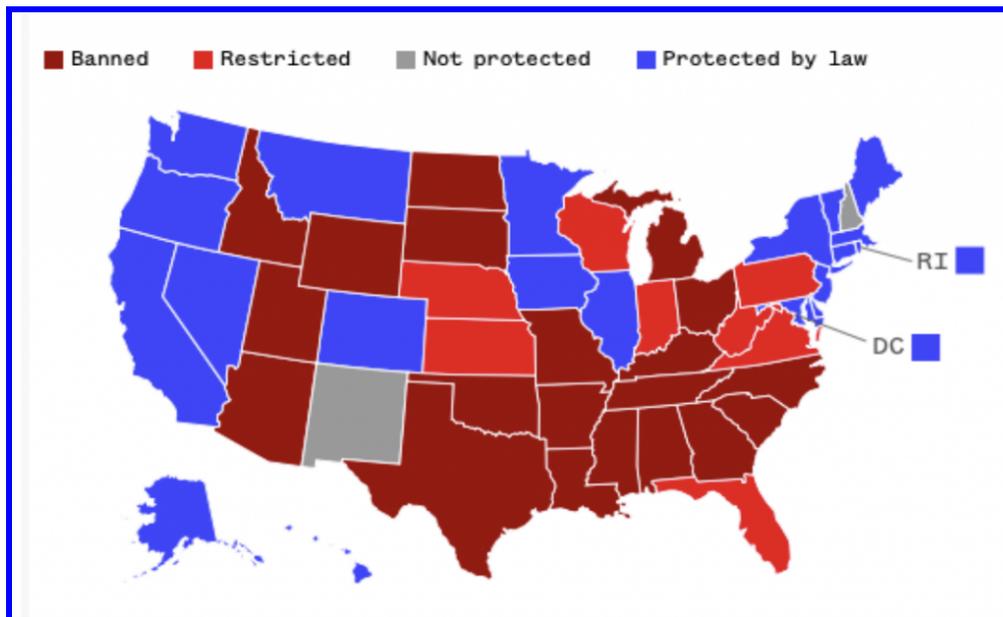


## The Overturning of Roe v Wade : Stranding women even beyond the borders of the United States

Forty-nine years ago, the United States Supreme Court issued a watershed ruling that changed the course of reproductive rights of individuals worldwide: [Roe v Wade](#). It is commonly misconstrued that this case ‘legalized abortion’ in the USA. However, the verdict transformed abortion regulation by protecting it under the constitutional rights of privacy, but only until [fetal viability](#).

This was until June 24 2022: the day of the [overturning](#) of this “[damaging](#)” “[abuse of judicial authority](#)”, as Supreme Court Justice, [Samuel Alito](#) chooses to characterize the decision of Roe v Wade.

While abortion is still legal in most states, this overturning has crushed the legal brick wall that had previously prohibited individual states from declaring abortion illegal. Now, the right to avail a legal abortion in the United States is dictated by each state’s government. The [map](#) below illustrates the expected prohibition of abortion in 23 US jurisdictions as a consequence of the overruling of Roe v Wade.



While these developments are being perceived as a conundrum in American politics, it is equally crucial to consider their international implications.

[“When America sneezes, the world catches a cold”](#)—a [quote](#) by 19th-century Austrian diplomat Klemens von Metternich encapsulates the consequences of American economic policy on the

global economy. American politics, culture, and social concerns exert a broad influence on the rest of the world. Thus, it is worthwhile to investigate the worldwide repercussions of America's anti-choice movement.

[The Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act \(1973\)](#), approved by the United States Congress in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade*, is evidence of the contribution of American international assistance in molding domestic policy of recipient nations. The USA is the leading [global health contributor](#) in a majority of nations, so whether US policymakers repeal Helms or amend it to allow for exceptions, the amendment would almost certainly have a disproportionate [impact](#) on the availability of legal abortion in low and middle income economies which are already belabored by issues of health and population.

Beyond bilateral foreign aid, the imprint of [American abortion politics](#) on international organization funding shapes access to and policy regarding reproductive healthcare the world over, especially considering the States' conditional donations to the UN Population Fund and the US '[Global Gag Rule](#)' (1984). This regulation, also called [The Mexico City Policy](#), is nearly forced upon organizations from countries seeking regular US support. They need to adhere to it in order to keep receiving US funding for providing effective sexual and reproductive health care and education, which in turn feeds into America's already existing influence on global politics. What's more, [numerous studies](#) have found that instead of decreasing abortions, this rule has actually increased the frequency of unsafe abortions in such countries as it leaves people no institutional choice.

An underlying trend appears in both aforementioned arguments: foreign policy, notably overseas funding, emerges as a site of controversy and debate in American abortion politics. American politicians like President Ronald Reagan who enacted the [Global Gag Rule](#) withheld funding to show their support for the anti-choice movement, a [formidable force](#) in American electoral politics. This shows that while [7 in 10 Americans favor legal abortion access](#), a rabid anti-choice propaganda exists at the heart of a right-wing, fundamentalist political engine which tugs at the levers of highest power to impede reproductive autonomy of individuals, to weaken the right of Americans to determine their own fate, and to help cast the destinies of citizens of nations that pin their hopes on US funding to safeguard indispensable healthcare services, such as safe abortions, in their respective countries.

The anti-choice agenda is closely integrated in the wider conservative movement's financial mechanism. However, the anti-choice movement operates primarily under the influence of a few traditionalist mega-contributors like the [Betsy Devos](#) and [Rebekah Mercer families](#). Such affluent, orthodox families finance such campaigns, establishing a [supremist apparatus](#) in the Congress, the [White House](#), the media and evidently, the courts.

The role of mindset is critical to address, since it has been the anti-choice movement's leading tactic. This movement has been systematically building the groundwork for courts to act in their favor—the prime example of which is the overturning of *Roe v Wade*. The fact that this propaganda runs up to the Supreme Court of the United States makes it appear potent enough to affect foreign policy initiatives of courts world over. MSI's Advocacy Manager for Ghana, Esi Asare Prah's [reflection](#): “It is frustrating for people like us working in reproductive choice in contexts like Ghana, because what happens in the US affects us. It gives power to the opposition and the tools to advance their efforts.”, is one of innumerable corroborations of [America's influence](#) on global trends.

Additionally, the first [March for Life](#), another American export, was a street rally conducted in 1974, the year after the *Roe v Wade* verdict. In 2005, an annual [Paris iteration](#) of the event was launched, demonstrating how the American movement influenced the French socio-political landscape. Parallely, in Italy, the far-right League party member Simone Pillon [praised](#) the US court verdict on Twitter, calling it a "great victory". Even in Spain, the leaders of the far-right Vox party which has origins in the ["pro-life" movement](#), attended an anti-abortion rally in Madrid after the verdict was announced.

In fact, even pro-choice groups across the world have sought to mimic the rhetoric of the American anti-choice campaign. According to a [research](#) published by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights which is a pro-abortion access network that unites parliamentarians across Europe, US\$81.3 million in financing poured in from US benefactors between 2009 and 2018 to facilitate fund advocacy against abortion and other conservative causes. Furthermore, a more European-based spinoff of a fundamentalist US group is the [Alliance Defending Freedom \(ADF\) International](#). In the fiscal year ending June 2021, the ADF headquarters in the United States [contributed](#) over US\$2.7 million to several European organizations operating under the name ‘ADF International’ with branches and offices in France, UK, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.

Quite evidently, the following pattern arises from preceding arguments: American 'culture wars' tend to outline discourse, politics, and policy worldwide, either by serving as an precedent or by giving rise to active attempts to globalize specific social movements, as in the case of the ['export of homophobia'](#) by [American social conservatives](#) and Christian missionaries.

As [Justice Harry Blackmun](#) reminds us: abortion can never be an unequivocal matter. It is still a contentious issue since people's perspectives vary according to their worldview and when they perceive human life starts. For many, the urgency for access to reproductive healthcare for women's rights, individual autonomy, and healthcare is evident. And even while the gravity of this issue is known to all it is truly understood by very few. To conclude, we must transform the way we perceive and critically evaluate abortion in the United States and the *Roe v Wade* ruling;

rather than viewing it purely as a domestic concern, we must recognise its pressing global ramifications. The repercussions when addressed such, can bend the arc away from inequity and injustice, and shift the discourse towards acknowledging freedom of choice of individuals from all over the world, not just within the borders of America.