Passage 1

Source: *MIT Technology Review*

Cryptocurrency, once a niche technological curiosity, has evolved into a global financial phenomenon with profound implications for the structure of economic and political power. At its core, cryptocurrency is built on the principle of decentralization—removing the need for centralized authorities such as banks or governments to validate and regulate transactions. Proponents argue that this shift democratizes finance, empowers individuals, and undermines monopolistic control over monetary systems.

However, the decentralization narrative is not without contradictions. While blockchain technology enables peer-to-peer transactions, the infrastructure supporting major cryptocurrencies—such as mining operations and exchanges—is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few powerful entities. This concentration raises questions about whether decentralization is truly being achieved or merely rebranded under a different architecture of control.

Moreover, the regulatory vacuum surrounding cryptocurrencies has created opportunities for illicit activity, market manipulation, and consumer exploitation. Governments face a dilemma: regulating too aggressively may stifle innovation and drive activity underground, while inaction risks systemic instability and erosion of public trust. The tension between innovation and oversight reflects deeper philosophical disagreements about the role of the state in managing economic systems.

Cryptocurrency also challenges traditional notions of sovereignty. Central banks derive their authority from the ability to issue and control national currencies. If digital assets become widely adopted, this authority may be diluted, potentially destabilizing monetary policy and weakening fiscal tools. Some governments have responded by exploring central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), which aim to combine the efficiency of digital transactions with the stability of centralized oversight.

The debate over cryptocurrency is not merely technical or financial—it is ideological. It forces a reconsideration of who should control money, how trust is established, and what role institutions

should play in shaping economic behavior. As the technology matures, the question is not whether cryptocurrency will disrupt existing systems, but whether it will do so in a way that enhances or undermines democratic governance.

1. What conclusion can be drawn from the author's discussion of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs)?

A. CBDCs will replace cryptocurrencies entirely.

B. CBDCs are more vulnerable to manipulation than traditional currencies.

C. CBDCs are a compromise between decentralization and institutional control.

D. CBDCs eliminate the need for monetary policy.

2. Which of the following assumptions underlies the argument that cryptocurrency empowers individuals?

A. Individuals prefer financial autonomy over institutional protection.

B. All users of cryptocurrency are technologically literate.

C. Governments are inherently inefficient at managing money.

D. Peer-to-peer systems are immune to corruption.

3. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the claim that cryptocurrency decentralizes power?

A. Most mining operations are controlled by a handful of corporations.

B. Cryptocurrency transactions are faster than traditional banking.

C. Blockchain technology is open-source and transparent.

D. Governments are unable to regulate digital assets effectively.

4. What flaw is present in the argument that regulation will necessarily stifle innovation?

A. It assumes all innovation is beneficial.

B. It ignores the possibility of adaptive regulatory frameworks.

C. It conflates oversight with censorship.

D. It presumes that innovation cannot coexist with accountability.

5. Which of the following best resolves the paradox between decentralization and concentrated infrastructure in cryptocurrency?

A. Decentralization refers only to transaction validation, not ownership.

B. Infrastructure concentration is temporary and will dissipate over time.

C. Regulatory intervention will redistribute control.

D. Users are unaware of the underlying power structures.

Passage 2

Source: *Nature Climate Change*, *The Guardian*, and *Harvard Kennedy School Review*

As the global climate crisis intensifies, climate engineering—also known as geoengineering—has emerged as a controversial set of proposals aimed at deliberately altering Earth's systems to counteract global warming. Techniques such as stratospheric aerosol injection, ocean fertilization, and cloud brightening are designed to reflect sunlight or enhance carbon absorption. While these interventions may offer temporary relief from rising temperatures, they raise profound ethical, political, and scientific concerns.

One central moral dilemma is the issue of consent. Climate engineering affects the entire planet, yet decisions about its deployment may be made by a handful of powerful nations or institutions. This asymmetry risks reproducing colonial patterns of control, where vulnerable populations bear the consequences of decisions made without their input. Moreover, the uneven distribution of climate impacts means that some regions may benefit while others suffer unintended consequences, such as disrupted rainfall patterns or ecological instability.

Another concern is the "moral hazard" argument: the availability of technological fixes may reduce the urgency to pursue emissions reductions. If policymakers view geoengineering as a fallback option, they may delay or dilute commitments to decarbonization, thereby exacerbating long-term risks. Critics argue that this mindset reflects a dangerous overconfidence in human control over complex systems, ignoring the potential for irreversible harm.

Supporters of climate engineering contend that the scale and urgency of the crisis demand bold action. They argue that research and controlled experimentation are necessary to understand the risks and benefits, and that rejecting these tools outright may be ethically irresponsible if they could prevent

catastrophic outcomes. Some propose international governance frameworks to ensure transparency, accountability, and equitable participation in decision-making.

The debate ultimately hinges on competing visions of responsibility: whether humanity should intervene in planetary systems to correct its own damage, or whether restraint and humility are more appropriate responses to ecological crisis. Climate engineering is not merely a technical question—it is a test of global ethics, governance, and the limits of human foresight.

1. What conclusion can be drawn from the author's discussion of consent in climate engineering?

A. Climate engineering should be governed by international consensus to avoid ethical violations.

B. Consent is irrelevant in global environmental decisions.

C. Only scientific institutions should decide on climate interventions.

D. Climate engineering benefits all regions equally.

2. Which of the following assumptions underlies the moral hazard argument against geoengineering?

A. Policymakers are likely to prioritize short-term solutions over systemic change.

B. Technological innovation always leads to ethical compromise.

C. Geoengineering is more cost-effective than decarbonization.

D. Climate engineering is universally accepted by the scientific community.

3. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the argument that geoengineering reduces the urgency for emissions cuts?

A. Countries investing in geoengineering also increase their decarbonization efforts.

B. Geoengineering is not yet technologically feasible.

C. Public opinion strongly opposes climate engineering.

D. Geoengineering has minimal impact on global temperatures.

4. What flaw is present in the argument that rejecting geoengineering is ethically irresponsible?

A. It assumes that all technological interventions are inherently beneficial.

B. It ignores the potential for geopolitical misuse of climate technologies.

C. It conflates research with deployment.

D. It presumes that ethical concerns are secondary to scientific progress.

5. Which of the following best resolves the ethical tension between intervention and restraint in climate engineering?

A. Establishing a global regulatory body with representation from vulnerable nations.

B. Limiting climate engineering to regions with the most severe warming.

C. Allowing private companies to lead geoengineering research.

D. Prioritizing economic growth over environmental risk.

ANSWER KEY

Passage 1

1. **C**

A. Incorrect - The passage describes CBDCs as a governmental response or alternative, but it makes no claim that they will entirely replace decentralized cryptocurrencies. They are presented as a competing model, not a definitive successor.

B. Incorrect - The passage suggests CBDCs are being explored to provide "stability," implying they are seen as less vulnerable to manipulation than unregulated cryptocurrencies. There is no suggestion they are more vulnerable than traditional currencies.

C. Correct - The passage presents CBDCs as a response by governments to the challenge of cryptocurrencies. It states they "aim to combine the efficiency of digital transactions with the stability of centralized oversight," positioning them as a middle ground between pure decentralization and traditional institutional control.

D. Incorrect - CBDCs are a tool of central banks and are designed to work within existing monetary policy frameworks. Their purpose is to preserve, not eliminate, the state's ability to manage the economy through such policies.

2. **B**

A. Incorrect - The argument for empowerment is a philosophical one about control and autonomy. It does not depend on the assumption that all potential users are currently technologically literate, though literacy would be necessary for practical implementation.

B. Correct - The argument that cryptocurrency "empowers individuals" is rooted in the principle of decentralization, which removes the need for authorities like banks. For this to be seen as empowerment, one must assume that individuals value this financial autonomy more than the security, insurance, and consumer protection that traditional institutions provide.

C. Incorrect - While proponents of cryptocurrency may hold this belief, it is not a necessary assumption for the empowerment argument. One can believe that decentralization empowers individuals without necessarily believing that all government management is inherently inefficient.

D Incorrect - The passage itself points out that the regulatory vacuum has created "opportunities for illicit activity, market manipulation, and consumer exploitation." Therefore, the empowerment argument cannot rest on an assumption of immunity to corruption.

3. A

A. Correct - The claim of decentralization is that it removes control from centralized authorities. If the essential infrastructure for the system, such as mining operations, is "increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few powerful entities," it directly weakens the claim that power has been truly decentralized.

B. Incorrect - Transaction speed is a measure of efficiency, not of power distribution. Faster transactions do not provide any information about whether the system is centralized or decentralized.

C. Incorrect - Transparency (being open-source) does not negate the possibility of concentrated control. A system can be transparent in its code while still being controlled by a small number of powerful infrastructure operators.

D. Incorrect - The inability of governments to regulate digital assets does not prove that power is decentralized. Power could be concentrated in the hands of private, non-governmental entities, which would still contradict the decentralization narrative.

4. B

A. Incorrect - The argument that regulation stifles innovation does not assume all innovation is beneficial. It simply posits a negative relationship between regulation and the rate or scope of

innovation, regardless of its quality.

B. Correct - The argument presents a rigid dichotomy: regulation or innovation. It contains a flaw by ignoring the possibility of "adaptive" or "smart" regulatory frameworks that are designed to foster responsible innovation while mitigating risks, thus allowing both to coexist.

C. Incorrect - While some regulations could be a form of censorship, the argument is broader, concerning all forms of oversight (e.g., consumer protection, financial stability rules). The flaw is not in conflating oversight with censorship but in assuming all oversight is inherently stifling.

D. Incorrect - This is another way of stating the core flaw. The argument presumes a zero-sum relationship between innovation and accountability, failing to consider that well-designed regulations can actually foster sustainable and trustworthy innovation.

5. A

A. Correct - The passage presents a contradiction between the decentralized validation of transactions on the blockchain and the concentrated ownership of the infrastructure (mining, exchanges). This option resolves the paradox by clarifying that the term "decentralization" in this context refers specifically to the peer-to-peer validation protocol, not to the distribution of power over the entire ecosystem.

B. Incorrect - The passage states that infrastructure is "increasingly concentrated," which suggests the trend is moving away from, not towards, dissipation. There is no evidence in the text to support the idea that this concentration is temporary.

C. Incorrect - The passage discusses the dilemma of regulation, not its effects. There is no information to suggest that regulatory intervention will successfully redistribute control.

D. Incorrect - The paradox is a structural reality of the cryptocurrency ecosystem, not a matter of user perception. Whether users are aware of it or not does not resolve the underlying contradiction.

Passage 2

1. **A**

A. Correct - The passage highlights the ethical dilemma that decisions on climate engineering could be made by a "handful of powerful nations," with consequences borne by vulnerable populations without their input. Governing such interventions through international consensus is the logical conclusion to address this violation of consent and ensure equitable participation.

B. Incorrect - The passage frames the issue of consent as a "central moral dilemma." This indicates that consent is considered a crucial, not irrelevant, factor in the ethics of climate engineering.

C. Incorrect - The author's concern is about the lack of input from vulnerable populations, not just a lack of scientific rigor. Delegating decisions solely to scientific institutions would not resolve the political and ethical problem of consent.

D. Incorrect - The passage explicitly states the opposite, warning of an "uneven distribution of climate impacts" where "some regions may benefit while others suffer unintended consequences."

2. **C**

A. Incorrect - The moral hazard argument is about political will and priorities, not cost-effectiveness. The argument would hold even if geoengineering were more expensive, as long as it is perceived as a less politically difficult alternative to emissions cuts.

B. Incorrect - The argument does not make a universal claim about all technological innovation. It makes a specific claim about the psychological and political effect of having a perceived "fallback option" for a specific, complex problem like climate change.

C. Correct - The "moral hazard" argument is that the availability of a technological fix (geoengineering) will "reduce the urgency to pursue emissions reductions." This argument assumes that policymakers, when faced with a choice between a difficult, long-term systemic change (decarbonization) and a seemingly easier short-term solution, are likely to prioritize the

latter.

D. Incorrect - The moral hazard argument is part of a debate and is raised by critics of geoengineering. It does not depend on the premise that the technology is universally accepted; in fact, it is part of the reason it is so controversial.

3. A

A. Correct - The argument is that geoengineering will reduce the urgency for emissions cuts by serving as a substitute. If countries investing in geoengineering are also increasing their decarbonization efforts, it would directly contradict this claim by showing that the two can be pursued in parallel, not as alternatives.

B. Incorrect - The moral hazard argument is about the idea or promise of a technological fix reducing current motivation. Whether the technology is currently feasible does not change its potential to influence policy decisions today.

C. Incorrect - Public opinion is a separate issue from the decision-making calculus of policymakers. The moral hazard argument is about how policymakers might behave, which may or may not align with public opinion.

D. Incorrect - The argument is about geoengineering being perceived as a solution, which reduces the urgency to act elsewhere. Its actual effectiveness is a separate question; the political effect can occur even if the technology is ultimately found to have minimal impact.

4. C

A. Incorrect – This option claims the argument assumes all technological interventions are inherently beneficial. But the passage shows supporters actually call for *research to understand risks and benefits*, so they are not assuming technology is automatically good.

B. Incorrect – This suggests the argument ignores geopolitical misuse, but the passage explicitly mentions supporters proposing international governance frameworks to avoid such problems. So

it is not overlooked.

C**.** Correct – The flaw lies in conflating *research* with *deployment*. Supporters argue that rejecting geoengineering is "ethically irresponsible," but what they mainly defend is *research and experimentation*. Opposing immediate deployment is not the same as opposing all research, yet the argument treats them as identical

D**.** Incorrect – This claims the argument presumes ethics are secondary to scientific progress, but in fact the supporters frame their position in ethical terms: that rejecting geoengineering could itself be unethical if it denies humanity potential tools against catastrophe.

5. B

A. Correct - The ethical tension is between the need for intervention and the risks of unilateral action, inequality, and unforeseen harm. Establishing a global regulatory body that includes representation from vulnerable nations directly addresses the core ethical problems of consent, equity, and accountability, thus providing the most balanced resolution.

B. Incorrect - Climate engineering has global consequences, such as affecting global rainfall patterns. Limiting its deployment to certain regions does not contain its effects and therefore does not resolve the global ethical issues of consent and unintended harm.

C. Incorrect - Allowing private companies to lead research would likely exacerbate ethical concerns about a lack of public accountability, transparency, and profit motives driving decisions with planetary consequences.

D. Incorrect - This choice explicitly prioritizes one value (economic growth) over another (environmental risk), which fails to resolve the ethical tension. The passage frames the debate as one that requires balancing competing values, not dismissing one in favor of the other.