eye of the beholder.

PASSING THE TORCH

CHLOE MALLE STEPS UP, ANNA WINTOUR MOVES ON

Aanya Reddy



After an extraordinary 37-year tenure as editor-in-chief of Vogue, Anna Wintour has stepped down, passing the reins to Chloe Malle, a former contributing editor now poised to lead the magazine into its next chapter. According to the New York Times, however, Malle is currently the "Head of Editorial Content", not Editor-in-Chief. Malle, who reportedly began her work immediately after assuming the new role, said in an interview with the New York Times that the truth is that “no one's going to replace Anna. While Anna Wintour will remain involved in Condé Nast as a Global Editorial Director, Chloe Malle is left as her hotly anticipated successor at Vogue.

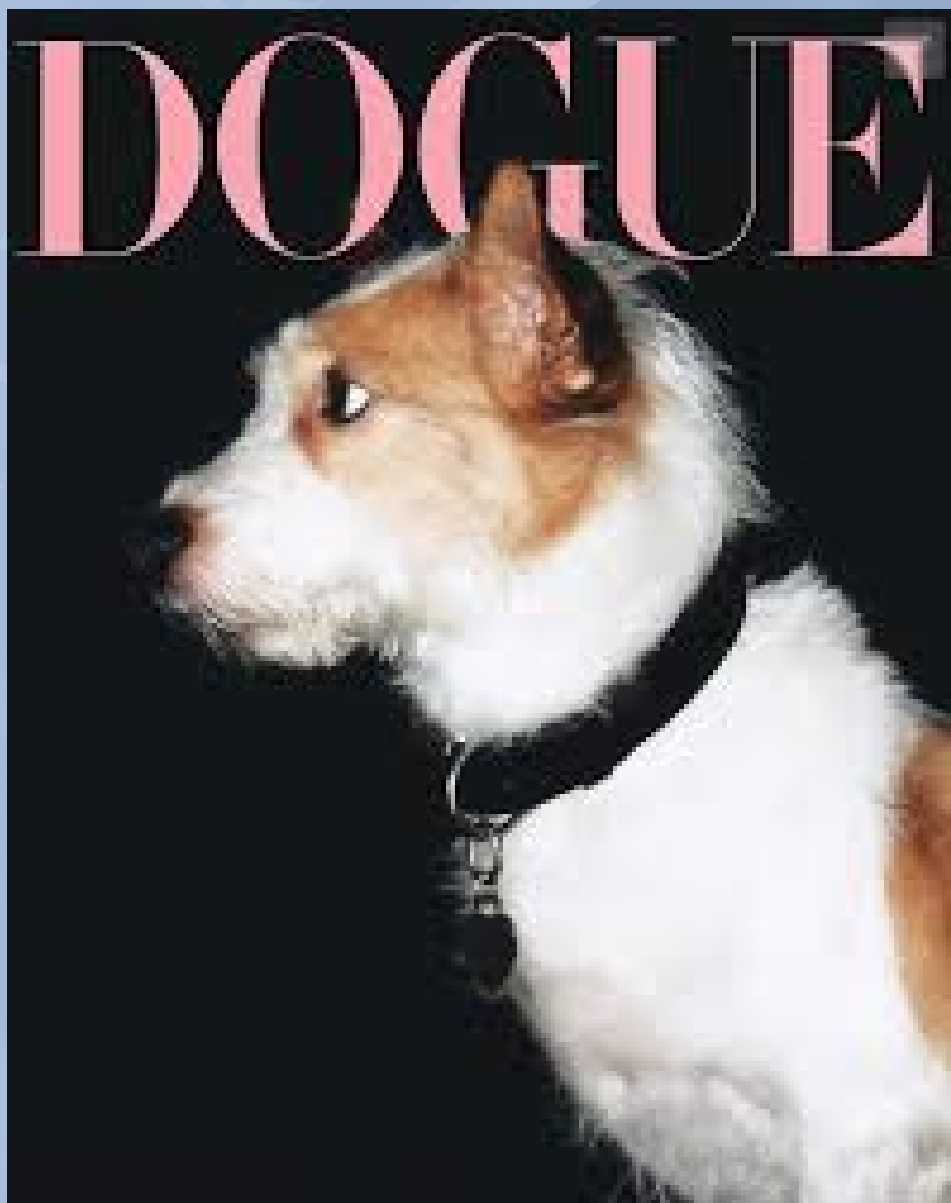
So, what is it about Chloe Malle that made Anna Wintour decide she was suitable to carry on her legacy at one of the most esteemed fashion magazines in the world? Is it that she's a "proud nepo baby" (as she's said herself), the child of late film director Louis Malle and Oscar nominated, Emmy winning actor Candice Bergen - who, interestingly enough, graced the cover of Vogue herself and played fictional Vogue editor Enid Frick in a television series?

For most “nepo babies” they often look at their privilege in a negative light. Something that causes them to hide behind the shadows of their famous parents - but not Malle. In an interview with the New York Times, Malle stated that growing up in Beverly Hills with her famous parents didn't restrict her to just being the daughter of Candice Bergen but rather pushed her to strive for something greater.



Chloe Malle graduated from Brown University in 2008 before jumping into her career in journalism. Her nascent career began as a reporter for the New York Observer which lasted for two years.

Her journey in Vogue, however, began in 2011 as a social editor where she took charge of all wedding and social coverage, before becoming a contributing editor to the magazine, writing features and overseeing special projects. In her time there, she even created Dogue, a canine send-up of the magazine she had published twice. She co-hosted a podcast called The Run-Through with Vogue in 2022, along with Chioma Nnadi, who is now British Vogue's head of editorial content and in 2023, she became the editor of Vogue.com, where she was viewed as a "key player in Vogue's expansion into new forms of storytelling.



For her first edition as head of editorial content, Chloe Malle chose Kendall Jenner and Gigi Hadid to be the focus of the issue. Horsing Around With Kendall and Gigi features the supermodels - who have been close friends for over a decade - on horseback in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park. The shoot blends high fashion with Western aesthetics, showcasing their enduring bond and individual journeys in the fashion industry.

Malle has an exciting new vision for Vogue, planning to place the remaining editions as special, collectible issues rather than routine publications.



This could include further reducing Vogue's print editions which had already been dropped from 11 to 10 in 2023. As she told The New York Times, "Putting my own mark on this will be the most important part of its success,". She also wants to take Vogue's digital presence in new directions, suggesting she wants to target "a more direct, smaller, healthier audience" rather than trying to jump on trending topics. Considering Chloe Malle's plans, it's safe to say that Vogue is being left in capable hands and that she will steer the magazine in a fresh, memorable direction.