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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The past year has revealed leaders with uniquely firm grasps over their political spheres in all corners of the world. In this edition of the Michigan Journal of International Affairs, we therefore take special note of individuals who loom large over their respective countries – defining figures with national influence of international consequence. Interestingly, the rising prominence of strongmen and consolidated power on a global scale is not necessarily a reason for concern. As a number of our writers express in this issue, the presence of indispensable power-players is not the end of world affairs as we know it, but rather another chapter in the long history of singular power shaping the international system.

In *The Cycle Continues*, Laura Vicinanza argues that Latin America is stuck in an endless loop of populism and predicts the rightward swing of the region's governments. Vicinanza notes the emergence of a new generation of leaders who no longer resemble the populist leaders of decades past.

Regional Editor Emma Stout discusses the impending change in leadership in Angola in *Changing Power in Angola*. She contends that the Angolan presidency is likely to pass from father to son, an often undemocratic move by national leaders. She explains, however, that this is the country's best option, regardless of charges of nepotism, due to allegations of corruption against the other chief candidate.

Nick Serra writes in *Italy and Eurozone Reform* that Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's zeal, enthusiasm, and willingness to make unpopular decisions is often met with skepticism from his European Union counterparts. Serra further argues that the EU is wrong to stymie Renzi's efforts at reform and is only aggravating Italy's economic issues.

Secretary Brendan Failla maintains in *Oman the Mediator* and its role in Yemen that Oman's monarch, Sultan Qaboos, was vital in bringing Iran to the table for the P5+1 nuclear talks. Failla further postulates that Qaboos is an essential partner in brokering peace in the region, particularly in Yemen.

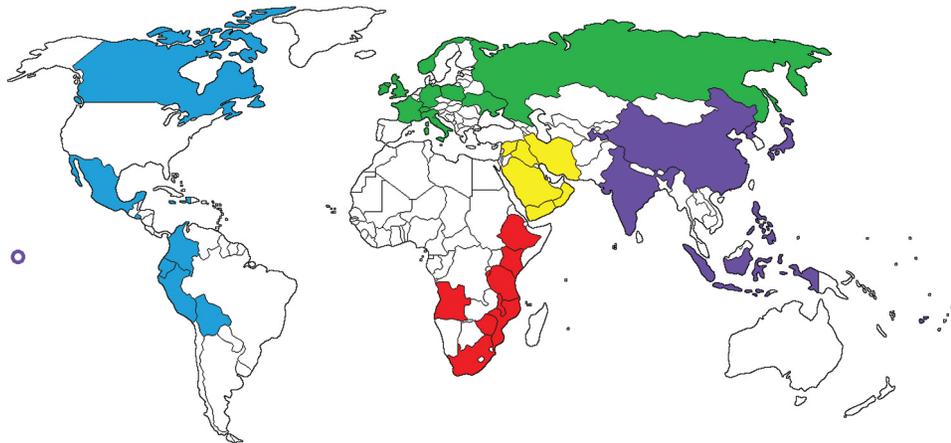
In *The Best or Only Option*, Managing Editor Trevor Grayeb asserts that, despite his plunging popularity, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is an essential player in the country's national politics. Grayeb states that Abe's loneliness at the top is more of a disservice to Abe himself than to the nation at large.

"Sovereign Says" is a commentary on the rise of quiet dominance. It remains to be seen how this style of governing will affect the global political landscape in the years to come.

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# El Niño in Africa

## Far-Reaching Effects and Lasting Consequences

- Africa Region Contributing Authors

In 1600, the first written record of the weather event called El Niño was recorded. Now, in 2016, coupled with already rising temperatures caused by global warming, much of the African continent is facing severe famine due to this weather pattern. It occurs every two to seven years and can last anywhere from six months to a year or even more in terms of its effects. What started around October of 2015 in Africa has now stretched into the New Year and shows no sign of slowing down. This has disturbing implications for the African continent. US President Barack Obama has drawn a relationship between rising temperatures and ongoing food shortages. With this, the displacement of populations has led to a rise in recruitment for terror groups such as Boko Haram and al Qaeda, both of which are active throughout the continent.

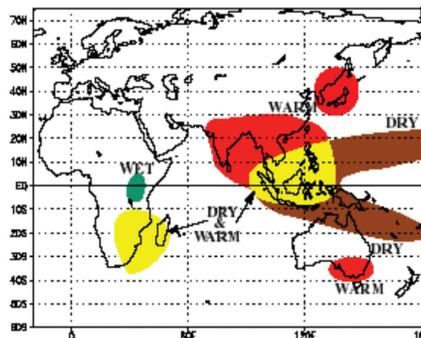
As terrorist groups continue to make headlines, little has been said about a larger killer spurred by this weather pattern: famine. Ethiopia faces its most devastating famine in years, Kenya and Mozambique have experienced flooding, while Zimbabwe has seen severe droughts. Crop failures in South Africa have affected its financial sector such that the country now risks a credit downgrade. El Niño continues to rip through the African continent, bringing in its wake increasing temperatures, famine, and flooding.

### ETHIOPIA

- Emma Stout

Ethiopia is perhaps the African country that has been hit the hardest by El Niño. The country has suffered under the worst drought it has seen in 50 years. Since El Niño is a weather pattern that lasts for several years, there are some communities that have not had rainfall in two years. In a country where 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas and many depend on subsistence farming for their livelihood, this drought is extremely troubling. Now in 2016, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has said that over 10 million Ethiopians are in need of food aid.

In the 1980s, El Niño devastated Ethiopia, something the international community vowed to never let happen again. Yet Ethiopia is suffer-



El Niño effects: December through February.  
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ing today. The country is in severe need of aid, but the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen have diverted most relief agencies' attention. 2016 has been a year punctuated by calls from the Ethiopian government for humanitarian aid and the international community's stubbornness to adequately respond. It is seemingly only the beginning of this devastating weather event, and Ethiopia, along with countless other African nations, is in need of relief.

### KENYA

- Samuel Corey

It's been a sizeable concern that the ongoing El Niño phenomenon would be the worst in Kenyan history. The changing weather pattern that can drastically distort the warmth and wetness of a climate is concerning to Kenya's development, since many roads and public infrastructure are placed near mountainous regions, making them vulnerable to landslides.

Historically, volatile weather patterns have wreaked havoc in Kenya. In 1997, the country was hit particularly hard by El Niño. During that year, some 300,000 people were displaced in East Africa, as food insecurity and disease skyrocketed, particularly in Kenya. In total, over one hundred Kenyans died. This year, much devastation has occurred during the wet season, as over one hundred people have died and about 100,000 have been displaced due to flooding.

In October, Kenya requested \$15 billion to prepare for expected flooding in April. To prevent against landslides and other natural disasters, Kenya set up a task force to reduce the damage caused by flooding. Ultimately, rainfall

was only moderately high—coming nowhere near to the levels seen in 1997. Thankfully, it appears that the worst of El Niño is over, as most of the damage occurred between November and December. In fact, the increased rainfall has actually yielded benefits for Kenyan crop performance, expanding the agricultural economy.

### MALAWI

- Laurel Cerier

Regarding the physical effects of El Niño, Malawi serves as a transition zone between Southern and Eastern Africa; while the north is abnormally wet, conditions in the south are especially dry. The government of Malawi has declared much of its northern territory a disaster zone due to flooding caused by torrential rains in January, which has displaced approximately 340,000 people. These dramatic weather conditions will have a devastating effect on the country's economy. Although it is already heavily reliant on international aid, the vast majority of Malawi's export economy comes from tobacco exports, and even while tobacco use is decreasing worldwide, the country's reliance on the product is steadily increasing. Moreover, approximately 90 percent of the population survives on subsistence farming, of which the staple crop is maize, but the northern floods will cause an estimated 28 percent decrease in maize production this year, increasing food prices even more, which have already doubled since 2014. As such, food shortages will likely evolve into famine. The UN is extremely concerned about severe malnutrition in children, especially right now, as the first harvest is only just beginning.

### MOZAMBIQUE

- Stuart Richardson

For the underdeveloped coastal nation of Mozambique, the effects of El Niño have varied significantly throughout the country. Thermal expansion in the eastern Pacific has exacerbated the effects of a two-year drought in the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, Sofala, and Tete. Yet farther up Mozambique's coast, the torrents of the normal rainy season have caused widespread flooding. Two poten-

tially cataclysmic events in different areas of Mozambique have thrown the government into a crisis that has already drained its coffers.

According to the Minister of State Administration, Carmelita Namashalua, the government has directed most of its emergency funds to the drought-stricken South because the situation there is much more dire and atypical for the usually tropical nation. As of mid-February, the national government had allocated some 560 million meticaais (approximately 12 million USD) toward its relief efforts. The National Disasters Management Institute (INGC) had provided another 200 million meticaais. The result of these emergency responses has been a combined deficit of over 63 million meticaais. Some Western nations, like the U.K., which is set to contribute €11.8 million (about 16.7 million USD) over three years in emergency relief aid, have stepped in to help relieve Mozambique of this financial burden, but this foreign aid has fallen short of the need. Unless more monies begin replenishing Mozambique's purse, upwards of 1.8 million people in the country will be in need of food by next year.

## ZIMBABWE

— *Caitlin Thomas*

Parts of Southern Africa have been dramatically affected by El Niño during the 2015-2016 harvesting season. While some countries experienced extreme flooding prior to the full onset of El Niño in 2014, Zimbabwe suffered particularly poor rains. As a result of this reduced rainfall, maize production, the staple crop of Zimbabwe, was significantly reduced. Due to the maize shortages, prices inflated, leading to widespread famine. Now families are unable to afford rising food prices, and there are limited opportunities to earn sustainable income outside of subsistence farming. Zimbabwe's wet season usually lasts from late October until early March, but El Niño has caused severe drought throughout the entire wet season, indicating the possibility of dismal crop productions in summer 2016.

Some farmers turned to tobacco production in order to sell directly to national markets, but droughts have reduced the quality of tobacco production, leading to lower market values.

Zimbabwean farmers are increasingly unable to provide for their families and some analysts fear citizens may turn to more dangerous and exploitative professions, such as panning for gold or mining as ways to earn income. The increased number of people avoiding subsistence farming during El Niño further contributes to the food shortages. Humanitarian assistance will be necessary to combat widespread famine and increasing malnutrition, not just within Zimbabwe but throughout much of Africa as well.

## SOUTH AFRICA

— *Emma Stout*

South Africa is a country sometimes known as the "Bread Basket" of Africa. However, the shadow of El Niño has come over the land in recent years. Maize production dropped 25 percent in 2015, having already fell by 36 percent in 2014. The cattle industry has also been hit particularly hard by El Niño. In addition to the current water shortage, the poor growing season from the previous year has reduced the grazing grounds available to ranchers. Farmers are now importing much of the food their cattle eat at great costs, driving up the price of beef.

While South Africa has a significant impoverished population, it is also one of the most economically advanced countries on the continent. Its economic advancement has allowed the country to address the drought differently than poorer nations. Where others are facing widespread famine, South Africa is mostly facing rising prices. Inflation is growing and the largest banks' production growth estimates are being slashed dramatically. The government has been forced to reallocate funds towards drought relief. Debt rating companies are taking a hard look at South Africa and the projected outcome is not good. Many in the country worry South African President Jacob Zuma, who has already been in hot water since renovations on his presidential palace were scrutinized, is not up to the task of leading South Africa through this time of instability.

Maybe the most intimidating aspect of El Niño is its capriciousness. The weather's shift-

ing dynamics between droughts, flooding, and warming that can last for the next several years puts many countries in vulnerable positions. In amalgamation with global warming, El Niño could bring even more devastating consequences. Unfortunately, due to restricted national budgets and weak infrastructure, most of the developing world is in danger. Not just in Southern and Eastern Africa, but also in South America and the Pacific Islands. As the affected countries continue to fight against nature itself, they wait, perhaps in vain, for additional assistance. There is hope that in the second half of 2016, El Niño will largely pass, allowing affected countries to re-establish some normalcy. However, in the wake of such damage, it may take years for the continent to return to pre-El Niño production levels. •

# Changing Power in Angola

- Emma Stout

On March 11, 2016, Jose dos Santos, the longtime President of Angola, announced that he would leave office in 2018. The next round of parliamentary elections in Angola are scheduled for 2017 and despite Dos Santos's announcement, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party will certainly still pick him as their presidential candidate. This means that whoever is the Vice President in 2017 will be Dos Santos's successor, effectively allowing him to hand pick the next leader. While it is still early, there is a belief that dos Santos will choose between his current Vice President, Manuel Vicente, and his son, Jose Filomeno de Sousa dos Santos, also known as Zenú. Until his father made him a board member of the Angolan Sovereign Wealth Fund, Zenú was largely out of the public eye. Vicente, on the other hand, is a well-known public figure. Recently, he was accused of corruption in a high profile case in Portugal surrounding illegal oil deals. Dos Santos has more to gain from naming his son his successor, rather than his current Vice President. Dos Santos's legacy will improve immensely if Zenú is able to improve the nation's troubled economy. Additionally, due to the charge of corruption against Vicente made by Portugal, naming Zenú would reduce the risk of poorer relations between the two countries.

Dos Santos has been a figure in Angolan politics since 1970 and first became president in 1979. He was a prominent figure in the 20 years of fighting between the MPLA and the western-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita). A party leader for the MPLA, he is credited with ending the drawn-out civil war in 2002. There is some skepticism over the truthfulness of his recent announcement, as Dos Santos has been hinting at his retirement for over a decade. However, this is the first time he has set a specific timeframe for his exit, leading people to believe he intends to follow through. Dos Santos himself has grown less popular in recent years due to falling oil prices, and there are now even more detractors who believe he should step down before the 2017 elections. Dos Santos has also faced accusations of siphoning off oil wealth from the state-owned Sonangol, adding to his unpopularity.



President José Eduardo dos Santos addresses the public. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Vicente is not a good choice for Dos Santos primarily because of the accusations of bribery against him. This is not the first time Vicente or other members of the Angolan elite have been implicated in corruption, but it is the first time that he or any other Angolan political figure has faced charges and a trial in Portugal, the former colonial ruler of Angola. Until recently, the two countries had very close ties. Since Vicente has political immunity as the Vice President of Angola, this move by Portugal is largely symbolic, showing they do not support him or his actions. Angola and Portugal have had extremely close economic ties since Angola gained its independence in 1975. However, in the wake of Angola's economic downturn, it is important that they not threaten any of their Western alliances. Though Dos Santos fought against Western-backed Unita, since coming to power he has worked to have good relations with the West. Having Vicente in power could threaten these relations. Additionally, the charges of corruption against Vicente would keep the allegations of Dos Santos's own mismanagement of Sonangol funds fresh in the public's mind.

While transferring power to Zenú would mean a dynastic transition for Angola, this is not necessarily a bad idea as the nation continues to struggle economically. Even planned transitions of power can be fraught with turmoil in single-party states when longtime rulers leave office. While Dos Santos has lost some popularity in recent years, he is still an important revolutionary figure for the nation. Zenú would be able to use his father's revolutionary clout to legitimize his rule, and provide for a smooth transition of power. Moreover, although Zenú has only recently become a public figure, his background is well suited to help

the ailing economy. He has a master's degree in information management and finance, has worked with Sonangol for many years, and was a board member on the African Innovation Foundation. Also, as a member of the Sovereign Wealth Fund, he has focused on investments in Asia. Asian nations such as China have been important business partners for Angola, and Zenú would be in an opportune position to continue these strong relations.

Many, however, worry about the implications of a dynastic transference of power, and believe that Vicente should instead be Dos Santos' successor. Vicente has years of experience and has been a public figure longer than Zenú has. However, Vicente's corruption charges and his connections to the current economic downturn make Vicente the weaker choice. An ideal result would be an open and free election, which could occur if Dos Santos was to step down before 2017, but this is highly unlikely. It also creates an opening for violence that can be associated with transitions of power in single-party systems. It has been less than twenty years since the end of Angola's civil war and any amount of unrest caused by political factions could renew violence.

The next two years are important for Angola as Dos Santos will make clear who his successor will be or possibly renege completely on his promise to leave office. If Dos Santos does not step down, the possibility of a violent power transition becomes more likely in the case of his death. Dos Santos's lifetime appointment could set a precedent for holding executive power in Angola, which could hurt the country's possible future attempts at transitions of power. No matter the outcome, this power transition in Angola will have important implications for the country's political future. •

# African Union Ready to Take the Helm for Human Rights?

- Caitlin Thomas

Just over a decade after the end of a brutal, twelve-year ethnic civil war, Burundi once again faces a violent political crisis. Current president Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial decision to run for a third term in office resulted in widespread violence, demonstrations, and even a failed coup in the weeks before the July 2015 election. As the violence continues to escalate, propelled by both opposition forces as well as the incumbent government's security forces, the African Union (AU) faces increased international pressure to intervene. The AU began talks with Nkurunziza to accept a proposed AU peacekeeping mission, called the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU), but Union leaders have since abandoned deploying peacekeeping forces after Nkurunziza's vehement opposition to the plan. Instead, the AU is appointing a delegation to begin dialogues with Burundian leaders. An AU decision to take decisive action and create a precedent for intervention without consent of the host government could stand as a testament to the growing ability of the Union and its commitment to pursue "African Solutions for African Problems." Now is the time not to act with delicacy and diplomacy, but with greater authority in order to end the violence and increase political stability within Burundi. The AU deployment of peacekeeping forces is more than just the creation of a pattern of commitment to human rights; it is a necessary action in order to prevent further mass atrocities in a country still recovering from the ravages of purported ethnic conflict.

The African Union was created in 2001 to replace the Organization of African Unity. The main objectives of the AU include the promotion of economic and political development, the promotion of unity and solidarity, and the defense of state and individual rights. The Union has deployed peacekeeping missions in the past to countries such as Sudan and Somalia. However, these missions were met with less resistance and even found support from these national governments. The decision to postpone or eliminate the peacekeeping operation in Burundi simply because the historically isolationist and abusive government does not approve of it is not an example of diplomacy, but of cowardice. Nkurunziza's public state-

**“Waiting for an international consensus on the extent of crimes and violence in Burundi allows the situation to grow out of control and allows history to repeat itself at the expense of human lives.”**

ments claim that he will consider MAPROBU to be an "invading force" and will take necessary retaliatory action. Regardless of this defensive rhetoric, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement supporting the decision of the AU, especially should they decide to send troops. Support from international organizations such as the UN is vital in strengthening coordinated diplomacy. It is necessary that the AU, the UN, and even the European Union have a unified voice against the violence in Burundi in order to emphasize the international community's growing scrutiny of the situation.

The delay in decisive action signifies the hesitation and fear of creating a larger, more violent conflict in response to an unwanted AU presence within the country. However, the African Union already faces criticism for its lack of action. Opposition members in Burundi feel as though the AU has abandoned its principles while the government continues to use fear, coercion, and violence against its citizens. When violence and corruption erupts within African nations, it is important for citizens to feel that they have a regional authority to whom they can appeal for protection and legal enforcement. Because of the growing discontent with the AU's inaction, the Union continues to weaken its own image as a legitimate source of justice and protection.

While the African Union patiently waits for the Burundian government to make diplomatic progress through "all-inclusive talks" with opposition leaders, President Nkurunziza has used violence and intimidation throughout the country to silence dissidents. Some African leaders fear that sending troops without Burundi consent will further destabilize the region. Others feel that the situation does not yet warrant AU intervention. But Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act grants the AU the right to intervene in a member state, given an Assembly decision "in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide, and crimes

against humanity." Leaders feel as though current violence cannot yet be identified as crimes against humanity and that military interference would further intensify violence. Regardless of the definition of what constitutes a war crime, continued tensions may lead the government and the opposition to seek a military, rather than diplomatic, settlement. While President Nkurunziza still has a monopoly on power and an unwillingness for fair dialogue, the situation within the country will remain stagnant at best but could begin to resemble patterns of destruction reminiscent of the ethnic conflict in Burundi during the late nineties.

It is important to realize that inaction fails to solve the problems at hand. Many citizens do not trust their government and feel that it is illegitimate. Perceived illegitimacy will ultimately result in long term instability. Given the lack of government accountability, it is imperative that the AU send peacekeeping forces in order to help foster an environment open to dialogues. Furthermore, the presence of ground peacekeeping forces emphasizes the mounting violence as a legitimate political and humanitarian concern. The presence of peacekeepers may also draw the attention of news outlets, in turn aiding in international attention and pressure for action. For now, the situation remains in the hands of the African Union. Leaders must be willing to take action in order to promote human rights. Waiting for an international consensus on the extent of crimes and violence in Burundi allows the situation to grow out of control and allows history to repeat itself at the expense of human lives. •

# Nationalism First, Democracy Later

## Tanzania's Strategy for Development

- Sam Corey

According to the late academic Benedict Anderson, nationalism is based on the concept of an imagined community. In practice, this means that nation-states exist because people (often millions) merely believe they are connected with one another. This belief allows individuals to work together toward common goals.

In the developing world, it is theorized that countries develop best if they have a strong economy and/or are democratic. If they have proper roads, a structured financial system, are industrialized, and are an adequate exporter, they will develop a higher GDP, leading ultimately to a more peaceful, democratic state. But, beyond establishing a strong economy and democratic ethos, the most indicative factor of development—creating peace and establishing democratic tendencies—is based on the belief that a sense of kinship in the citizenry is important and one's investment in this institution will pay dividends in his or her own life. The more strongly one identifies with others within a specific, "declared" geographical boundary, the more effectively that country will develop in the long run. This theory is best exemplified in Tanzania.

Tanzania's strong nationalism stems from its first President Julius Nyerere's systemic plan, known as ujamaa—roughly meaning community, socialism, or togetherness. Ujamaa was a comprehensive ideological and macro-economic plan that was vehemently anti-colonialist and advocated for mass participation in socialist-leaning policies, particularly related to the agricultural sector. Early on, Tanzania adopted Swahili (rather than English) as its national language; heavily promoted Tanzanian culture, history, and values in its schools; and replaced ethnic or tribal identities with a comprehensive national identity. Furthermore, equitably distributing public services across the country was a cornerstone of Nyerere's plan, thereby investing heavily in healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

The nationalistic seeds planted early on in the East African country have had long-lasting effects. According to one survey of twelve African countries carried out by scholar Edward Miguel, Tanzania displayed "the highest levels of support for democracy, confidence in govern-

**“Tanzanians’ strong civic-mindedness has allowed the country to sustain high degrees of trust and low amounts of violence.”**

mental institutions, and trust in fellow citizens.” Additionally, one study by the Afrobarometer found that 88 percent of Tanzanians identify as nationals (higher than any other African country). This patriotism exists in Tanzania despite comprising of over 120 different ethnic groups and significant religious diversity.

While President Nyerere's nationalist-socialistic policies concentrated too much power in his hands and ultimately shrunk the Tanzanian economy, Tanzania has rebounded with a strong, sustainable workforce since Nyerere left office. Today, the country boasts the tenth largest economy in Africa. With high degrees of trust in one another, and more economic independence, Tanzanians have been able to freely conduct business with one another, thereby increasing the GDP.

Most recently, Tanzania's successes have come from civil society. As many African countries remain fraught with political violence and corruption, Tanzania maintains a reputation as one of the most peaceful countries on the continent. According to one report, Tanzanians' strong civic-mindedness has allowed the country to sustain high degrees of trust and low amounts of violence.

2015 marked a particularly impressive display of a participatory, free, and fair multiparty election. Initially, more than 12,000 candidates vied for a seat in parliament. Over 67 percent of the country voted in the presidential election. And more women were elected to parliament, surpassing the 30 percent gender quota. Although some analysts were worried that protests and unrest would follow the election of President John Magufuli, the streets remained peaceful and unrest virtually absent.

Development and the advancement of democratic values by way of strong national identity makes intuitive sense. Strong civic identity is the basis by which states exist. When people are willing to make material (and personal) sacrifices for their fellow citizens, it is more likely that public goods will be evenly distributed through-

out the state as each individual feels connected to a broader, imagined community of people. The result incentivizes leaders to meet the demands of the people—providing clean water, good roads, widespread public transportation, affordable housing, good schools, and proper health care—because he or she feels a personal connection to them. Therefore, when resources are widely distributed, more people have access to sustainable jobs, increasing the GDP of the country. As living standards rise, there emerges a stronger incentive to fight for more necessary political rights so everyone's life gets better. This is Tanzania's legacy. Rather than prioritizing the economy, democracy, foreign policy or security, the nation established a stable national identity first. This strategy has allowed every subsequent political action to occur through this nationalist prism, leading to a stronger economy and a more peaceful, democratic state.

A strong dose of nationalism has allowed Tanzania and its communities a stronger civil society, more participatory democracy, and higher GDP. In rather obvious terms, it is beneficial for everyone to dedicate themselves to their fellow citizens. Tanzanians seem to have internalized this belief and it has certainly paid dividends. •

# The Cycle Continues

## The Inherent Flaws in Populism

- Laura Vicinanza

Leftist populism has long flourished in Latin America, cycling in and out of mainstream politics in the region since the early twentieth century. Historically, populism has had more success in Latin America than in any other part of the world due to extreme inequality, wealth in natural resources, and sharp class divisions entrenched in the region. These factors have led to a bigger role for the state in supporting industry and granting social benefits to workers, leading to a rise in populist governments.

The newest wave of anti-neoliberal populism, instituted at the turn of the century by leaders such as Evo Morales, Michelle Bachelet, Hugo Chávez, and Néstor Kirchner, has begun to crash. From the success of right wing opposition parties to the adoption of open market policies, many Latin American countries are departing from populism. The disillusion with populism in Latin America is due to economic issues, such as currency depreciation and low commodity prices, the scarcity of charismatic leaders, and the lack of institutional accountability.

Internal and external economic factors, mainly falling commodity prices and massive inflation, have caused the decline in populism in Latin America. In the past, populist regimes have relied on economic policies based on budget deficits to stimulate domestic demand, nominal wage increases with price controls for income redistribution, and exchange-rate controls to cut inflation and raise wages. During the first decade of the 21st century, a long cycle of economic expansion allowed populist leaders (primarily in Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia) to stay in power by improving living standards through said policies. However, this period has come to an end as the aftershocks of the 2008 global financial crisis have weakened emerging market economies. As a result of large-scale public dissatisfaction and a call for accountability, these regimes can no longer run huge deficits or shield their currencies from speculative crises.

With a 29.3 percent inflation rate in 2014 according to the World Bank, it's no wonder that Argentines voted against the chosen heir of former president Christina Fernández de Kirchner and for a centralist, Mauricio Macri. Macri has made it his mission to clean up the economic disaster left behind by the de Kirchner admin-

istration and has moved towards more market-oriented policies. In addition to promising to balance the budget, Macri has depegged the Argentine peso and cut a deal with bond investors, in hopes of reigniting foreign investment: a stark contrast to the previous government's economic policies. Additionally, the collapse of commodity prices has devastated resource-rich Latin American economies.

In Venezuela, the sharp fall in oil prices has shed light on the OPEC nation's inherently weak economy. It can no longer afford the generous oil subsidies of the past, and the country's entire economy is hurting as a result of the fall in oil prices. The people have gone to the polls to voice their dissatisfaction with their country's populist economic policies, with the opposition winning a majority of seats in the National Assembly, defeating the Chavista movement for the first time in roughly two decades.

Populist governments also depend heavily on paternalistic, charismatic leaders who can mobilize the masses. In populist Latin American countries, citizens have increasingly realized that their leaders are not as benevolent as previously thought. With social media increasing demands for accountability, leaders in the region cannot rely solely on their charisma anymore. In Argentina, de Kirchner's leftist Victory Front (FPV) lost the trust of the people and ultimately the December elections due to its undermining of democratic institutions, manipulation of official statistics, and connection to a high profile murder scandal. Due to this lack of transparency, people began scrutinizing the legitimacy and character of President De Kirchner. Likewise, in Venezuela, Maduro has never possessed the likeability of the late president Hugo Chávez. The December parliamentary elections indicated a clear sign of political change for the country, with the ruling United Social Party of Venezuela (PSUV) losing control of the Assembly for the first time since 1999. In the past, many populist leaders have been military officers, including Juan Perón and



Bolivian president, Evo Morales.  
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Hugo Chávez. These leaders benefited from their military “caudillo” (strongman) appeal to deliver justice to the people. The newer wave of populist leaders lacks the allure of their predecessors.

The third and final factor that has exhausted populism in Latin America is government corruption. Populism thrives on vertical leadership with ruling parties maintaining extreme holding power over the government. This tendency has naturally led to

a lack of institutional accountability. Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro is one of the clearest cases of this abuse of power. During his presidency, Maduro has continually used non-democratic means to attain his goals, such as manipulating electoral results, deporting immigrants, and restricting the media. Even some of the more successful populist governments, such as Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, have seen increasing dissent and internal conflict. This quasi-authoritarian style of governance has not gone unnoticed, reflected in the February 21st Bolivian referendum, which rejected Morales's ability to run for an illegal fourth term. With populist leadership comes an inbuilt tendency towards a nearly autocratic exercise of power, undermining the capacity of democratic regimes and the ability to make real political progress in the region.

Despite this trend, the decline in populism in Latin America is hardly a new concept. The region continually cycles between liberal, market-oriented policies (such as the agenda of Macri in Argentina) and periods of domestic-oriented, industry-based policies. The cyclical persistence of populism in the region is detrimental to overall growth in Latin America. Countries develop through a mixture of the right policies and the right institutions. The lack of institutional accountability under populist governments is perhaps the greatest obstruction to real economic and political progress in the region. Whatever their past achievements, the populists are leading Latin America nowhere, and a change in political regimes for the region is needed to genuinely achieve the egalitarian goals of populism. •

# The Rise of Quinoa

## Feeding the Economy and Malnourishing its People

- Connor VanDenBosch

Last year, millions of people in Paris and San Francisco went to high-end grocery stores, such as Le Grande Epicerie and Whole Foods, in search of nutritious quinoa. Ten years ago, few in France and the United States would know how to pronounce quinoa, let alone know what it was. Quinoa is primarily grown in the Andean region of South America, with Bolivia and Peru accounting for 98 percent of global production according to the Latin American Integration Association. Since 2006, international demand for quinoa, a grain considered a “super food” packed with essential amino acids and proteins, has skyrocketed. For the indigenous people of Bolivia who have relied on the rich nutritional value of quinoa for thousands of years, the rapid rise in prices has pushed this essential foodstuff outside of affordability. As a result, the rate of malnourishment in the Andean region of Bolivia has increased, as many have had to substitute the proteins and amino acids from their prized domestic grain for less protein-abundant, unhealthy imports. In order to reduce malnourishment in rural indigenous regions, the Bolivian government should subsidize quinoa for its citizens.

Quinoa has been important in Bolivia since the ancient Incans deemed it “the mother of all grains” five thousand years ago. It was a staple for the Incan army, mixed with lard to make “war balls,” giving soldiers endurance during long marches. In the sixteenth century, Spanish colonists attempted to replace the quinoa fields with wheat because they viewed the native grain as inferior. What they failed to recognize – what the indigenous had known for centuries – were the extraordinary nutritional properties of quinoa. According to researchers from the Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina in Peru, quinoa contains all essential amino acids, a diverse abundance of vitamins and minerals, and a large amount of rich proteins. For the indigenous and rural people of Bolivia, who live on or near the Altiplano region of the Andean mountains, the abundant nutrients present in quinoa are vital for their survival. The resilient quinoa is one of the only plants able to grow in the arid and cold climate of the Altiplano, and has comprised a large portion of rural Bolivian diets for thousands of years.

Now, the grain is in high demand in indus-



Quinoa growers in the Andes.  
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trialized countries across the globe. The United Nations deemed 2013 “The International Year of Quinoa,” citing its rich abundance of protein and vitamins as “having an important role in eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty.” All of the praise for the grain has led to a 3,800 percent increase in demand between 2002 and 2012, according to data from the Latin American Integration Association. This increase can be largely attributed to affluent, health-conscious Westerners in countries such as France and the United States, who account for 63 percent of global consumption. As a result of this skyrocketing demand, the world price of quinoa has rapidly increased from 1.50 USD/kg in 2008 to 5.00 USD/kg in 2015. For the Bolivian farmers who grow quinoa and the multinational corporations who sell it, these heightened prices provide more income, which in turn “helps bolster the local labor market and generally boosts local spending,” according to Jose Reyes from the World Bank. Additionally, the boost in demand has allowed neighboring quinoa producer, Peru, to diversify exports and grow the economy through increased investments in capital and infrastructure.

Although the price increase has been a boon for producers, consumers who have relied on quinoa for generations – largely rural and indigenous populations – are unable to afford their precious grain. According to the Bolivian agricultural ministry, between 2006 and 2011, domestic consumption of quinoa dropped 34 percent. María Julia Cabrerizo, a nutritionist at the Hospital de Clínicas, says that “chronic malnutrition in children [has] climbed in quinoa-growing areas.” Bolivians have had to substitute the super food with cheaper, processed products. These less healthy alternatives, such as

rice and noodles, are leading to increased rates of malnutrition, which has historically been a major issue in the South American nation. The Foundation for Sustainable Development states “Malnutrition is crippling Bolivia... An overwhelming 25 percent of Bolivian children under the age of three have [suffered] or currently suffer from malnutrition.” The shift from nutrient-rich quinoa to less healthy alternatives is only further exacerbating this epidemic.

Some would claim that there is no solution to this issue and that the high prices will boost the economy, eventually trickling down to help the low-income indigenous and rural populations. However, there are methods to increase domestic quinoa consumption without greatly harming producers. For instance, the implementation of an export tariff would create a wedge between domestic and world prices. According to a report by the OECD, this would reorient supply towards the domestic market by virtue of its comparatively lower price. This would help Bolivian producers by increasing the marginal revenue received for each unit of the grain from international consumers, though overall demand may decrease slightly, and also help domestic consumers by lowering their price. Alternatively, the Bolivian government could apply a quinoa subsidy in order to reduce the price paid by local consumers, including the rural and indigenous populations. This policy would benefit producers as well, due to the decreased cost of transporting the product.

Quinoa is a rising commodity internationally, which is helping some in Bolivia. For those who have relied on the crop for millennia, the rural indigenous population, the explosion of demand from foreign nations such as the United States and France has pushed a staple of their diets out of affordability. As a result, efforts to fight malnutrition have become less effective with less protein-rich alternatives taking the place of quinoa. In order to alleviate this problem, the Bolivian government should place either an export tariff on the good or instate a domestic subsidy. Either policy would increase domestic availability of quinoa without drastically harming producers, resulting in economic growth and less malnutrition. •

# Words Do Matter

## How Anti-Zika Rhetoric Perpetuates Regional Sexism

- *Maria Fabrizio*

In a recent article, New York Times foreign correspondent Azam Ahmed challenged his readers, asking, “When in human history has an epidemic become so alarming that a nation feels compelled to urge its women not to have children for two years?” For women in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica, what once would have been a nebulous hypothetical posed by a speculative journalist is now a reality.

In efforts to stop the recent outbreak of Zika virus, these four countries have requested that women hold off on getting pregnant until the development of a vaccine in a couple of years. Although this recommendation is intended to be a reasonable response to a massive public health crisis, it disproportionately shifts the responsibility of restoring public health to women, and will perpetuate gendered policies and rhetoric in the region. By directing pregnancy recommendations at women while simultaneously failing to provide the primary means to prevent pregnancy, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica are setting women up for defeat.

By asking women in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica to refrain from getting pregnant, these governments insinuate that women have a high level of control over if and when they get pregnant. However, according to Monica Roa, the director of an organization dedicated to the human rights of women and girls, over fifty percent of pregnancies in Latin America are unplanned. The lack of comprehensive sex education, inaccessibility of birth control, and instances of rape all contribute to this problematic rate of unplanned pregnancy. This oversight is especially critical because, according to the 2015 United Nations World’s Women Report, these four nations are among the top six Latin American countries where women aged 15-49 years have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes. Clearly, the 25 to 40 percent of women who experience this kind of violence lack autonomy in domestic decisions and are ultimately deprived the basic choice to become pregnant, which is the very thing being demanded by government officials.

Another major issue with the recommendations is the inherent assumption that contraceptives are both readily accessible and acceptable. In a region dominated by the conservative



Catholic Church and riddled with poverty, it should come as no surprise that birth control is neither universally accessible nor widely accepted. This severely limits women’s decision-making power and ultimately depletes their control over their own bodies and pregnancy preferences. The lack of contraceptive options often leads women to choose a more extreme kind of birth control: abortion. According to the Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to advancing sexual and reproductive health, the only countries in Latin America that broadly permit abortions are Cuba, Guyana, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay, meaning that women in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica are left without any clear legal means by which to prevent childbirth. The Center for Reproductive Rights reports that bans on abortion “put women and adolescent girls at risk, because many of them may resort to illegal and clandestine abortions.” Ultimately, the inaccessibility of contraceptives, the lack of a receptive cultural environment, and the prevalence of restrictive abortion laws create a system that seems designed to ensure failure. By directing anti-pregnancy recommendations exclusively at women, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica advance the false narrative that pregnancy is the sole responsibility of a woman, while also assuming that birth control is accessible and accepted when, in fact, neither is the case.

While some countries in the region, like Brazil, are rethinking their strict abortion laws and could potentially provoke a similar change in neighboring countries, this change will come too late for many women and it will ultimately fail to address the broader issue of gendered policies and rhetoric. First, even if pro-abortion

laws were passed through Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica, these countries would still lack the capital and enforcement capabilities to make such laws a practical reality. Beyond this, such a law would serve only as a Band-Aid on the gaping wound of gender-inequality, because it would fail to compensate for a prevailing lack of accessible contraceptives and decision-making power. Sweeping policy reforms, while an attractive solution, are unlikely to take hold because of entrenched cultural perceptions of abortion perpetuated by the Catholic Church. Additionally, even in the unlikely event that a swath of Latin American countries do make abortions available, countries like Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica will still lack the institutional and enforcement abilities to make abortions a practical, accessible, and effective method of birth control. In short, these government-sanctioned recommendations perpetuate sexism at an institutional level. By specifically targeting women, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica are scapegoating a single gender for an act that requires both men and women. In this way, these governments are placing a tremendous burden on women who already face policies, practices, and rhetoric intended to keep them subordinate.

Times of crisis inevitably leave populations distressed and anxious for effective leadership. This places great power in governments and intergovernmental organizations to direct public discourse and perceptions to some degree. It is therefore the responsibility of the Colombian, Ecuadorian, El Salvadoran, and Jamaican governments to not just seek a cure, but to also keep this health crisis from provoking negative societal externalities, like prevailing sexism. In order for the world to escape the Zika virus with minimum collateral damage, it is important to understand that how countries react prior to finding a cure is almost as important as finding the cure itself. For Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Jamaica in particular, this means changing how their governments talk about women in relation to the virus, so as not to ostracize, scapegoat, or otherwise repress their female populations. Although altering discourse may seem like a small change, it provides an opportunity to erode institutional sexism with just a few words. •

# Curtain Call for the Haitian Electoral Farce

- Casimir M. Stone

The fiasco surrounding the 2015 Haitian presidential elections could almost be characterized as a comedy of errors, were it not so tragic. It truly bares uncanny resemblance to a farce, only played on a scale of massive proportions and with stakes so high and so many lives in the balance that it should elicit few laughs. Yet with such a colorful cast of characters, it's easy to forget some of the very real, regular threats to Haitian citizens. The very real political solutions that the government needs to actively pursue to even begin remedying those threats seem to be even easier to forget. These solutions often appear unattainable and may even be better solved outside the hands of the Haitian government. And yet, if serious electoral changes are not made soon, the Haitian government risks running into even more trouble than it is currently in.

Per the country's new term limits, Haiti's first democratically elected President Michel Martelly, also known as "Sweet Micky", a prominent Haitian pop star, prepared to step down for the 2015 October elections. His successor-to-be, Jovenal Moïse, an agricultural mogul who ran for presidential office under the patron moniker "Banana Man," won the popular vote in the first round of elections. However, his opponent Jude Célestin, a more traditional politician, successfully engineered a cancellation of the second round of elections by leveling electioneering charges at Moïse—the same charges that had been leveled at Célestin when he ran against Martelly five years ago. This conflict came to a head on February 7th, when Martelly was forced to step down without a successor, and ten days later, an entirely new player, Jocelerme Privert, a former political prisoner who has also run before against Martelly, was declared the new interim president until April 24th. Gracefully, Martelly responded to his involuntary exit with a literal song: "Give Them the Banana."

On the bright side, Privert's inauguration marks a temporary finale to the absurdity impacting the Haitian electoral cycle. However, it means little in the grander scope of Haiti's struggle to improve the quality of life for its people. Many would argue that Privert, simply on the virtue of not being a singer-songwriter or a banana exporter, is better fit to run the



The National Palace in Port-au-Prince.  
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country than his opponents. It is true that, in a government plagued by systematic corruption, Privert has an impeccable record, having made enormous strides toward a mutually beneficial relationship with Venezuela and a more prosperous (or at least functional) tax system. Yet, even with these qualifications, the time between now and the end of April is too short to make a significant impact. And regardless, the expectation of the interim president is that he will focus purely on reworking the electoral system.

Fortunately, that very focus may yet enable Privert to make a positive impact on Haitian politics. When we think of the problems pressing Haiti, we think of extreme poverty, first and foremost. We think of course of the 2010 earthquake, perhaps of the crippling malnutrition epidemic, or even of the persistent prevalence of cholera, a disease that has been eliminated in most other corners of the world. With these catastrophes, as well as striking levels of corruption pervasive in all institutions, any president would have a nearly unfathomable amount of barriers to overcome. With all that on one plate, it would be difficult to know where to start, but the president certainly could not tackle the problems all at once – whoever takes the seat must, at least at first, focus on one issue to solve.

Despite what many humanitarian organizations may say, that first issue must be electoral stability. Due to the aforementioned crises, Haiti has long been a hotspot for non-governmental organization humanitarian aid, particularly in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. And yet, we saw that without a stable government—which is the natural successor to stable, democratic elections with fair competition—much of that aid was misallocated or predated and the efforts by and large fell flat. That's not to say

that NGOs should not focus on Haiti—perhaps they're just focusing in the wrong place.

Haiti's next-door neighbor, the Dominican Republic, which is also in the midst of a relatively recent transition from dictatorship to democracy, boasts a high standard of living as a regular tourist and retirement destination, while Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. There are many factors to account for the differences between these two sovereign states situated on the same island, but one thing is certain: NGOs did not just throw bottles of water at the Dominican Republic and hope that things would change. Organizations such as the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) engaged in constant consultations with the Dominican government during its transition, and perhaps more importantly, observed the early democratic elections. This is not to say that it is on the outside world to fix Haiti's problems. At the end of the day, only the Haitian government, with serious internal commitments, will be able to handle its own situation. But in such a particularly tumultuous yet potentially decisive electoral cycle, an international presence is a much-needed stabilizing force, particularly one such as the IFES, whose experience, budget, and proven success could make all the difference in ensuring a successful election.

Interim President Privert may not be in a position to enact the massive social changes Haiti must see before it becomes a truly prosperous state, but he is in the position to issue a call for international intervention. Though Haiti, independent since 1804, is a historically proud nation, it must not be afraid to ask for help. On the other hand, although Haiti is a relatively small actor in international affairs, with a population of ten million in desperate need of help, it must not be ignored. Hopefully, with electoral reforms, the Haitian government will no longer be looked at as a comedy or a tragedy, but rather a drama—a prominent player that will be taken seriously on the global stage. •

# Trudeaumania 2.0

## Canada's Liberal Honeymoon Proves Substantive

- Meghan Rowley

Since winning the national elections last December, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made waves as the fresh new face of Canadian politics. At 44, the son of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau bolstered Canada's international image and popularity, leading to a political honeymoon with the promise of reform and a charismatic young leader. The celebration is only heightened when juxtaposed with the near decade-long reign of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper. However, this liberal wave, hailed as a potential second Trudeaumania (the term used to describe Pierre Trudeau's surge in popularity upon his election), proved to be more substantive than empty promises and charm from a relatively inexperienced politician. In his first 100 days in office, the Prime Minister made progress on the 214 promises made during the campaign cycle, demonstrating that Trudeau is an effective foil to his Conservative predecessor.

Although described as shocking, the Conservative Party's loss was ultimately not as unpredictable as marketed. While he weathered the global financial crisis and balanced the budget, Harper's economic policies were not enough to keep Canadians content. In fact, according to *The Atlantic*, before the election cycle, two thirds of voters' top priorities were to defeat Harper. Approaching a recession and facing nearly a decade of Conservative rule, constituents had begun to reconsider reelecting Harper for a fourth time.

There were many reasons for this backlash against Harper. First, there was a perceived lack of transparency within his administration. With enhanced security measures, cyber intelligence, and general inaccessibility, the former Prime Minister's policies generated a lack of trust in his administration and government as a whole. Furthermore, moderate tax cuts for the middle class did not significantly stimulate the economy or increase social mobility, leading voters to turn to a candidate who favors more spending. Harper's decision to ban the niqab, a full face veil which some Muslim women choose to wear, in the name of national security also proved controversial. He received criticism from Canadians who described the policies as culturally insensitive and a reversal of Canada's welcoming reputation. Finally,



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.  
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there was Harper himself: his older, more critical, and constantly controlled demeanor made Trudeau's candor and relaxed nature look far more approachable in comparison.

Trudeau met these reservations among voters with a series of progressive campaign promises. Throughout the election cycle last fall, he emphasized positive politics, "beating fear with hope," and creating a government representative of today's multicultural Canada. More specific proposals included running an annual \$10 billion deficit to finance investments in improved infrastructure, withdrawing Canadian fighter jets from Syria in exchange for heightened humanitarian aid and training, as well as a pan-Canadian coalition to combat climate change. In addition, Trudeau promised to repair soured relations with the Obama administration, increase taxes on the wealthy, offer an economic stimulus, prioritize gender equality, and take in 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. All these promises led to a record number of seats swung in an election (34 to 144 of the 338 seats in the House of Commons), as Trudeau vaulted from 3rd to 1st place in the last days of the election campaign. But with the appeal of a movie star more than a head of state, and a political career that only began in 2008, it is only fair to question Trudeau's actual progress.

According to *TrudeauMetre.ca*, a nonpartisan website that tracks the progress of the Prime Minister's 214 proposals, Trudeau is on his way to making tangible change. So far, he delivered on at least thirteen promises, broke two, and started twenty-nine more. The most notable victories thus far are setting a date to pull the Canadian Air Force from combat in Syria, appointing a gender-equal cabinet, and raising income taxes on the rich to 33 percent while cutting middle income taxes from 22 to 20.5 percent, as well as creating multiple independent advisory bodies for branches of government, including the Senate. Broken promises include the proposed intake of 25,000 government-sponsored refugees by December 2015, which was reformed to 2,500 by the end of February, half of which will be privately sponsored. Furthermore, Trudeau acknowledged that balancing the budget by 2019 will prove difficult, with annual deficits likely to exceed \$10 billion.

However, with multiple projects under way, including a national inquiry into missing indigenous women, a reassessment of carbon emissions, and a strong showing at the UN climate summit, a \$60 billion investment in infrastructure, and the reopening of veteran's affairs offices across the country, it seems promising that Trudeau will be able to make good on a number of his promises. While it is still early and most projects are still to come, Trudeau effectively thwarted claims that he is all talk and no action. And if the current rate of progress continues, he may prove one of the most notable prime ministers in Canadian history. •

# From the Saint of Death to the Drug Trade

## The Fall of Mexico's Traditional Institutions

- Ava Tavrazich

On his first day in Mexico, Pope Francis addressed throngs of devoted Roman Catholics and condemned what is thought to be the epitome of the Mexican anti-Christ movement: Santa Muerte. Especially popular across the country, the “Saint of Death” has not only increased in popularity over the past 25 years but has also become so commercialized that even tourists seek out figurines of her likeness. The bony figure is largely significant due to her association with the drug trade; she is known as one of the most important “narco-saints.” The cartels turn to her for assistance in their deals, due to the fact that she is considered to be non-judgmental, an aspect that contributes to her overall popularity. As violence and participation in the cartels has increased over the past ten years, despite rampant efforts by the Mexican government to quell such activity, the power of Santa Muerte as a figure of devotion further complicates the fight to dismantle the violent system. Such complexities simply highlight the fact that the Mexican government must take a more holistic approach in combatting the drug trade, and focus on aspects other than trying to simply eliminate cartel-generated violence.

The origins of Santa Muerte are not completely known, though she is thought to be a colonial-era hybrid of indigenous religions and Catholicism. The saint's lack of a clear history does not deter her followers. According to the Huffington Post the number of Santa Muerta worshippers has increased to roughly 12 million people across the Americas. As her ominous name indicates, she quite literally represents death, serving as an opposing force to traditional Catholic values that emphasize eternal life. For this reason, the Catholic Church views Santa Muerte as an illegitimate cult and an antithesis to Christianity. Perhaps the greatest appeal of Santa Muerte is that, unlike God, she does not judge; followers can pray to her for absolutely anything, such as success in drug transactions, without fear of questioning standards imposed by moral institutions.

Santa Muerta has gained a significant following in Mexico—so much so that hundreds of unofficial temples have been erected in people's homes and she is found in marketplaces all over the country. Further adding to her popularity



Representation of Santa Muerte near Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

is the fact that people can, and in most cases do, practice Catholicism at the same time. To many devotees, she is both a part of and the opposition to the official institutions set up by the state, at least with regard to the Catholic Church. Santa Muerte's reach bypasses social classes, reaching people of all different professions and socioeconomic statuses, however the majority of her followers tend to be poorer and on the margins of society—speaking not only to the criminal proclivities of the cult, but also to the rising poverty levels in the country. According to Reuters, in 2014 the poverty rate increased to 46.2 from 45.5 percent across Mexico.

Although poverty, the worship of Santa Muerte, and involvement with drug cartels are not inherently linked, it is true that the drug trade attracts people of lower socioeconomic status, in that it can provide a quick way to make money. A devotee of Santa Muerte will by no means necessarily join a drug cartel, though the question arises of the degree to which the association of Santa Muerte increases the appeal or justifies the drug trade. Culturally, Santa Muerte is an attractive symbol of the drug cartels. In a similar way to the highly popular musical genre of narcocorrido, which glorifies specific cartels through song, Santa Muerte is a non-traditional, yet widespread, cultural aspect of the cartels that people enjoy. Additionally, as traditional institutions in Mexico begin to appear less effective, people could very easily lose faith in the establishment. Between 2007 and 2014, the Roman

Catholic population declined from 24 percent to 21 percent, as stated by the Huffington Post, certainly indicating a movement away from one such powerful institution. Santa Muerte's following, on the other hand, continues to increase. At least for supporters of the drug cartels, Santa Muerte fills a void that the Catholic Church cannot, since the latter condemns the drug trade. The cult can be seen as a source of spiritual guidance for those who fall out of the traditional and legal system of society.

Santa Muerte is certainly not the cause of the drug trade, though the cult does complicate the government's response to cartels. Since the launch of the anti-drug campaign in 2006, the Mexican and American governments alike have invested heavily in attempts to dismantle the system of drug cartels. Most money has been devoted to targeting specific members of the cartels, to try to deter violence, and to disassemble the drug trade on a more individualized level. Despite such efforts, violence has not decreased and homicide rates have either remained fairly constant or increased since 2006. The campaign is seemingly ineffective, since the cartels are still quite powerful; however, the Mexican government continues to pour money into its efforts. As reported by Forbes, in 2013 an estimated \$172.7 billion was invested in peacekeeping efforts in the Mexican drug war. This investment is ineffective unless allocated to the right campaigns.

The continued violence and aspects like Santa Muerte show how complex the drug trade is. If the Mexican government wants to deter its citizens from participating in alternative institutions, it should focus on improving those that it can control, such as the education system, and working harder to eliminate corrupt officials that at times assist the interests of the cartels. Improving these flawed structures can more effectively restore the population's faith in traditional state institutions, while leaving alternative systems, like the drug trade and Santa Muerte in a less alluring position. The Saint of Death is an indicator that the elimination of the drug trade should become fought less as a moral crusade and instead with a more all-encompassing approach that could both build trust in and improve the effectiveness of the Mexican government. •

# The Decline of Kiribati

## Climate-Change Refugees

- Sanuri Gunawardena



The flag of Kiribati. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The United Nations' definition of a refugee does not take climate change into consideration as a motivating factor for relocation. Due to rising sea levels around the globe, several island countries in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are facing crises involving their low-lying lands. Kiribati, a country composed of a chain of thirty-three atolls, lies only 266 feet above sea level, exposing the population to the drastic effects of climate change. Unfortunately, the current refugee crises are mainly focused on the conflicts and wars plaguing the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, Kiribati and other island nations facing the same issue are struggling to find the financial resources and international aid to support the impending migration. Maxine Burkett, an associate professor of law focusing on climate change at the University of Hawaii at Manoa's William S. Richardson School of Law, warns that the situation is "only set to get worse. In the next generation or two, it's possible the majority of the island[s] of Kiribati will have to be evacuated." With such clear warning signs for the future of Kiribati's island population, the United Nations needs to take urgent measures to add provisions to their refugee laws and urge nearby nations to take initiative in supporting climate change refugees until alternate solutions can be appropriately postulated for Oceania's struggling island nations.

Approximately 665,000 to 1.7 million people in the Pacific could be displaced or forced to migrate by 2050 because of the climate-induced rise in sea levels. Such forecasts have caused experts to believe that Kiribati may in fact disappear within the next thirty to sixty years. In an attempt to take early precautions, Kiribati has already purchased land on Fiji, an island more than one thousand miles away, for approximately eight million dollars. While speaking to the Associated Press, Kiribati's former President

Anote Tong explained, "We would hope not to put everyone on one piece of land, but if it became absolutely necessary, yes, we could do it. It's basically going to be a matter of survival." However, relocation to Fiji is not a lasting solution, as Fijians will also need to move from low-lying areas. The United Nations should incorporate climate change refugees into reform policies because they are no different than the refugees residing in Europe. All of these displaced populations are facing the overarching drawback of a loss of habitat.

Considering that relocation seems to be the only plausible solution for the people of Kiribati, the next pressing matter involves deciding who is responsible for the refugees. Kathleen Newland, a co-founder and senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, a Washington-based think tank, argued that nearby countries should take on the responsibility for sheltering the displaced populations of Kiribati. The United Nations should become involved in setting up standard procedures for the operation of this climate change migration. The most viable candidates for taking in the refugees would be those nearby, meaning Australia and New Zealand. However, without the UN's designation that climate-change refugees are in fact refugees, these territories are unlikely to move forward with the acceptance of Kiribati's helpless citizens. For instance, a Kiribati citizen was denied asylum last September in New Zealand because a court decreed that his request did not meet the "serious harm" requirement necessary for applicants seeking refugee status. If the UN were to include climate-induced loss of habitat, then these asylum seekers would gain the refugee status they require to survive the damage to their homes.

An enormous amount of political will is required to negotiate the transfers of massive refugee populations. The political climate in potential destination countries remains reluctant to make commitments to accept millions of refugees on the basis of climate change-induced habitat loss. Currently, the UN defines a refugee as a person escaping persecution. Escaping the loss of one's home due to climate change must make its way onto this political agenda. A promising first step was made at the Third UN Conference on Small Island Developing

States, where leaders held discussions during a weeklong meeting to promote solidarity and partnerships with developing small islands. A prominent topic that was discussed included disaster risk prevention. If members of the meeting reach a consensus with the leaders of destination countries in realizing the necessity of standing in unity during trying times, then the UNHCR can proceed to incorporate legal revisions to the UN's refugee policy. This political body first requires a solid agreement on a protection agenda to address the needs of displaced people across international borders due to the natural hazards that include the effects of climate change. Kiribati's closest neighbors will then be able to utilize this new definition of a refugee to grant protection to the small island populations that are losing their homes.

Global climate-change talks took place in Paris last December, during which leaders agreed to contain global warming to below two degrees Celsius. This is certainly a promising goal for the long-term; however, the people of Kiribati do not have the time to wait. They are already beginning to experience the complete loss of their homes. In addition to the mere loss of land, climate change has resulted in serious public health and agricultural challenges. For example, floods are becoming more common, resulting in a decrease in arable land due to soil salinization, the death of valuable livestock, and causing garbage and human waste to flow into homes. While Kiribati's citizens are attempting stopgap measures, such as constructing cages in trees for livestock, long-term solutions will only be provided through international action. The UN has made ambitious plans for the future, but Kiribati requires immediate aid before it is too late. Once the UN accepts climate-change refugees as a part of the larger group of refugees who have been displaced from their homes, territories such as Australia and New Zealand will be under greater pressure to legally grant citizens of Kiribati asylum. This could be an important first step in helping the climate-displaced regain control of their lives following the loss of the land they have called home for so long. •

# Fijian Mining Reform

## A Path to Growth or Ruined Paradise?

- Akash Ramanujam

**O**n January 27, 2016, Fiji's Prime Minister announced that his government planned to reform Fijian mining regulations in order to strengthen the country's mineral extraction sector, with the aim of increasing mining leases. PM Voreqe Bainimarama indicated that the mining sector could provide a means to at least partially alleviate Fiji's economic woes: the Asian Development Bank (ADB) notes that, "[in] Fiji, 31 percent of the population lives below the poverty line... [and only] 35.9 percent of the population aged 15 years and above is employed." However, Bainimarama and his associates are mistaken in assuming that increased mining activity is a viable solution for Fiji's economic troubles. By attempting to grow the mining industry, the current government risks endangering Fiji's tourism sector, placing Fijian economic performance in the hands of temporary global commodity market conditions, and hampering the ongoing development of the Fijian economy.

As Fiji's Department of Environment itself recognized in a country report to the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, lackadaisical waste disposal threatens Fiji's tourism industry "by detracting from the 'Pacific Paradise' image...and by association with health warnings about infectious and vector-borne diseases." Environmental damage from Fijian mines has already been reported: in 2012, Radio Australia reported that a mine extracting copper and gold had discharged toxic materials into the environment, and in 2015 Radio New Zealand reported that a chief in Fiji's Bua province claimed that a bauxite mine had contaminated local fisheries. Despite the costs of mineral extraction, mining revenue provides only a fraction of Fiji's revenue compared to tourism. While mining comprises only 1 percent of Fiji's GDP, Fiji's Ministry for Industry, Trade and Tourism estimates that the tourism sector produces 17 percent of GDP. Of course, the larger the mining sector grows, the more it will contribute to GDP. However, the more the mining sector grows, the more the tourism sector suffers. Considering the difference between these two sectors in terms of GDP contribution, it is hard to imagine a scenario in which the mineral extraction sector grows so large that mining gains offset tourism losses.

Additionally, increased mining activity will place Fiji's economy at the whims of global commodity markets, diminishing economic stability. Much of the recent interest in Fijian mineral extraction has been focused on gold and bauxite. To be sure, becoming a gold producer could prove useful during an economic downturn as investors turn away from securities toward a time-tested store of value. However, the price of gold is not always stable and has revealed volatile tendencies in the past. In other words, Fiji's attempt to grow its economy could lead to greater dependence on the frequently shifting value of gold, potentially minimizing the damage of global economic declines, but also frustrating Fiji's attempt at steady economic growth.

Increased reliance on bauxite will not fare much better: a 2014 Bloomberg article noted that increased demand for Fijian bauxite has been stimulated by the Indonesian government's proposal to stop exporting unrefined bauxite in order to develop Indonesian smelters. Consequently, current interest in Fijian bauxite is the result of a temporary situation in international commodity markets. If Fiji's government is looking for a sustainable path towards economic growth, it should look somewhere else. Even with Indonesia out of the picture, Fiji is still not a large enough player in the world bauxite market to influence prices. Also, supposing Indonesia gains the smelting capabilities it desires, an increase in the supply of refined Indonesian bauxite would decrease world prices for processed bauxite. Lower processed bauxite prices could force foreign corporations that refine Fijian bauxite out of business, depressing demand for Fijian bauxite. Where Indonesia exported raw bauxite and then turned to export more refined products, Fiji would find it hard to do the same. This is because refining bauxite is infeasible in Fiji. As noted in a July 2015 Fiji Times article, refining Fijian bauxite domestically is impractical. Fiji's bauxite reserves are limited and the bauxite in them is of low quality. Thus it is impractical if Fiji decided to increase its mining activity and in the process may damage its tourism industry and finds itself more subject to global commodity fluctuations.

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of the Prime Minister's proposed shift in mining poli-

cy is that despite economic troubles, Fiji's economy has actually shown real signs of improvement recently. Of course, like any developing country, Fiji struggles to maintain the institutional strength vital to a healthy economy: Transparency International notes that sub-par rule of law and nepotism are enduring areas of difficulty. However, the ADB estimated GDP growth of 4 percent in 2015 (higher than several of its fellow Pacific islands) and projects an increase in economic growth in 2016. On top of that, a 2014 ADB report noted that Fiji was on track to achieve half of the Millennium Development Goals proposed by the UN to improve economic prosperity, which is promising for a country that has been forced to reckon with the phase-out of a preferential sugar quota with the EU and the resulting collapse of a historically important sugar industry.

There is no way around the contraction of the sugar industry in Fiji nor the punch that it will deliver to the national economy, but that does not mean Fijian agriculture is dead in its tracks. Fiji can still stay true to its agrarian past by offsetting decreased sugar production with increased cultivation of tropical produce. Fiji's government has wisely attempted to stall the downfall of the sugar industry, which one 2014 ADB report referred to as "the mainstay of the rural economy." However, if the government is dead set on enacting a dramatic policy to boost economic growth, it may want to consider scaling back assistance an ailing sugar industry and pouring it into the development of tropical agriculture, which will probably yield more long-term profit. While increased mining activity will not detract from agricultural productivity, a larger mining sector will act as a net benefit on the Fijian economy, risking a dent in economic growth where such a risk is ultimately unnecessary.

Leaders of developing countries probably have difficulty with the "wait it out" mentality, and maybe rightly so. After all, proper economic management often requires prompt policy adjustment. But the need for timeliness in government operations is not an excuse for panicked policymaking. The Fijian government needs to curb its impatience before it digs up a mining problem. •

# Peace in the Philippines Out of Reach or an Election Away?

- Hannah Feldshuh

For decades, insurgency and violent separatist movements have plagued the island of Mindanao. As the center of the Philippines' Muslim minority in a predominantly Catholic nation, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has been the site of enduring violence. Secessionist movements have vied for control and threatened the legitimacy of the central government for decades. The most popular secessionist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) gained strong support in 1980s and 1990s, and ultimately established a parallel government within the ARMM. Since that time, MILF has been engaged in conflict with the military. A 2014 peace agreement ended fighting between MILF and central military authorities, but governmental instability and dismal economic growth has allowed a period violence to erupt. This region is suffering not just from insurgency, but also from the inability to resolve core issues underlying the violence – including religious persecution, political isolation and economic stagnation.

The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was proposed and debated to resolve the long-term regional governance issues and address political isolation, religious persecution, and economic stagnation. This landmark piece of legislation was envisioned as a legacy action of President Benigno Aquino III. Drafts of the BBL underwent over 200 hours of debate, eight months of consultations, and 51 hearings. Despite this extensive review process, the Bangsamoro Basic Law failed to pass at the end of the congressional session in February 2016, primarily due to perceived public opposition and chronic legislator absenteeism. Despite the military, economic, political, and social costs of instability in Mindanao, legislators are allowing election season motivations and apathy to derail a 17-year peace process. Proponents of the BBL are fearful that the Philippines' election season will derail this process further and allow violent extremists to exploit legislative indecisiveness. To address the plight of the population of Mindanao and the effects of this conflict on the Philippines more broadly, legislators and the next administration need to recommit now to passing the Bangsamoro Basic Law in the next administration.

**“To address the plight of the population of Mindanao and the effects of this conflict on the Philippines more broadly, legislators and the next administration need to recommit now to passing the Bangsamoro Basic Law in the next administration.”**

At a fundamental level, the Bangsamoro Basic Law is necessary to increase political stability and end violent attacks. Under the BBL framework, a devolved parliamentary system will be created in the current ARMM region, with the aim of empowering Bangsamoro to “secure their identity” and “allow for meaningful self-governance.” Current dissatisfaction with political representation structures has real consequences. In December 2015, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a 2011 offshoot of MILF, attacked nine Christian villages, leaving nine dead over two days of fighting. BIFF rejects negotiations with the government of the Philippines and demands an independent nation for Bangsamoro. According to Voice of America, tensions in Mindanao have resulted in the deaths of 150,000 over seventeen years. According to the Committee on Population and Development Executive Director Romeo Dongeto, children would be most vulnerable to renewed and continued violence, as they are subject to displacement and recruitment as combatants. The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that between 30,000 and 50,000 children are impacted by armed conflict in Mindanao.

Despite this loss of life and political instability, many lawmakers failed to show up to deliberations and voting as election season approached, communicating apathy towards Bangsamoro, Filipino Muslims, and the peace process. Following the failed passage of the BBL, rioting and protests broke out in Muslim cities across the Philippines, calling legislators “anti-Muslim and anti-peace.” For many in the ARMM, the failure of BBL is yet another set in a string of slights and discrimination against the Muslim minority. To begin to heal the tension with this long-disenfranchised group, the next administration must recommit to the BBL following the May 9th elections.

Beyond the imperative for political stability and social cohesion, the Bangsamoro Basic Law offers potential for greater economic growth. Currently, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is Mindanao's poorest region, with only 0.9 percent GDP growth in 2013 and 55.5 percent labor participation in 2011. Research from the Philippines' National Economic and Development Authority communicates that BBL stability has the potential to increase economic output, employment and investment, intra- and inter-regional trade, and narrow the regional wealth disparities between Bangsamoro and the rest of Mindanao. The Bangsamoro Development Plan 2015-2022 (BDP), the economic proposal designed to accompany BBL, aims to push Bangsamoro into double-digit growth within five years of creation and seeks to increase per capita gross regional domestic product from 29,608 to 38,000 and upwards. Without the BBL as a framework for stability and decreased violence, this vision of growth remains unlikely.

As a landmark bill crafted by the Aquino administration, the future of the Mindanao and the Bangsamoro Basic Law remains uncertain as election season approaches. The priorities of the next administration will ultimately determine the bill's success or failure, but it is unclear whether presidential candidates will recommit to its passage. All current presidential candidates have publically advocated for peace within ARMM, but have expressed differing views on BBL, ranging from direct support to questioning its constitutionality. Regardless of party affiliation or election platform, legislators and candidates must commit to peace in Mindanao through the passage of Bangsamoro Basic Law. Without this legislation, the efforts of a seventeen-year process will be in jeopardy, and electoral ambitions, lack of political will, and legislative apathy will be to blame. •

# Indonesian Hazy Development

## Finding Sustainable Measures

- Lanxin Jiang

As Indonesia transitions into a developing economy, it struggles with the undesired consequences of economic growth – air pollution. In 2015, Indonesia experienced its worst man-made forest fires since 1997. According to the World Bank, forest fire cleanup cost \$16.1 billion, more than double the amount spent on rebuilding Aceh after the 2004 tsunami. Exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon in 2015, air quality near Indonesia's persistent peat fires regularly exceeded the maximum level of 1000 on the international Pollutant Standard Index (PSI), more than three times the amount considered “hazardous” to human health. As a trans-boundary problem, neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia contributed to cloud-seeding efforts in inducing rain to combat the haze, but tackling the annual Southeast Asian haze requires more than regional cooperation. Preventative, proactive measures such as increasing accountability and developing clearer land tenure and license requirements could lead to more effective and sustainable long-term development.

Indonesia's blind pursuit of economic growth while neglecting the effects of its externalities on human health and the environment is problematic. The country's model of free trade is defined by high global demand for its natural resources, including palm oil, pulpwood and timber. Its palm oil production alone meets over 50 percent of the world's needs. While Indonesia is able to utilize its comparative advantage with the export of agricultural products, it comes with trade-offs. Even with regulations, smallholder farmers and large corporation producers find opportunities to employ the slash-and burn technique that clears forests at low tangible costs, making way for cash crops. Not only do these practices disregard the consideration of external costs to society, such as environmental degradation, biodiversity destruction, and toxic fumes produced during the fires, the burning of Indonesia's peatlands often spins out of control, blanketing Indonesia and neighboring countries in prolonged haze. In 2015, the haze resulted in an estimated 500,000 cases of respiratory illnesses and deaths. The Indonesian government must act, despite facing a dilemma between prioritizing economic growth and prioritizing welfare

development. Worsening Southeast Asian haze and growing diplomatic tensions signal that it is time for stronger Indonesian government intervention, which will allow for the pursuit of a more balanced growth without compromising on quality of life.

In 2002, all ASEAN nations signed the legally binding ASEAN Agreement on Trans-Boundary Haze Pollution – a commitment to collaborate with neighboring states to reduce air pollution as a result of forest fires – but have since seen little improvement. Economic obstacles to cooperation are also compounded by coordination problems and differing interpretations of the agreement. Thus, while regional cooperation is a laudable ideal, individual countries' commitment to reduce the Southeast Asian haze is required to eliminate the bystander problem. Singapore provides an example of how national commitments can lead to effective action. In 2014, Singaporean parliament passed the Trans-Boundary Haze Pollution Act, allowing regulators to prosecute individuals and companies that contribute to severe air pollution in Singapore. This law was created in part as a response to Indonesia's concerns that Singaporean and Malaysian investors own large shares in plantations involved in fires and must thus take on some responsibility. Judging from the success of Singapore's strict laws on deterring crimes and improving standards of living during its nation-building years, a large reduction or even total curbing of Singaporean investors' contribution to the annual Southeast Asian haze can be rightly anticipated. However, to aid cross-border prosecution, the Indonesian government must propose similar laws to increase accountability and, as a result, deter perpetrators from continued engagement in catastrophic deforestation.

While strengthening accountability can contribute to drastic reduction of levels of the Southeast Asian haze, the difficulty in identifying perpetrators can prove to be an impediment in attaining Indonesia's pledge to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2030. A significant factor in the identification problem lies in unclear or unenforced land tenure between local smallholders, corporations, communities, and government agencies, giving rise to many unresolved conflicts over disputed claims of land.

To date, 25 percent of state owned-forested land (called Forest Estate) in Central Kalimantan, or four million hectares of land, have overlapping land use certificates that have been issued or are in process. Additionally, 3.1 million hectares of Forest Estate have overlapping regional government permits, with 560,000 hectares holding both Ministry of Forestry licenses on top of regional permits. These statistics are also indicative of other forest zones, in which excessive and inconsistent regulations not only obscure compliance rules, but also provide fertile ground for bribery. Awareness of the need for land tenure reforms has gained momentum in the past few years with recognition that consolidation and reinforcement of land tenure and licenses plays an imperative role in ensuring rule abidance. With clearer license issuances and more distinctive land tenure, perpetrators who clear lands using the slash-and-burn method will also be more easily identifiable.

Under the current paradigm of Indonesian economic development, concerns for environmental degradation tend to come second to maintaining high levels of economic growth. However, economic development need not follow an all-or-nothing policy design. With Indonesia's low human and capital cost, it can still pursue a transitioning primary commodities export industry, but with greater government intervention overlooking land tenure and licensing, to hold producers accountable to more stringent regulations. While it is unrealistic to expect complete eradication of the Southeast Asian haze over the next few years, Indonesian president Joko Widodo has expressed urgency over the matter. After signing a \$1 billion agreement with Norway, Indonesia is now among the first countries implementing REDD+, a mechanism for sustainable management of forests covering deforestation and conservation of forests. With greater global and local commitment to environmental sustainability, there may be renewed optimism that there will not be a repeat of the 2015 trans-boundary haze, and that one day, there will be no need for Indonesians to stockpile respiratory masks. •

# The Best or Only Option

## The Lack of Alternatives to Shinzo Abe

- Trevor Grayeb

Japanese lawmaker Yuriko Koike once quipped that her country's Prime Ministers are like tissue paper – easily disposable and even more easily replaced. Yet current Premier Shinzo Abe seems to be made of sturdier stock than his recent predecessors. In the fall of 2015, Abe secured his leadership of Japan's indomitable Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) with an uncontested, unanimous reelection as party president – the first such one-man election in nearly 20 years. His detractors within and outside the party bemoan his seemingly undisputed grip on Japan's politics, which no amount of scandal or failure has thus far succeeded in shaking. Barring a moment of sudden clairvoyance on the part of the country's dysfunctional opposition, it remains unlikely that the LDP-Komeito coalition will be ousted from government in the near future. Yet despite this, or perhaps because of this, the country now risks a slide into stunted, ineffectual leadership with no effective alternative. Even with guaranteed prospects for reelection, Prime Minister Abe should not lead the LDP into another lower-house election – for the sake of both his party and the policies he has so long fought for.

Newspaper polls have shown support for the Abe cabinet hovering around 50 percent for several months now, but these numbers deceptively suggest a satisfaction with the Prime Minister himself, which is in fact largely nonexistent. Of those who support the cabinet, the percentage of those whose given reason is a lack of “better alternatives” has consistently climbed over the past year. With most recent polls, over 40 percent of Abe's supposed supporters now say that they simply feel there are no other appropriate options. A recent Asahi Shimbun survey asked respondents which LDP lawmaker they felt would make the best Prime Minister – 52 percent answered with “I don't know.” Only 7 percent backed Prime Minister Abe as deserving of another term.

Among the reasons for the Prime Minister's perceived lack of competition from within the LDP is the care with which Shinzo Abe has isolated and neutralized his most prominent and influential critics. The chief victim of this cautiousness may yet be Shinjiro Koizumi – the popular and dynamic son of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Having won re-

election in 2012 by the largest margin of any candidate in the country, he was rewarded with the undesirable job of pitching the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to farming communities in Northern Japan. This herculean task of attempting to build support among the demographic most likely to be negatively impacted by the deal is largely tantamount to political exile. Often alluded to as a potential future Prime Minister, the young lawmaker's stint in the wilderness may shackle or delay his hopes with a near-inevitable and well-publicized failure, coupled with the enmity of the LDP's key rural support bloc.

However, Abe's lonely position at the top does a disservice to his own political goals. The Prime Minister's bland style has led many to term him a sort of Anti-Koizumi, referring to Shinjiro's father Junichiro and his uncanny ability to stir up public support for any and all of his political pet projects. Inversely, polling data has consistently shown that the longer Shinzo Abe champions an issue the more disinterested in it the public becomes. Recent challenges to his cabinet have augmented these worries. Falling GDP numbers, an unsteady stock market, and the recent revelation that the country's population has shrunk by one million since 2010 have all but erased any lingering public optimism about the country's direction. Furthermore, the loss of Akira Amari – the former Trade Minister, architect of Abenomics, and a member of Abe's inner circle – to a high-profile bribery scandal has dented faith in the cabinet's integrity. A snowballing of myriad setbacks and scandals has crippled the confidence many Japanese once held in Abenomics and other Abe cabinet programs – yet with the opposition still in its perpetual state of disarray and internal LDP rivals muted there seem to be no plausible alternatives than to soldier along under Abe's crumbling leadership.

If the Prime Minister continues to lead alone, when he inevitably steps down or is ousted from within the LDP many of his key

programs – in particular the TPP – will be left without a prominent champion in the party. If, as he and many of his advocates say, Japan requires difficult structural reforms to break its cycle of economic and social stagnation, it is imperative that the party present strong leadership capable of implementing those reforms and rallying the public around them. Rather than resign his party to mounting popular dissatisfaction and a growing political quagmire, Abe should attempt to enshrine his legacy in a more capable successor.

Reversing his tendency to ostracize prospective opponents in favor of grooming an heir could infuse new energy into an administration whose public image has come to be characterized by disappointment and quiet resignation.

The talents of 34-year-old Shinjiro Koizumi – a veritable child in a political culture dominated by sexagenarians – could be better spent building national consensus behind economic reform than being berated by farmers in northern Japan. Either Cabinet Minister Seiko Noda or Policy Research Council chairwoman Tomomi Inada, both close to Abe and notable as prominent female lawmakers, could easily signal a more meaningful commitment to Abe's promotion

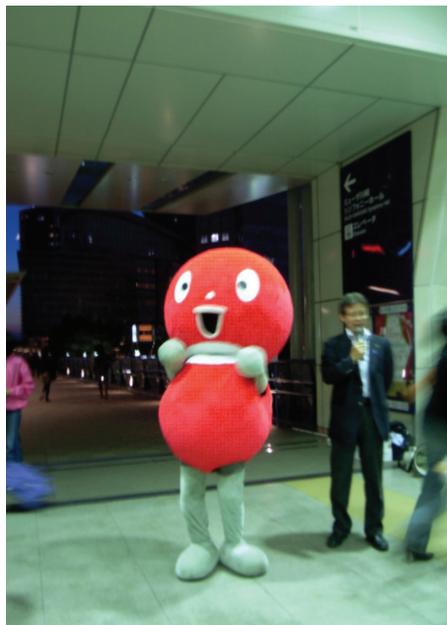
of women in leadership roles by being given the opportunity to become the nation's first female Prime Minister. Most importantly, though, the question of who is to succeed Shinzo Abe needs to be answered sooner rather than later. The longer Abe's policies are left to languish under a Prime Minister who increasingly fails to instill public confidence or support, the more stagnant and abrasive the country's political leadership will become. Shinzo Abe's political agenda may or may not be right for Japan, but the country at least deserves to have it presented by a party with effective, inclusive leadership. •



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

# A Meaningless Merger

- Trevor Grayeb



Minshu-kun, the mascot of Japan's largest opposition party. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

On March 14th, a prominent Japanese political figure took to social media to assuage his supporters' fears that his job was in jeopardy. Earlier this year the country's two largest political parties – the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ, or Minshu-to in Japanese) and the Japan Innovation Party (JIP) – had agreed on a surprise merger ahead of the upcoming upper house elections. The new party recently adopted the name Minshin-to, tentatively translated as “Democratic Progressive Party,” after the results of a popular opinion poll. Among other things, the renaming cast doubt on the future of Minshu-kun, the DPJ's bulbous costumed mascot. Yet shortly after the new party name was announced, a video was uploaded to Minshu-kun's Twitter account showing the mascot amending his name, demonstrating that by adding only six short lines, the second character of Minshu could be recycled to read Minshin. If this is all the rebranding that the opposition can manage, then Minshin-kun may end up being the most popular member of their party.

Even prior to the merger with the JIP, the DPJ struggled with an image as a party without any meaningful foundation in policy. Consistently unwilling to present substantive proposals to counter the long-governing Liberal

Democratic Party (LDP), even in the midst of the burgeoning unpopularity of government policies, the party is seemingly unified solely by the fact that it is not the LDP. The party's official platform even describes it as a “party of seikatsusha,” which can be roughly translated to “people who lead lives.” Years of such vague, noncommittal stances have run public patience thin, and increasingly desperate bids for public support have not improved the party's image. A self-deprecating ad campaign proclaiming, “I hate the Democratic Party, but I want to protect Democracy” drew widespread derision and ridicule. Compounding the party's troubles, voters still harbor memories of the party's brief stint in government from 2009 to 2012 as having been rife with ineptitude and failure.

Considering the party's woes, the merger with the JIP – a reformist, vaguely populist outfit – should ostensibly present an opportunity for reinvention and rebranding. More likely, however, these prospects will be squandered and the result will instead be an exacerbation of the opposition's internal dysfunction. The DPJ's lack of definitive political stances is due in part to internal discord among centrist and center-left members of the party, many of whom are former defectors from the LDP and an array of smaller parties. Adding in the JIP's membership, which includes an array of conservative and nationalist elements, may only succeed in further diluting the opposition's already tenuous platform. Party leaders claim that the merger between the two parties is the first step in building a pan-opposition alliance to overcome what many decry as the increasingly heavy-handed leadership of Prime Minister Abe. Yet there is no indication that this kind of desperate big-tent unity is the kind of political alternative Japanese voters are looking for. More likely than not, future elections with the new Democratic Progressive Party will only see the further flight of left-leaning voters to the Communist Party – the sole major opposition group with a clear and established set of policy proposals.

If the Democratic Progressive Party enters into this summer's election having built a new, centrist consensus – an alternative to Abenomics, collective self-defense, and all other trappings of the current administration – then the

country's political landscape could see serious transformation. Yet an Asahi Shimbun poll found that less than a third of respondents felt optimistic about such prospects, as the DPJ has thus far eschewed consensus in favor of weak-willed obstructionism, voicing displeasure with LDP governance while offering neither meaningful resistance nor substantive alternatives. Defying these expectations is not only critical to the survival of the new party – preventing a fragmentation into numerous smaller parties – but to the wellbeing of Japan's political opposition overall. Japanese politics has thrived on consensus building for generations. Even during the LDP's long, unbroken rule from 1955 to 1993, the party habitually entertained the objections and alternative proposals of minority parties, in particular the Social Democrats. Now, however, there are few such proposals to even consider, were LDP lawmakers willing to do so. If, as the DPJ's advertising claims, Prime Minister Abe's leadership has truly undermined Japanese democracy, their party must be considered at least partially complicit. As the nation's leading opposition party, they have failed in their primary charge – to voice a political alternative – and Japanese voters have and will continue to resent them for it.

When Minshu-kun, using his unwieldy spherical hands, tacked on a few additional lines to his name, it validated the pessimism that the rebranding was as toothless and superficial as the opposition itself. The smiling red mascot currently has more Twitter followers than DPJ President Katsuya Okada – emblematic, perhaps, of the dwindling faith in the party's leadership. The merging of a country's two largest opposition parties should be many things – a harbinger of political change, a sign of burgeoning political consensus, or a signal to the government of shifting public opinion. Instead, it may end up being none of these, another blunder by a party desperate to accrue anti-LDP votes without being forced to reconcile its internal fragmentation. Japanese voters – fewer in number as turnout continues to drop – will likely go to the polls this summer and be left to choose between the LDP and an empty vessel for nondescript dissatisfaction. They shouldn't have to. •

# Can Stricter Sanctions Solve the North Korean Crisis?

- Megan Cansfield

As countries begin implementing the newest round of United Nations sanctions against North Korea, the strictest and most comprehensive to date, the latest chapter of the ongoing North Korean nuclear saga is unfolding in a manner sadly reminiscent of policy dead-ends and fruitless condemnation of the past decade. UN Security Council Resolution 2270, passed unanimously on March 2nd, came as a decisive response to three months of escalating provocations from the rogue state, beginning with a supposed hydrogen bomb test on January 6th, followed by a rocket-enabled satellite launch on February 7th, and most recently, dictator Kim Jong Un's claims of successfully miniaturizing nuclear warheads for missile deployment. On paper, the international sanctions should pressure the unruly regime with tightened restrictions on the trade and financial transactions sustaining the nation's nuclear program to ideally force concessions from Pyongyang. In practice, however, any efforts to sanction North Korea into submission are still hampered by existing challenges to multilateral implementation and enforcement, making sanctions alone unlikely to change the status quo on the Korean Peninsula without also adjusting engagement policies accordingly.

Compared to previous international efforts, Resolution 2270 offers the long-awaited intensification of existing sanctions and necessary improvements on core weaknesses exploited by the North Korean regime and its third-party enablers. The UN aims to tighten the net around North Korea by expanding bans on travel for state officials, trade in luxury goods, conventional weapons sales, and shipments of items that could enhance the armed forces. It also introduces a new ban on mineral exports of coal, iron, and gold, which account for nearly half of North Korea's total exports and can reliably generate hard currency for the regime due to their high value. To enforce these trade barriers, the resolution imposes a blockade around North Korea to search inbound cargo and cut off international trade, while also requiring UN mem-

ber states to conduct their own inspections of all incoming North Korean vessels. Additionally, the sanctions promise to freeze North Korea's overseas assets and blacklist more companies and individuals linked to transactions with the country. Several nations have made further efforts to extend these financial penalties; most notably, the United States passed a congressional act on Feb. 18 requiring the US Treasury to designate and implement secondary sanctions on any sanction-violating institutions with ties to the US financial system. These punishing measures undoubtedly create significant challenges for the Kim regime's operations, and the international community now appears poised to start playing waiting games following the assumption that the regime can only last so long under such circumstances.

Unfortunately, the North Korean leadership has repeatedly proven its resilience to coordinated opposition, and despite the new sanctions' rigidity, they ultimately cannot deter a regime with a dogged conviction of its dependency on a nuclear deterrent for survival and little left to lose. North Korea has already been heavily sanctioned and isolated since 2006, yet these efforts have failed to halt, let alone reverse, the country's nuclear progress. Instead of withering outside the global economy as expected, North Korea has managed to circumvent existing UN sanctions through illicit cash-flow networks, transactions in intermediaries, physical material and technology transfers, and other underhanded tactics. As long as these methods remain viable workarounds, North Korea has few incentives to comply with sanctions that offer no immediate benefits for doing so. Even if the sanctions do critically threaten the regime, Kim Jong Un will simply strain his destitute population even more to muster the resources to keep his officials paid and his reactors running, meaning that bluntly ramping up sanctions will carry a heavy human cost for marginal gains.

The greatest obstacle to achieving Resolution 2270's intended outcome remains the same as in previous rounds of sanc-

tions: inconsistent implementation from certain UN member states, particularly China. As North Korea's largest aid donor, closest trading partner, and sole ally, China is widely criticized for enabling the Kim regime's longevity by allowing its businesses to conduct trade and its banks to make transactions with North Korea, defying UN sanctions. The situation is further complicated by China's UN Security Council membership, giving it veto power over attempts to enact stricter sanctions. China has the ability to cripple North Korea's nuclear development by blocking sanctioned exchanges if it chooses, but it would prefer to maintain the status quo with North Korea as a buffer and bargaining chip against the West, at least until the country becomes a liability threatening China's fundamental interests in regional dominance, border integrity, or internal state security. While many speculate that Beijing's cooperation on Resolution 2270 demonstrates growing frustration with its increasingly unpredictable and belligerent neighbor, it is still unclear how faithfully China will honor the new sanctions, since it could easily slack on cargo inspections to gain a trade edge over compliant neighbors or disguise sanctioned goods as weakly regulated humanitarian aid. What is clear is that China's participation, or willful ignorance, could likely spell success or failure for international sanctions against North Korea.

While China certainly deserves blame for its obstructive and excessively lenient stance towards North Korea, it was hardly alone in creating the menace that the nation's steadily progressing nuclear program has become. As the other major power player in the crisis, the United States must also accept a share of the responsibility for its stubborn refusal to negotiate and insistence that North Korea is exclusively Beijing's problem to solve. The Obama Administration's policy of "strategic patience" in particular has translated into chronic non-action and foot-dragging that has only alleviated pressure on the Kim regime and granted it another eight years

to bide its time with the usual threatening rhetoric, developing its nuclear capacity all the while. The United States, too, is guilty of not throwing its full weight behind international efforts to restrain North Korea: it is hesitant to up its political demands for fear of antagonizing China, and this lack of a cohesive strategy on North Korea has made standalone sanctions a faulty fallback policy. In the current context, it is increasingly apparent that sanctions are not working as intended and probably never will.

Although existing sanctions under Resolution 2270 are somewhat slowing North Korea's nuclear development and should not be abandoned altogether, the UN member states must commit themselves to full enforcement and supplement sanctions with negotiation if they are to avoid a nuclear North Korea. It will undoubtedly be difficult to convince Kim Jong Un that he has more to gain from compromise than risky provocations, but not impossible so. If the world addresses North Korea's prevailing goal of state security by making clear that the regime's economic and political future depends on reform and disarmament – a position whose credibility requires eliminating Chinese complicity and American resistance to diplomatic engagement – the well-worn policy stick of sanctions can be supported with much-needed carrot incentives in dealing with North Korea that may yet prove effective. •

**“Any efforts to sanction North Korea into submission are still hampered by existing challenges to multilateral implementation and enforcement, making sanctions alone unlikely to change the status quo on the Korean Peninsula without also adjusting engagement policies accordingly.”**

# The Wolves of Pyongyang

## The Risky Rise of North Korea's Market

- John Soltis

The veil of the Hermit Kingdom is notoriously difficult to penetrate. Despite this, a steady trickle of information from defectors and informants has revealed a market economy growing beneath the grip of the mafia state. This market economy, both illicit and legal, has proven essential to the survival and enrichment of millions of North Koreans. Despite this potential, the regime risks destroying the market with its provocative nuclear program. It is in the obvious interest of both the North Korean people and the ruling elite to encourage the growth of the market and not provoke sanctions.

Until the 1970s, the North Korean economy outpaced that of its southern neighbor, but following the collapse of Soviet Union, the regime fell on hard times. Due to a lack of Soviet assistance and poor crop yields, North Korea was plagued by famine throughout the 1990s. In response to the inflexibility of the command economy and the subsequent influx of international aid, a black market began to grow. A merchant class, called donju, has enriched themselves with the influx of hard currency and corrupt officials willing to look the other way for a cut of the profit. In addition to the entrepreneurial acts of the donju, the regime has also developed a taste for freer markets. The government, in a rare act of competence, has in recent years allowed families to sell thirty percent of any surplus on the market and grow kitchen farms of up to 3,300 square meters. These changes have been critical to feeding the current population.

Unfortunately, there is also established precedent for rolling back reforms and squeezing, or even executing, donju. For example, Kim Jong Il announced small market oriented reforms in 2002 that he then removed by 2005. Kim Jong Un is seemingly more interested in improving the living standards of the average North Korean and has appointed Pak Pong Ju, the architect of the 2002 reforms, as Premier. Despite this, Kim Jong Un still displays his father's tendencies, and has persecuted donju following past nuclear tests to fill state coffers. According to the DailyNK, a Seoul based news site with informants in North Korea, many donju expect that a new round of extortion will take place to make up for the most recent nuclear test.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

These fears were seemingly vindicated when South Korea shut down its operations at Kaesong Industrial Complex, a jointly run venture between the Koreas, in response to the recent satellite launch and nuclear test. Kim Jong Un's goal of a more prosperous North Korea is still apparently secondary to his military ambitions.

In some ways it is unsurprising that the North Korean regime seems hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons. After witnessing the violent destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime in following accusations of weapons of mass destruction, the state sees nuclear weapons as the only true guarantee against western aggression. Perhaps rightly so, considering that its main strategic ally, China, has shown a recent willingness to also condemn North Korean abuses. Yet, through it is in a breakneck pursuit of a nuclear deterrent, the regime has arguably increased the risk of this very scenario. Previously, China's fear of a massive influx of refugees and American troops on its border made continuing the Kim dynasty a priority. It is not inconceivable that in the future an unstable and nuclear-armed North Korea might be overthrown by China itself in the interest of establishing a friendlier puppet state. Alternatively, North Korean provocation may threaten South Korean and American interests so extremely as to force their hand. Even if the regime avoids an externally forced collapse, the pursuit of nuclear weapons promises increased sanctions and tougher reactions from Beijing, Seoul, and Washington. Sanctions threaten North Korea's critical yet fragile market, and the stability and wealth that it grants the regime.

In an ideal state, one would argue for greater market reforms, decreased corruption, and increased personal freedoms. But North Korea is not an ideal state, and its Orwellian re-

gime's sole driving interest is self-preservation. From the perspective of the regime, a policy of a gradual slowdown of its nuclear program and détente with the internal community would offer Kim Jong Un the greatest longevity. Currently, Kim Jong Un's strategy aims to terrorize the ruling elite while gradually loosening the state's stranglehold on its struggling citizens. This path allows Kim to keep his throne secure from an enterprising general's coup d'état without further alienating his people. The current deplorable corruption of the state allows the ruling elites to siphon resources from the poor when the state falls on hard times. While this system is somewhat necessary to avoid backlash from the upper echelons of political society, the regime could reduce the damage extractive elites have on the average citizen by incrementally legalizing portions of the black market. A path of glacial market reforms and repression of potential challengers would offer the regime its best chance at survival.

Despite its protestations, the ruling regime's interests do not squarely align with that of its citizens. From the perspective the average North Korean, the eventual collapse of the regime ought to be a fundamental platform. Nevertheless, an immediate collapse of the regime would cause so much death and destruction to the populace that it is an unacceptable goal. Instead a program of gradual market oriented reforms, accelerating in impact over time, would likely yield the best results. In addition, a regime that oriented itself away from terror and towards efficiency, perhaps modeling the Chinese, would greatly improve the lives of the ordinary citizen. Disappointingly, such a competent and farsighted regime is currently unlikely. For now, North Koreans will have to improve their lives from beneath the heavy hand of the state through luck, industry, and the manipulation of a greedy ruling caste. •

# Rainbow Flag Does Not Fly

- Bing Sun

**O**n July 4th, 2015, one girl in the graduating class of Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou, China received rapturous applause from the entire stadium during the graduation ceremony. Wan Qing, a journalism major, went on to stage draped in a rainbow flag when her name was called. She asked the University President, Luo Jun, to “make a gesture of support for sexual minorities.” Pictures of her and the President making a clenched fist gesture, signifying encouragement, and hugging on stage quickly became popular on the Chinese Internet. Her public coming out stirred a debate on homosexuality and gay rights in China, drawing both support and criticism from the virtual community. Homosexuality was decriminalized in China in 1997 and then eliminated from the official list of mental illnesses in 2001. However, the Chinese government has remained silent on gay issues since then, making the legal status and position of LGBT people unclear. A study done by the Pew Research center shows that from 2007 to 2013, the acceptance of homosexuality grew from 17 percent to 21 percent. Support rate among young people (18 to 29) is 32 percent. However, a report published in 2015 by the biggest online dating site in China, Jiayuan.com, with assistance from the Chinese Academy of Sciences states that, when provided a neutral option in the questionnaire, only around 20 percent of the single population is against homosexuality. Surveys taken in universities in Beijing indicate that only 7 percent of the students stand firmly in the “unacceptable” camp. However, despite the growing acceptance of sexual minorities in the Chinese society, particularly among the younger generations, the LGBT community should not get their hopes up for a more progressive stance from the government any time soon.

Many became hopeful of progress in gay rights because of several recent examples of local courts accepting “groundbreaking” cases. However, this is the corollary of ongoing Chinese legal reform, not a sign of the government wavering on gay issues. The most noticeable legal example is China’s first

**“Despite the growing acceptance of sexual minorities in the Chinese society, particularly among the younger generations, the LGBT community should not get their hopes up for a more progressive stance from the government anytime soon.”**

same-sex marriage case. Last June, Hunan Province’s local registry office denied Sun Wenlin and his partner’s application to tie the knot, insisting that only a man and a woman could marry. Sun sued the registry in December. To many people’s surprise, the Furong District People’s Court accepted the case in early January. Nonetheless, one should not over-interpret the acceptance of the case. In October 2014, the Chinese Communist Party unprecedentedly devoted its entire fourth plenary session of the 18th Congress to discuss “rule of law,” passing an ambitious plan of legal reform. In an effort to remove barriers to taking legal actions in China, the Supreme People’s Court issued guidelines last year, stating that cases must be accepted when they are registered, rather than after a preliminary review of their merits. The guidelines also require courts to respond to litigants promptly, address disputes, and avoid ignoring claims. Thus, the Furong District Court is only following the procedure that was formalized after the CCP professed its commitment to legal reform. In fact, the court notified Sun and his lawyer that the hearing would be delayed two days before its scheduled time, providing no explanation. As this example demonstrates, the outlook for LGBT rights in China is gloomy, with no evidence of a meaningful shift in position from the Chinese government on gay rights.

On the legislative front, the LGBT issue lacks momentum. China’s leading sexologist Li Yinhe is a long-time supporter of same-sex marriage. She first raised the issue of legalizing same-sex marriage in 2000 during a meeting that gathered top scholars studying

marriage, law, and sociology, hosted by the government when China was revising its marriage law. She faced pushback from her peers for this proposal. In 2001, she wrote for the first time a proposal recommending two options to make same-sex marriage legal. A delegate from Shanghai brought the proposal to the National People’s Congress but was unable to gather the thirty signatures required to proceed to further evaluation. Since then, Li has made tremendous efforts to push the proposal, but the result is disappointing. Similarly, other gay rights activists, parents with homosexual kids, and college students have tried to mass mail the delegates or post open letters online. However, very few delegates have an interest in LGBT issues or decline to help due to media pressure. Even if a delegate agrees to take the proposal to conference sessions, like in 2015, the number of signatures needed has been an insurmountable obstacle. Therefore, the proposal has never reached the next stage, justifying the government’s continuous inaction. Without a catalyzing incident, it is unlikely that this disinterest will end anytime soon, leaving nothing that would force the government to respond.

Furthermore, the state censorship of various forms of entertainment explicitly displays government-backed intolerance towards the LGBT community. The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television is notorious for issuing bans on movies and TV series that have “sensitive contents.” The first mainland movie about homosexuals, *East Palace, West Palace* (1996) by Zhang Yuan, is still forbidden from public viewing. The authority claims that it “slanders

socialism and propagates corrupted ideas.” The Oscar-winning *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) by Chinese director Ang Lee was not able to escape the restriction either. Foreign movies that wish to enter the Chinese market are also closely investigated. *Cloud Atlas* (2012) obtained the permit only after cutting 40 minutes of footage concerning homosexuality. There is no sign of loosening the censorship: the instant internet hit *Addicted* (2016), a gay school romance web series, disappeared online in less a month. A new set of rules on TV production by the State Administration was leaked online afterwards. The rules, issued on December 31, 2015, explicitly states that with regard to sexual content, “abnormal sexual relationships or behavior” such as homosexuality are forbidden. With disappearance of *Addicted*, China’s top broadcast regulator has made it clear that the country’s booming online television industry should be subjected to the same restriction. Some may point to the success of Jin Xing, the most famous transgender person in China, as evidence of growing openness. However, despite creating a widely popular talk show in 2015, her show rarely covers LGBT issues. People tune in because she is sarcastic and fun to watch. This is probably the reason the authorities have appeared to be more tolerant. At the same time, without the media, an average Chinese citizen has little chance of being exposed to LGBT issues, let alone accepting sexual minorities and joining the campaign to call for equal rights. The government, consequently, finds no urgency in shifting its policy.

The Chinese LGBT community’s hope that the government would break the silence and take a stance protecting gay rights is completely wishful thinking. There are few, if any, positive signs from the judicial, legislative, and media perspectives. Unless the CCP is deliberately acting secretly in order to throw a surprise party for the sexual minorities, one should not expect an official friendly gesture anytime soon. The pressing issue, and

the more practical entry point of fighting for equal rights, is to promote social awareness and acceptance. The activists will need to devise innovative plans to achieve this goal; only then will the LGBT community be able to form formidable alliances and pressure the government to effect changes. •

# The Fate of Chinese Legal Reform

## Rule by Law or Rule by Party?

- Hannah Feldshub

Despite the dramatic transformations of China's economic and social landscape over the past thirty years, the legal system has failed to keep pace. To address its legal dysfunction, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) made legal reform the focal point of the 2014 Fourth Plenum, emphasizing the importance of "rule of law" in guiding Chinese judicial and legal reforms. Subsequent months marked some positive steps in moving towards a rule based system, including separation of powers, improving judge quality, and emphasizing the role of procedural justice. Despite these positive signals, President Xi Jinping has asserted that the role of the Party will remain dominant; saying that rule of law is "a knife whose handle was in the hands of the party and the people." While the Fourth Plenum reforms mark an important step to transform the Chinese legal landscape, lawyer persecution, persistent soft repression, and televised confessions threaten efforts at reform and harm Party legitimacy.

Persecution of public interest lawyers is one element threatening the legitimacy and sustainability of Chinese legal reforms. Weiquan (or "rights defense") lawyers advocate for social issues that are often of a sensitive nature, including wrongful conviction, housing demolitions, environmental pollution, and Internet censorship. July 2015 marked an open crackdown on weiquan lawyers, particularly the Beijing-based firm Fengrui. According to Amnesty International, over 100 lawyers were detained or arrested during July 2015 alone, with two more Fengrui employees detained during January 2015. Fengrui faces accusations of disrupting public order and has been branded a criminal organization in state media. While public interest lawyers frequently face persecution, this was the latest and most concentrated effort that seems to signal state concerns about the balance of rule of law reforms and "stability maintenance." This demonstration of Party power is not only detrimental to Chinese civil society, it is harmful to Party legitimacy at home and abroad. Unlawful detentions and arrests undercut promises for rule of law reforms domestically and decrease Chinese credibility in regional and international agreements.

In addition to this use of the legal system

**“In the absence of robust economic expansion, the Chinese Communist Party will need rule of law, not rule by Party, to ensure its continued legitimacy.”**

for lawyer intimidation, soft repression measures such as "harmonious demolition" further threaten rule of law reforms. "Harmonious demolition" refers to the process of removing residents from homes slated for demolition by local governments. To foster agreement, "demolition headquarters" are created (often staffed by family members of the houses that are due for removal), at times relying on a combination of public shaming, persuasion, threats, and fines if residents refuse. Although China's State Council has condemned this practice, coercion in the process of demolition is an enduring practice. To counteract this issue, the process should mirror mechanisms recognized by other nations, such as the US's eminent domain, wherein governments must follow an established procedure to prove the need for public use of the land and allow for appeal.

Random detentions are another tactic that harms state credibility and garners negative international attention. In recent months five people have gone missing, all with connections to the Mighty Current Publishing House and Causeway Bay Books, which has been known to publish works that are frequently banned on the mainland. In February 2016, three Hong Kong booksellers resurfaced in Guangdong under investigation for "illegal activities" after being missing for 100 days. Under current formulations of Chinese law, suspects can be held for up to six months if they are under "residential surveillance in a designated location" before making a formal arrest. These disappearances of activists and others are not restricted domestically, but have also occurred in Thailand and elsewhere on foreign soil. Forced disappearances, especially internationally, undermines Chinese soft power and threatens foreign ties. To preserve its international credibility and internal rule of law efforts, this practice of arrest and detainment must end.

Public confessions, many of which occurred prior to any official legal action, are prime ex-

amples of extra-legal measures that undermine efforts to regularize judicial practice. State-televised confessions have grown in number in recent years, with sixteen since Xi took office in 2012. The most recent were broadcast in January 2016 and featured confessions from the co-founder of a human rights advocacy training organization and a Hong Kong-based publisher. These televised confessions both shape public opinion and aim to intimidate troublemakers. Reminiscent of the self-criticism rituals of the Cultural Revolution, this practice runs contrary to Fourth Plenum reform efforts and threatens the construction of an open and fair judicial system.

Given the mammoth scope of legal reform in China, progress in rule of law reforms is not inconsequential. Inroads have improved the professionalization of courts, adherence to procedural justice, and autonomy from party and government agencies. Despite these efforts, Party-oriented mentality remains an enduring issue that creates fundamental friction with rule of law reforms. As long as prosecutors, judges, and police officers still see themselves as arms of the state, lasting rule of law reform will remain elusive. In order to solve problematic practices such as soft repression measures, forced disappearances, and lawyer persecution, further separation of state ideology from regional and local legal practice is essential. Fourth Plenum reforms signal recognition of the importance of rule of law reforms. In the coming years as the Chinese economy enters a "new normal" of more moderate growth, legal reform will become increasingly important. In the absence of robust economic expansion, the Chinese Communist Party will need rule of law, not rule by Party, to ensure its continued legitimacy. •

# Strides and Stagnation

## Policy Responses to Sexual Assault in India

- Hannah Feldshuh

In 2012, Jyoti Singh Pandey, a physiotherapy student in Mumbai, was savagely raped by six men and assaulted with an iron rod while riding a bus in Mumbai with a male companion. Internal injuries included the destruction of 95 percent of her intestines, and she died shortly after reaching the hospital. The brutality of this attack and its brazen nature sparked national outrage and garnered global attention, leading many to ask what is being done to protect India's women and girls.

As a result, a panel of experts known as the Justice Verma Commission developed a report geared to address gaps in India's legislation towards sex and gender based violence. India's Parliament adopted many of these recommendations in a 2013 amendment to the Criminal Law, which expands the definition of rape and sexual harassment, increases minimum sentences, introduces the possibility of the death penalty, makes police officers liable if they ignore complaints, and encourages resolution of cases within two months of filing. In spite of these additional protections, violent and visible attacks against women remain prevalent. Despite clear issues of chronic under-reporting, official statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau indicate an increase from 2012 to 2014, with an average of 92 women raped per day. The Justice Verma Commission's measures have done much to address legislative gaps, however criminalization of teenage sex, the continued legality of marital rape, and the absence of sex and violence education are problematic and must be addressed.

With recent legislative changes, if an unmarried girl and boy under the age of 18 have consensual sex, the boy has committed statutory rape and risks criminal action. Criminalization of teenage sex is an intrusive stance on youth sexuality, does not address the issue of sexual violence, and risks misuse. Legislators should not direct limited energy to outlaw teenage sex, when the problematic and pervasive crime of marital rape remains legal. The Verma Committee proposal criminalizing marital rape was an area glaringly ignored in recent legal reform. Under current legislation, marital rape is not illegal as long as the bride is at least 16 years of age. A panel of legislators who opposed the marital rape clauses asserted that such legisla-

**“Legislation that leaves any women subject to sexual violence without legal recourse is a heinous miscarriage of justice that must be rectified.”**

tion “has the potential of destroying the institution of marriage,” and that “if the marital rape is brought under the law, the entire family system will be under great stress.” Others assert that a marital rape clause would be hard to prosecute and could be misused. Some lawyers argue that the government is reluctant to criminalize marital rape because they would have to address laws on religious practices, including the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, which says that a wife is duty-bound to have sex with her husband. Indian legislators believe that criminalizing marital rape will be politically unpopular, as it will require addressing contentious religious regulations. Despite the assertions of lawmakers, the ability to prosecute rape does not destroy the institution of marriage; rape does. A 2000 survey from the United Nations Population Fund found that two thirds of married Indian women claimed to have been forced into sex by their husbands. Legislation that leaves any women subject to sexual violence without legal recourse is a heinous miscarriage of justice that must be rectified.

Without a systematic shift in mentality and attitude towards women, harsher legislation will have a limited impact. Education, particularly early-childhood education, needs to address the sexual assault mentality before violence against women is internalized as normal. A survey from the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness, a Bangalore-based NGO, explored perceptions of sexual assault among over 10,000 high school and college students across India. Findings reported that 57 percent of boys and 52 percent of girls believed that when women “dress and behave provocatively” they evoke violent behavior from men. A further 43 percent of boys and 39 percent of girls agreed that, “women have no choice but to accept a certain degree of violence.” These socialized perceptions are not exclusive to schoolchildren. In 2014, Manohar Lal Khattar, the top elected official of the state of Haryana, expressed similar sentiments, saying that, “if a girl

is dressed decently, a boy will not look at her in the wrong way. Freedom has to be limited... Our country's tradition asks girls to dress decently.” Without a systematic approach to gender and sex sensitivity training, an engrained mentality of victim blaming will be difficult to combat.

Stories like the rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey are heartbreaking examples of senseless violence and violation. While her death broke through public apathy and galvanized much needed action, combating violence against women can't be a reactive process, dependent on public outrage to high profile rape cases that are then quickly forgotten. As director of Social and Economic Development at the International Center for Research on Women, Priya Nanda has said, the current model demands change from “time to time on a particular rape, then there's the diagnosis of that rape, and we move onto the next one.” India, and the global community, can't afford to treat rape as a topic of occasional interest. •

# The Great Divide

## Narendra Modi, Kanhaiya Kumar, and the Polarized Sedition Debate

- Vineet Chandra

In this era of the internet, information is cheap and opinions are cheaper still. An unrecognized side effect of this age of access, one that lurks just beneath the surface of the daily news cycle, is the ever-rising presence of instant controversy. Perhaps at no other time in history has any single event had the ability to divide a nation so quickly. This phenomenon was clearly exhibited in the recent affair at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, India: on February 12th, JNU Student Union President Kanhaiya Kumar was arrested on charges of sedition for allegedly chanting anti-India slogans at a rally protesting the hanging of a convicted terrorist. Though he was released on the March 3rd, the charges against him have not been dropped at the time of this publication. Kumar's arrest and alleged involvement in the rally have sparked outcry on two fronts; some believe that students ought to stay out of politics altogether, and that no one should get away with chanting anti-national slogans. Others find it outrageous that anybody in modern India could be tried for simply saying something, and that Kumar's arrest is a prime example of the efforts of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government to silence any and all dissent. Both sides find the other side's argument entirely egregious, and there is little middle ground to be found. Despite the two distinct opinions on Kanhaiya Kumar as a person, there is one fact that is abundantly clear: Kanhaiya Kumar's arrest is legally warrantless. Furthermore, by failing to address the JNU saga, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned Kanhaiya Kumar into a formidable symbol of true Indian freedom, and a hero for the opposition. To unite the country and to quell this great divide, Modi must rise above the fray and address this issue in a measured way, rather than pretending it does not exist.

On one side of the JNU affair are the people of India that feel Kanhaiya Kumar is being unfairly targeted due to his opposition party affiliations, and that the charges against him are unfounded. Indeed, there is merit to this argument. Modi's BJP is the conservative party of India, which encourages deregulation to make India an appealing destination for large multinational businesses, as well as furthering some policies based in Hindu beliefs. Kumar, for-

“The legal argument against Kanhaiya Kumar, then, is laughable at best.”

merly associated with the Communist party on campus, is clearly an opposition figure for the students at JNU. Kumar's party affiliation, coupled with allegations that the video presented as primary evidence against him was doctored to make it seem like he himself chanted the anti-national slogans rather than someone else in the crowd, paints a picture of a young dissident being explicitly targeted for his speech against the actions of the ruling government. In March 2015, almost a year after Narendra Modi took office, India Today Editor-in-Chief Aroon Purie wrote about him in an opinion piece, saying, “The way to govern this complicated country is to engage in discussions and win arguments with those who disagree by selling your idea to them. Squashing dissent, surrounding yourself with those who praise you, and believing your own propaganda, is a sure way to lose touch with reality.” The JNU affair, then, fits nicely with the ongoing narrative that Modi chooses to ignore dissent instead of addressing it.

The other side of this argument is not completely baseless. There is a large portion of India that feels that Kumar is wrong to have engaged in such a political issue. Many feel that by protesting the death penalty as applied against a man who was a convicted terrorist, Kumar is by extension guilty of endorsing the acts of terrorism. For this, they argue, he must be punished. One BJP supporter said, “We Indians will not tolerate this. They cannot raise slogans against our country. It is not free speech — it is speech against our country... It's a plot to destabilize our country.” While the arguments against Kumar are largely emotional, there is a very real public feeling that he is simply a radical left-wing troublemaker causing trouble for no good reason.

Heightening the tensions between these two viewpoints is one simple fact: the legal argument against Kanhaiya Kumar is utter hogwash. The sedition law under which Kumar is being charged, Section 124a of the Indian Penal Code, was devised and implemented by the British government prior to Indian independence in 1947, and was often used to try Indian freedom

fighters. In 1962, the Supreme Court held that simply uttering a statement against the state is not remotely close to advocating for action against the state, and that a simple statement of dissent is indeed covered by the freedom of speech clause. This standing was reaffirmed in 1995, when the Supreme Court held that a man chanting slogans in support of a separate Punjabi nation was not guilty of sedition because he was not actively advocating for any specific, violent act against the state. In this case, Kanhaiya Kumar is accused of chanting slogans that translate to “break India up into little pieces” and “long live Pakistan.” Even if he did say these things, his first statement urges no actionable, violent act against the state, and the second statement is completely unrelated to the state because India is not currently at war with Pakistan. The legal argument against Kanhaiya Kumar, then, is laughable at best. The case against him, however, continues, and the longer Narendra Modi continues to ignore the scandal altogether, the more poorly it reflects on him as the head of state.

To truly stand as the leader of a united India, Narendra Modi must address the grievances against him. In addition to the shoddy legal case against Kumar, Modi's refusal to even comment on this matter and other similar affairs are indicative of an unfortunate indifference towards the will of the people he serves. It is possible that Modi is emboldened by his widespread support; even those who predicted that Modi's election would be a disaster for minority rights in India have admitted that the beginning of his term has been a pleasant surprise. For this reason, perhaps, Modi chooses to ignore the criticisms against his government. Until Modi addresses the JNU scandal head on and takes a stand, however, there will likely be little justice for Kanhaiya Kumar, and this ever growing tear in the fabric of Indian national politics will not be sewn back together. •

# A Clean Shave

## Tajikistan's Dangerous Solution to Combating Extremist Ideology

- Jack Ultes

In early January of this year, President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan ordered 13,000 men to trim their beards as a symbol of their commitment to moderate Islam and to fight against what he cited as “foreign” influences. On the outside, this appears to be an attempt by the Tajik government to repress the potential influence of ISIS and the Taliban on young, unemployed males. Yet, some critics argue that this is a thinly veiled ploy that allows Rahmon to further consolidate his power. They view this tactic as part of a grand strategy that has given Rahmon an opportunity to ban opposition parties under the auspices of ridding Tajikistan of any threat of Islamic radicalization. However, cutting beards and banning opposition parties will not stop extremist ideology. On the contrary, such policies have adversely catalyzed long held prejudices against the ruling elite, and have encouraged young Tajik males to join the ranks of ISIS.

The modern day Tajikistan ruling class, led by President Rahmon, is a product of the 1992 to 1997 civil war that saw brutal politics and fighting reminiscent of the power vacuum left after Lenin's death in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Emomali Rahmon rose from the ranks of the former Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, and was Chairman of the Union Committee of the collective farm in Danghara when the country split apart after the fall of the USSR. Rahmon and his supporters were able to successfully survive against attacks from the United Tajik Opposition, Jamiat-e Islami and other predominantly Islamic groups, including groups supported by Al-Qaeda. Fighting ceased when the “Moscow Protocol” was signed on June 27, 1997, and the opposition groups agreed to a power-sharing ceasefire that ensured them high-ranking government positions. This was quickly superseded by allegations of fraud in the 1999 elections that saw Rahmon win 97 percent of the popular vote, and an amendment in 2003 that allowed him to run for two additional seven-year terms following the expiration of his presidential term in 2006.

Many critics argue that Rahmon has carried over the legacy of repressive tactics used to consolidate power during the civil war to his current administration. The threat of any Islamic opposition group unseating Rahmon has undoubtedly influenced his policy choice

to take a hard line against non-secular politics in Tajikistan. As a result, the recent rise of ISIS has prompted his government to undertake extreme measures to prevent the spread of their fundamentalist ideology, which would endanger his status as president. This fear has resulted in policies such as banning hijabs and ostracizing opposition parties, as well as allegations of rampant election fraud on the side of radical groups.

Such policies against the threat of ISIS would appear to help promote stability and order in a country susceptible to the extremist ideology. Yet, there has not been a recorded ISIS attack in Tajikistan to date. Rahmon has instead used the threat of ISIS to further posit flamboyant rhetoric against any Islamic opposition. In a September speech last year, Rahmon warned that Tajiks who join ISIS will “burn in Hell,” and called ISIS “the plague of the century.” Shortly after this speech, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), an opposition group to the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) headed by Rahmon, was ordered by Tajik authorities to shut down. The IRPT was a political party that fought against Rahmon and his government in the civil war, and reformed as a political entity in opposition to the PDPT following their defeat. Until recently, they were the only registered Islamic opposition party in the country. Rahmon and his government claimed that shutting down the IRPT was necessary because they did not have enough supporters to run a legitimate political party. Coincidentally, within the same week of banning the group, over 50 IRPT offices around the country were forced to close as well. This decision to ban the only Islamic opposition has undoubtedly affected the relationship between Rahmon and the citizens of Tajikistan, 80 percent of whom are practicing Muslims.

Rahmon, who himself is a Sunni Muslim, has chosen to run a secular government dating back to his first term in office. This decision has led to recent cracks within his administration against his harsh policies towards non-secular rule in response to the threat of ISIS. One notable example is that of Colonel Gulmurod Khalimov, a US trained leader of a Special Forces unit loyal to the Rahmon regime who left to join ISIS early last year. In deserting his post, the popular commander cited Rahmon's hard line against Islamic

practices he deemed dangerous to the state as the major reason for his defection. Therefore, Rahmon needs to realize the greater implications of policies aimed at cutting Islamic practices from an overwhelmingly Muslim population.

Further compounding the threat of extremist ideology is the weary economic state of the country. According to a 2011 report by the International Federation for Human Rights, close to 90 percent of Tajiks who go abroad to find work end up in Russia. However, the current Western sanctions placed on Russia and the subsequent depreciation of the ruble have threatened to decrease job availability for a workforce reliant on migrant agricultural and industrial labor. Tajikistan has also ranked near the bottom for human rights, inequality, and on the Human Development Index. With Rahmon's power secure until 2020, these trends are likely to continue. Deteriorating economic conditions have coincided with a large number of Tajiks leaving to pursue other opportunities, including joining the ranks of the Taliban and ISIS. Current estimates put the number of Tajik fighters anywhere between 400 to upwards of 2,000 men, some of whom, like Col. Kharimov, have joined due to the oppressive tactics against certain moderate Islamic practices. Rahmon's policy of cutting beards and his willingness to suppress the only Islamic opposition party in Tajikistan has sent a message to Tajiks that political dissent is not tolerated, thereby making the fundamentalist ideology preached by ISIS a more viable alternative to the oppressive regime.

Nonetheless, the Tajik parliament recently passed a constitutional amendment allowing Rahmon to run for office indefinitely. These policies would appear to be the status quo for the foreseeable future, as another amendment was made to lower the presidential age requirement so his son can run in 2020. For any change in policies to materialize there needs to be a discussion about plausible Tajik opposition to the regime. The recent ousting of the lone Islamic opposition party in a country that is almost exclusively Muslim will only serve to further dampen public opinion of the quality of the regime. Rahmon needs to realize that blocking radical ideology through the suppression of moderate Islamic practices is not a long-term solution to holding onto power. •

# Troubled Times?

## How a “Brexit” Could Damage Anglo-Irish Relations

- Katherine Mercieca

Since the United Kingdom began exploring the possibility of leaving the European Union, a phenomenon known as “Brexit,” the wider European community has expressed considerable anxiety over the future of the EU’s social and financial well-being. While the UK may risk compromising its relations with continental countries, however, its improved sociopolitical relationship with the Republic of Ireland stands to lose the most.

April 10th, 2016 marked the eighteenth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. This deal formally ended the Troubles, a violent thirty-year conflict with primarily Catholic Northern Irish nationalists who wanted Northern Ireland to separate from the United Kingdom and join the Irish Republic. Meanwhile, the unionists, who comprised the Protestant majority, wanted Northern Ireland to remain in the UK. Since the Agreement, the UK and Ireland made considerable strides in improving Anglo-Irish relations by bringing local communities together and opening the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Most of this progress depended on EU support and the maintenance of these relations requires the continued EU membership of both of the nations. A Brexit would, therefore, disrupt Anglo-Irish relations by uprooting the ways in which the UK and Ireland have worked toward peace.

The Good Friday Agreement and its subsequent peace initiatives were successful because of the EU’s role in financing cooperation between both nations. According to Ireland’s Centre for Cross Border Studies, one of the deal’s key provisions includes “the implementation of EU policies and programmes and proposals” under an EU framework. These “programmes and proposals” operate on EU funding since both countries claimed EU membership when they signed the agreement. This monetary support would be eliminated, or at least severely curtailed, if the UK exits the European Union because only Ireland would subsequently be eligible for funding. While it remains hypothetically possible for both countries to continue funding these projects in the absence of EU support, the UK would place an undue financial burden on Ireland and experience a significant constraint on its own budget.

The cost of these initiatives is measured in billions, but their importance to local communities is indeed invaluable. According to Taoiseach Enda Kenny, the head of the Irish government, the EU channeled €2.4 billion into Northern Ireland between 2007 and 2013. These funds helped to decrease residual violence while facilitating reconciliation efforts on a local level. Meanwhile, the EU could spend up to an additional €229 million by 2020 to create shared education and other projects aimed at uniting Protestants and Catholics. Should the UK cut itself off from EU funding, it risks undermining costly and time-consuming progress and reducing further efforts to engage in a dialogue essential to maintaining regional peace. Should sectarian violence reemerge or the nations disagree on how to spend their funds, they will not have a third party to mitigate potentially detrimental disputes. During the Troubles, this violence claimed 3,600 lives, injured 50,000, and caused widespread psychological damage to both warring parties.

A Brexit could also isolate Northern nationalists, because the open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland could vanish along with ongoing peace conversations. No physical line of demarcation currently exists between the North and the Republic, and travelers can cross the border without a passport. This freedom of movement allows communities on both sides of the border to remain socially, culturally, and economically integrated. But one of the central goals of Brexit supporters, including UKIP’s Deputy Leader Paul Nuttall, is to prevent “outsiders” from entering the UK. This initiative would involve establishing “hard borders” equipped with passport checks, customs posts, watchtowers, and, at worst, walls and razor wire fences. Such a frontier would send a hostile message to southern neighboring communities, suggesting that they are undesirable “foreigners” that belong outside the UK’s national boundary. Northern nationalists would likewise feel symbolically detached from the Republic. This could revive any latent nationalist sentiments in the North if supporters become increasingly vocal as they become physically and culturally disconnected from the remainder of the island.

Yet pro-Brexit critics dismiss the potential

for fallout in Anglo-Irish relations as fear mongering. Northern Ireland’s First Minister Arlene Foster said that the UK would promote “practical solutions” following a Brexit, which would allow people’s free movement to remain unaffected. Given the close economic, geographic, and social links between Ireland and the UK, along with the desire for continuing positive Anglo-Irish relations, one could argue that Ireland has no reason to fear a Brexit and that it is in the UK’s best interests to fund peacekeeping and cross-border initiatives in Northern Ireland.

David Cameron’s primary reasons for a possible EU exit, however, are directly opposed to open borders. In a November 2015 speech, Cameron expressed the UK’s desire to assume control over its borders and reduce EU citizens’ “abuse” of their right to freedom of movement. Cameron could broker a special deal with the Republic, but it is obvious that he and the Tories do not want EU members to have unrestricted access to the UK.

Cameron’s demands also do not bode well for fair peacekeeping initiatives. In a letter to the European Council, Cameron articulated his desire to increase British sovereignty within the EU, which would likely result in a commensurate decrease in other countries’ abilities to negotiate with the UK. By extension, Britain’s increased sovereignty upon exiting the EU would create an imbalance of power between Britain and Ireland if the EU no longer involves itself in peacekeeping efforts. This is not to say that Britain will exploit Ireland or completely neglect negotiations. Rather, the EU’s absence would increase the possibility that Ireland would be at a disadvantage in future bilateral negotiations.

Indeed, the UK must consider its commitment to peace, among many other issues, when deciding whether the supposed gains of a Brexit are worth the potentially significant costs. A Brexit would test the UK’s diplomatic wherewithal by demonstrating whether it has the skills and desire necessary to maintain positive relationships in the face of incredibly delicate proceedings. Should its priorities dictate otherwise, however, old wounds could resurface and all Irish communities, irrespective of borders, could pay the ultimate physical and emotional price. •

# How France Must Rethink Calais

- Justin Berg

A graffiti piece by renowned artist Banksy appeared two months ago in an unlikely place: Calais, France, the flash-point of many debates surrounding refugees. His piece depicted the late Steve Jobs holding an iMac and a bundle. Its message was clear: refugees and their offspring can be the founders of the most innovative and valuable companies on the planet. Their potential should not be underestimated. Banksy's piece, while it did not arrive in a timely manner, is still influential as ever in a country and continent failing to properly deal with a crisis. Taking Banksy's message, France, which has been at odds with the rapid influx of asylum-seekers, needs to realize immigrants' potential by finding ways to assimilate and provide work opportunities for people looking to start over. France must address this issue and take advantage of what refugees may offer.

Most migrants, having already endured a journey of thousands of miles, have very few possessions. They live in plastic encampments near the English Channel which they try to cross nearly every night. Many, according to a recent article by *The Guardian*, wear simple skirts without any other protection from the cold rains of northern France. The conditions in the tent cities, especially last fall, were so poor that the Calais camp became known as "the Jungle."

Calais exemplifies the French government's failure to properly address the migrant crisis. The Jungle has become such an issue that France recently decided to confront it by building prison-like cells for the nearly 2,000 residents of the camp. While this effort is noble, albeit insensitive in that it offers a temporary solution to the squalid conditions residents endure, it fails to tend to the real reason the Calais camp developed in the first place: its proximity to the United Kingdom. Just about every migrant is attempting to cross the Channel tunnel to be granted asylum in the UK, whose own policies are only worsening this situation.

Unfortunately, there are many difficulties that face migrants attempting to cross the English Channel. One common method, according to *The New York Times*, is to pay smugglers upwards of \$2,000, further depleting migrants' already limited resources. Most, however, attempt

crossings unsuccessfully – too often hindered by personal injuries or clashes with the police. Migrants failing to cross only further strain the resources of the British and French governments, as well as their families. It is too often that after having failed a crossing migrants are worse off than they were previously. In addition to the police, there have also been many issues within the camp itself, including violence. In December, one refugee suffered fatal injuries from being slashed in the neck. Increasingly, truck drivers (one of the most common ways to reach the other side of the tunnel) have faced attacks from migrants, prompting some drivers to threaten carrying weapons.

France, having endured the November 13th Paris attacks perpetrated by the Islamic State, is already facing a rise in anti-immigration activism. Recent weeks have seen a tide of further anti-immigrant and Islamophobic action in Calais, prompting the mayor of Calais to call for military intervention to help quell protests. Other means have lessened friction between the migrants and local populace. Language acquisition has been one solution that has begun to take hold elsewhere in Europe, like Germany. While it's not a perfect remedy, if the migrants can learn the language – and the vast majority are either learning French or English in the camps regardless – they may be more easily absorbed into the world's sixth-largest economy.

Another solution is in legislation. If France ensures that migrants may pass background checks, they may either remain in France for a period of time before moving to where their skills can fulfill European Union needs. There are many countries whose aging populations have left manufacturing jobs which go unfilled by younger generations. Uneducated migrants may be able to fill these vacant positions.

What is certain is that France must not continue keeping migrants in this state of limbo – resisting granting asylum in France in hopes that migrants will relocate to England. If France doesn't act now, the number of migrants will only rise in the camps, and so too will anti-immigrant sentiment. •



Banksy's image of Steve Jobs in Calais.  
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# After Asylum

## Sexual Education for Norway's Migrants

- Elisabeth Brennen

In the face of the refugee crisis, much of the European political debate has centered on processing and accommodating the one million asylum seekers that arrived in 2015. Until the reports of mass sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016, issues of cultural assimilation had remained on the backburner. The assaults brought to light the problem of cultural assimilation from extremely conservative societies to liberal ones, but also highlighted the benefits of the cultural integration programs used elsewhere. In winter 2015, Norway began offering a controversial program for migrants that focuses on education in Western sexual norms. These classes, though facing criticism from both the left and right, address the reality of international disparities in gender equality, and are an appropriate, necessary response to concerns about assault and assimilation. However the current structure of the course leaves much to be desired in addressing the concerns of Middle Eastern and North African refugees integrating into Norwegian society.

From the right, anti-immigration groups such as Human Rights Service have expressed that the program does not go far enough in ensuring the safety of Norwegian women. Like many European countries, Norway does not track crime statistics according to race or ethnicity, but their state statistical bureau has stated that immigrants are overrepresented as perpetrators of violent sexual crime, relating to both a lack of integration as well as lower socio-economic status. This claim has been a rallying cry of anti-migrant conservatives across Europe, and anti-immigration activists call for a halt to immigration to prevent it. However, as thousands of migrants come to Europe each month, halting immigration will not solve these problems as they exist among existing immigrant communities. Despite the right's complaints, the new courses on sexual norms are a step in the right direction in addressing the concerns of life after an approval stamp on an asylum application.

Norway's leftist groups, however, have also criticized the courses, reluctant to embrace a program that may stigmatize immigrants as potential rapists and thereby play into the hands of anti-immigration politicians. While these concerns are legitimate, they blatantly ignore

**“...the course must be made a mandatory part of refugee integration programs in Norway – for all migrants regardless of origin or gender.”**

the reality of international legal and cultural disparities in regards to the treatment of women that can prove confusing to migrants if they are not educated on the new laws and norms of Norwegian society. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, Syrians, Eritreans, and Afghans comprise the largest groups of asylum applicants to the country. Although sexual assault is illegal in these countries, the laws are not well enforced and assault is underreported as women face immense risk of violence, honor killings, or being criminalized themselves for adultery. In Eritrea, spousal rape is also legal. These laws differ greatly from Norwegian laws, which are strictly enforced and illegalize all forms of rape, marital or otherwise. The course manuals reference only Norwegian laws, explaining the norms of society in clear terms: “to force someone into sex is not permitted in Norway, even when you are married to that person.”

On another note, the left's criticism ignores the practical details of the course. For example, in each lesson about the legality and morality of sexual assault, the perpetrator is a fictional Norwegian character named Arne, while Hassan, an “honest and well-liked” character practices bystander intervention. The courses are based on small-group discussion led by a native Norwegian facilitator, encouraging participants to open up about their attitudes towards sex. Linda Hagen of Hero, a company contracted by the Norwegian government to run these courses, notes that the courses “turn the roles around a bit because there are rapists in all ethnic groups,” demonstrating their dedication to avoiding stereotyping immigrants as sexual predators.

Currently the courses are short-term and voluntary in Norway, and the results have been somewhat successful. Young men leaving the program express understanding that wearing revealing clothing, smiling, flirting, and even kissing do not mean that woman consents to any further sexual activity. However, these do

not effectively reverse the attitudes formed over years of living in conservative society. Graduating students often struggle to define consent in situations involving alcohol, or that a woman consenting to one sexual activity is not necessarily consenting to all sexual activity. Some leaving the course still do not understand the illegality of spousal rape.

Furthermore, the courses should be expanded to include women's education in their program. Without knowledge on the laws and norms of Norwegian society, such as that reports of sexual misconduct are taken seriously and that you cannot be criminalized for reporting assault, migrant women are at risk of underreporting sexual crimes. Married migrant women especially are at risk without this education, as spousal rape may be legal in their country of origin. These women, who are just as unaccustomed to Norwegian culture and sexual norms as migrant men are, must know Norwegian sexual assault laws so that they may report misconduct regardless of the nationality of their attacker.

To adequately address these problems, the lessons should be made part of their long-term integration program that includes language courses and government assistance for migrants, helping present migrants with a full picture of Norwegian culture and societal norms. For the safety of women in local communities but also the migrants who may unknowingly break Norwegian law, the course must be made a mandatory part of refugee integration programs in Norway – for all migrants regardless of origin or gender. •

# Italy and Eurozone Reform

- Nick Serra

**P**IGS. This rather offensive acronym labels the four countries that have suffered the most severe economic recessions in Europe – Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain. Aside from Greece, Italy has the most debt in proportion of GDP in the European Union. It is only a matter of time before an inevitable collapse occurs. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi is facing internal pressure to leave the euro. Italy must now make a tough decision on whether or not to stay in the Eurozone, and it is important that Italy stays. Renzi has demonstrated potential to guide Italy to a much-needed economic recovery but his political feuds with Germany – in one case, withholding European funding of Turkish refugee management – do not bode well for him. Even so, it would be optimal for Germany to yield more economic freedom to Italy and for Italy to remain in the European Union. This can be achieved by allowing Prime Minister Renzi more freedom in his economic reforms. While ill will remains between Italy and Germany, a proper recovery process is still possible within the European Union. Hopefully, fair results can be achieved so Italy does not have to look beyond the euro for its recovery.

Italy's relationship with the European Union has seen better days. Prime Minister Renzi feels that the European Union's "fixation on austerity is actually destroying growth." Recession has plagued the country for more than half a decade and GDP per capita is at the lowest it has been since the new millennia. Since becoming a member of the European Union and adopting the euro, Italians exports have decreased. To compound the problem, Italy has little incentive to offer outside businesses, as it is one of the most expensive places in the world for startups. Two other factors significantly bog down the Italian economy. Among modern countries, Italy has the lowest amount of workers with a university degree, and the country has one of the highest proportions of educated workers living abroad. Italy is not totally innocent here. Small Italian businesses failed to adapt to the ever-changing economy during the euro boom and did not properly adapt with its American and European counterparts when the market shifted from manufacturing to services. Since joining the European Union, the Italian economy has only grown 4%. Prime Minister



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Renzi plans to reform the labor market by creating a "decentralized wage-setting process" if the industry cannot create one itself. These modifications may alienate some of his voter base, and Renzi's willingness to upset his supporters should be noted by the European Union. The current state of affairs is not benefiting Italy's economy. Labor productivity and GDP per person have been in constant decline for years and things certainly look bleak in Italy. Renzi's ratings have drastically fallen and there is fear that his Democratic Party could lose their hold to the Five Star Movement. Italy's third largest bank, Monti dei Paschi di Siena, suffered a run on its shares and Italian Banks' non-performing loan percentage is the one of the highest in Europe (debtors have not been paying their loans for at least 90 days). The movement for another currency is growing stronger and Renzi feels victimized by the European Union agenda. Facing external pressures, it is evident that a new system may be needed and Renzi offers the best chance at solving this problem, but the EU's strict economic relations hinder Renzi's proposals. In order to sustain an Italian economic rebound, the European Union must strike a balance between its public spending and banking regulations, as well as Italy's desired reforms.

Italy is not all to blame for their economy. In 2011, the European Central Bank slashed lending rates while Italy attempted to reduce debt. This led to a doubly worse recession, and the Italian economy has not been in such poor shape since adopting the euro in 1999. This incident, coupled with other political factors, has led Prime Minister Renzi and other Italians to believe that they are being grossly mistreated by the European Union. While this belief is not

totally true, the Italians have the right to feel the way they do. Greece has been bailed out by Germany while Germany continues special interest deals with Russia and gives its own banks fairer treatment than Italy. Italian officials believe that the European Union has more lax rules for Germany than other countries and though Renzi has a reputation for not playing by the rules and Germany has been the standard-bearer of economic austerity, resolutions need to be made. In this dire situation, bad blood is not doing the Italians any good and it is hindering the Italian economic recovery. Germany needs to step back and allow Prime Minister Renzi more freedom for reform.

As of late 2015, the Italian parliament had approved plans for a larger budget designed to expedite the Italian recovery process. Critics argue that this plan will not aid Italy's budget deficit nor help Italy repay its debt. However, Italian officials deserve more leniency than Germany and its other critics are giving them. Germany argues that a \$3.9 billion tax cut to the middle class only aims to impress voters and will offer no help to the ailing country's GDP. However, these tax cuts are a necessary step, because in order to sustain long-term growth, Renzi should be allowed to put money back into the pockets of his people to stimulate spending. Debt forgiveness is out of the question, as is evident with the situation in Greece, but debt restructuring should be looked at as another viable option. This would allow the amounts owed to remain the same, but the interest rates would be lowered. These alternatives would ease relations within the Eurozone and expedite the recovery by allotting the Italians more economic freedom.

Mr. Renzi's zeal is sometimes mistaken for ulterior motives. He is simply trying to place Italy in the best position for recovery and do what is best for the Italian people, even though it may upset Germany. Despite current policies, Italy would only leave the euro under the worst case scenario. In the meantime, with looser fiscal rules, Italy can once again achieve economic prosperity. Yet, the EU's current restrictions are not allowing Italy to properly engage in economic reform. Recovery will only be achieved when Prime Minister Renzi and the rest of the European Union begin to see eye to eye. •

# Germany

## Neo-Nazis in a World of Rising Xenophobia

- Sindhu Kadhiresan

The opening line of the official homepage of the German NPD reads, “The National Democratic Party (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or NPD) is Germany’s oldest nationalist party since 1945 and one of the few patriotic organizations not yet banned by the government.” However, the fact that the National Democratic Party has been tolerated for so long by the German government may be changing. In March 2016, Germany’s highest court, the Federal Constitutional Court, began hearing a request to ban the NPD, which is described by many as a neo-Nazi fringe party. The case essentially argues that the far-right NPD is a threat to the country’s liberal democratic order. However, as Constitutional court chief justice Andreas Vosskuhle stated, to ban any political party is difficult and there are often many obstacles; Germany has not banned a political party in almost 60 years. In order to ban the party and all of its entities, the court requires a supermajority vote of six out of eight judges, who are set to sit for three days before issuing their verdict. The pending case aside, it is important to question what problem lies at the heart of the matter. It is fair to say an “anti-democratic, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-constitutional party” poses an issue; however, does banning the party itself solve the problem of a country with an underlying condition of xenophobia, racism, and a sense of nostalgia for archaic ideals? Regardless of the answer, the German Bundesrat is intent on banning the party as a solution.

Germany’s Bundesrat, a legislative body similar to the British House of Lords, represents all sixteen of Germany’s states, and believes they have indisputable evidence that proves that the NPD is politically dangerous. It is essentially attempting to prove that the NPD’s platform of racism and violence is too similar to Nazism, which has been outlawed in Germany. The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, believes that the NPD is built on racism and fear. However, the Party itself argues that the refugee crisis in Europe has merely brought to light fears in the Germany people that the NPD addresses in its political stance.

But why is Germany taking such an active step towards banning the NPD altogether?

“...Germany must address the foundation of the problem, which has manifested from an intense, deep-rooted, irrational fear of migrants and an aversion to social and political progress.” ”

The dark reality is that Germany’s past – more specifically the atrocities and political implications of Adolf Hitler’s rise to power during the Weimar Republic – made extremely clear to the postwar elites of Germany that to protect their democracy, they must take steps against those who threaten it. So, the new Federal Republic of Germany redefined itself as “wehrhafte,” meaning a militant democracy in which anti-democratic politics are illegal. However, because the NPD is a political party and not merely an anti-democratic group, only the Federal Constitutional Court can ban it – and after failing to have the NPD banned in 2001, the German Bundesrat is eager to push this case to a win.

A more significant question, perhaps, is why now? The NPD party has had a presence in Germany since 1964, when it was founded as a successor to the neo-fascist German Reich Party, and the last attempt to ban the party was over ten years ago. So what pushed the Bundesrat over the edge? One possibility is the increase in NPD support as well as rising far-right violence. Germans are afraid. They are uncertain in which direction a radical right-wing leadership would take them, but the majority of Germans have no desire to find out. In the past few years, the NPD has won a few seats in some states, which in itself is concerning to German politicians. Another angle, however, is that Europe’s migrant crisis and subsequent influx of migrants has heightened pre-existing xenophobic tendencies. Germany’s “Willkommenskultur” (welcome culture) and outspoken sentiments of support by German political elites (e.g. Angela Merkel) have attracted millions of refugees and a sector of the German population has turned to right-wing parties for support. Although much of the support is going to the Alternative for Germany (AfG), the NPD is also growing, and with it, the rate of violent attacks against refugees and their homes.

The stresses put on the country by the mi-

gration, and the political backlash caused by events such as those in Cologne have involuntarily bolstered support for ultra-conservative ideals and contributed to the rise in negative sentiment. However, this is not to say that Germans are not taking steps to combat racist and right-wing populism. In February, thousands of counter-demonstrators formed a human chain to block the path of the hundreds of neo-Nazis gathered in Dresden to march in the annual commemoration of the anniversary of the allied bombing of the city in 1945. Perhaps, with continued support from the more moderate and left-wing German population, the Federal Constitution Court will find evidence and motivation to ban the NPD.

In short, banning the NPD is more a symbolic gesture than anything else. To ban a party whose “railing against migrants” is rooted in ethnic nationalism would show not only the German people and concerned governments worldwide, but more importantly other radical right-wing groups that Germany still adheres to Wehrhafte and is willing to take action to crush antiquated ideas that hinder progress. Amidst claims of bias, a judge of the Federal Constitution court, Peter Müller, has made clear to defense counsel that he believes the party’s defense strategy to be thin, and that the defense should not anticipate a favorable outcome.

Court decision aside, the fact of the matter is, is that a mere banning of a party cannot automatically change the minds of those who align with NPD ideals. Whether or not there is a formal institution in place for them to show their support is irrelevant. In order to truly curb the rise of anti-immigrant and archaically-anchored political agendas, Germany must address the foundation of the problem, which has manifested from an intense, deep-rooted, irrational fear of migrants and an aversion to social and political progress. •

# Why Switzerland Holds the Key to Reforming FIFA

- Tyler D. Coady

In 2015, an American and Swiss probe into the dealings of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) leadership revealed a world of corruption entailing bribes, favorable television contracts, and a tainted World Cup host bidding process. While the United States was right to use its legal powers to go after FIFA bigwigs, its ability to enact structural change is limited due to FIFA being based in Zurich, Switzerland. Switzerland is in the best position to reshape FIFA into a respectable institution. The Swiss Parliament and Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) should place FIFA under independent supervision, tighten laws that govern international sports organizations (ISOs), revoke FIFA's status as a nonprofit, and subject it to more financial oversight. Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter allowed a culture of reciprocity and excess to penetrate all corners of soccer governance. FIFA, even with new leadership, still fails to acknowledge its structural faults. The wide-ranging powers of executive members, the secretive nature of World Cup bidding processes, and the outsized power of regional confederation leaders are problems that need to be fixed.

Yet, as this culture of back-room negotiations has festered, it becomes even more apparent that the leaders of FIFA are not the ones to provide sound remedies. According to The New York Times' Sam Borden, governance experts recommend adding independent members to the executive committee. FIFA leaders are opposed to the idea because their current influence over financial and governing matters would be curtailed. However, Swiss authorities should not bow down. They must take that proposal one step further and place FIFA under group supervision. Swiss law allows for financial institutions and conglomerates to be under governmental oversight. Placing FIFA under similar scrutiny is a necessary step for Switzerland to take as FIFA becomes less a point of pride and more an unwanted embarrassment. For this to happen, FIFA's status as a nonprofit needs to be challenged and revoked.

Switzerland is the international sports governance capital of the world. Its reputation as a cozy place to be an ISO was reaffirmed in 2011 with a new law that, according to the Swiss



Former FIFA leader Sepp Blatter poses for the cameras. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Graduate School of Public Administration, ensures ISOs “enjoy favorable conditions for the exercise of their activities.” As a non-profit with revenue of more than \$5 billion from 2011 to 2014 and cash reserves of \$1.5 billion, FIFA enjoys the fruits of being an ISO in Switzerland without facing the stricter legal statutes of an intergovernmental organization.

However, because of FIFA's abuses, a general shift in tone amongst Swiss leaders signals a growing willingness to clamp down on ISOs. With the passage of the so-called “Lex FIFA” legislation, sport leaders in Switzerland are now able to be prosecuted for corruption. While this is a welcome development, the inherent problem is that FIFA is a nonprofit, making it a financially burgeoning enterprise operating under opaque circumstances. As a nonprofit, it only has to meet the basic requirements that the Swiss Civil Code requires. Many aspects of the Civil Code are not legally binding, thus allowing ISOs to operate with a great deal of autonomy. Designating FIFA as a business would break with the *laissez faire* approach of the Swiss Government toward ISOs and it would be a significant step in holding soccer's governing body more accountable. The reformation of FIFA cannot be achieved unless its finances and its leaders are subjected to increased transparency.

As part of Switzerland's vow to get tough on ISOs, the Swiss Parliament passed a law in December 2014 that “allows more scrutiny of bank accounts held by governing bodies and their leaders,” according to The Guardian. However, the law only allows authorities greater oversight over bank accounts and financial assets held in Switzerland. With 72 percent of FIFA expenditures on “direct investment in football,” so much of its business will still be conducted

in the world of Rio de Janeiro high-rises and Middle Eastern sheikhdoms.

Thus, it is imperative for the Swiss FDJP to work closely with the US Justice Department, whose legal reach is far more extensive than that of the FDJP. According to The Times, “US law allows for...prosecution of foreign nationals... [because] the activity affected interstate and foreign commerce, and took place in New York.” With the US policing FIFA's international investments and sponsorship deals, Switzerland will be able to ensure financial transparency and shrewd spending at FIFA headquarters. Keeping FIFA's expenditures under check will ensure that corruption and bribery are less likely, decrease lavish spending on employee salaries and expenses, and subject sponsorship and television deals to thorough examination.

While Rebecca Ruiz of The Times reported that the Swiss do not want to be seen “as puppets of the United States,” the real obstacle to FIFA reform lies in the cries of nationalism and American imperialism that are sure to emanate from South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Leaders of these regions' football associations have amassed a substantial amount of power within FIFA and will be reluctant to see that thoroughly challenged by the United States and Switzerland. The FIFA Congress operates under a one-nation, one-vote system that has allowed soccer's power base to grow beyond the historical confines of Europe. While this has made world soccer more democratic in some respects, it has also seen the organization amass an inordinate amount of money, influence, and subsequent falling of prey to corruption, bribery, and greed. Thus, Switzerland must scrutinize FIFA finances, treat it like a corporation, work with the United States, and place it under independent supervision. Only then will FIFA be able to credibly represent the beautiful game. •

# Evaluating New Democracies

## Quick to Judge and Criticize

- Olivia Singer

Sometimes referred to as “the phoenix,” Poland has astoundingly risen from the ashes of the aftermath of World War II with impressive economic success, high literacy rates from its mass education system, and sustainable democratic reforms. Although Poland has enjoyed a booming economy paired with increasing European integration over the last 25 years, its successes and European Union membership do not change the fact that it is still a new democracy in comparison to its Western European counterparts. Poland is indeed a fascinating case study, challenging many of the traditional political models of international relations that have dominated academic discourse post-WWII. Poland’s economic success in the early 2000s made it an attractive candidate for accession to the EU, but the controversial legislation passed in December 2015 by the majority Law and Justice Party (PiS) has prompted the EU to rethink its decision, and has resulted in continuous protest in the nation’s capital. Poland’s democratization and modernizations efforts merit appraisal, but when evaluating the health of the state’s democracy, it should not be held to the same criteria as its EU member counterparts.

Since the ascension of PiS to power, which is notoriously Eurosceptic, Western governments and pundits have questioned Poland’s democratic legitimacy and EU membership. They fear that Poland’s democracy is in danger due to the conservative majority in Parliament, and claim that the legislative acts of the Law and Justice Party disrespect the European Union’s rule of law. The election and the sweeping victory by the Law and Justice government is a classic test of Poland’s democracy; the results of the 2015 election present a trend of conservatism that many European countries are currently facing in an attempt to garner a sense of nationalism.

Polish voters elected the PiS last December with the first parliamentary majority since Poland’s establishment as a democracy. Shortly after winning the election, the party changed the constitution to allow the PiS to pack the Constitutional Court and take state control of public broadcasting services on both radio and television channels. According to one survey, about 55 percent of Polish nationals therefore expressed fear that democracy is under threat. Although the split between traditional nation-

alism and liberal reformers may not be very surprising, the question remains whether the PiS is actually likely to put an end to Polish democracy.

Marek Magieroski, a spokesman for President Andrzej Duda, explains that the party is facing difficult challenges and is attempting to make reforms in the best interest of the citizens. He states: “our country is now run by politicians accountable to Polish voters, not to German, British, or French.” Members of the party assert that unlike previous governments, the PiS is listening to the citizenry and is putting the Polish first, and the EU second. President Duda wrote in his article published in the *Financial Times* that Poland is pro-European and wants to play a more active role; however, the Polish government does question the Union’s effectiveness, especially in relation to the refugee crisis and protecting European countries from foreign terrorism. On this note, the critics should not discount that the party is supported by a large population of the Polish citizenry, believing that the party has the means to resolve the issues that are of the most concern to Polish citizens: the immigration crisis, terrorism, and creating more jobs via economic interventionism policies.

To many, the legislative changes drafted and put forth on December 30, 2015 recall a Bolshevik-style of governance, providing the central government the executive power to appoint and discharge public figures of their positions. News outlets and EU politicians have claimed the legislative changes to be an “assault on democracy;” they appear quick to judge Poland’s political and economic progress, condemning the state as “a failing democracy.” However, given the national support for PiS and the historical context of the state’s governmental transition, the perspective and criteria used to evaluate the political acts of the Polish government – the metrics used to measure quality of democracy – should be revisited. Indeed, the conceptualization of Poland’s political structure is more complicated than has been reported, and Poland’s inability to fall under the EU model of democracy



Photo of the first Parliamentary meeting with PiS majority.  
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

does not automatically deem it a failure. Anna Seleny, a professor of International Politics at Tufts University, investigates the democratization of Eastern European countries, including Poland; she argues that scholars often disagree on how to measure “democratic consolidation” of the Eastern European countries that transitioned in the 1970s and 80s from authoritarian regimes to

democracies. Furthermore, she argues, many theoretical approaches and rationalities applied to these countries result in political analysis that is “shallow, incomplete, or simply misinformed.” Thus, when interpreting whether the democratic trajectory of Poland should be deemed a failure or not, alternative rationalities beyond the traditional institutions and structures may be more fittingly applied. Democracies can vary in terms of quality, and measuring states without making adjustments for historical contexts can lead to erroneous conclusions. For instance, using Seleny’s analysis, there are “high-grade democracies” that should be held to a different standard than those that have more recently entered the period of transition. Seleny does put forth, however, a set of minimum requirements for a state to be classified as a “democracy,” and Poland meets these requirements comfortably.

Democracies of all sorts often confront challenges, and indeed this is the case in Poland as PiS seeks to represent the majority while legitimizing its agenda. In evaluating the status of the wide and varied forms of democracy, different cultural contexts and histories must be integrated, as old political rationalities evidently may continue to structure existing political agendas. Poland is not on a ruinous path as some are convinced. Not entirely different from some parties in Western Europe, the party’s conservatism and state control of institutions may indeed test the quality of democracy, but does not threaten its existence. In light of the fact that protest successfully toppled the old regime and the vocal existence an everlasting faction that will not condone the managing government’s legislation, exercising democratic rights are not endangered in Poland; at least not yet. •

# Ukraine's Continuing Battle

- Matt Rosenthal

Western media relishes the opportunity to cover Russia's various military involvements. Outlets heavily reported on Ukraine's Maidan revolution and then Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea and shadow-war in eastern Ukraine. Now their attention has shifted to Russia's operations in Syria against the Islamic State and the rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime. With this shift in attention, the focus on Ukraine has waned. Yet, the war and the reform process in Ukraine rages on. Unfortunately, Ukrainian political reforms and military operations have not progressed well in the past year. The government must still genuinely address the corruption that prompted the Euromaidan protests in order to create stability throughout the country that would limit the success of continued Russian advances.

In the winter of 2014, Ukraine erupted into a revolution. People filled Independence Square protesting President Viktor Yanukovich's corruption and decision to abandon increasing economic ties to the EU in favor of Russia. The demonstrations were not truly about Yanukovich's economic decision, however, but rather a culture of cronyism and corruption that robbed the government of accountability and civilians of dignity and justice. The demonstrations resulted in Yanukovich's ouster at the cost of many protesters' lives and Russian intervention in the conflict. As the protests reached their violent peak, Russia annexed Crimea and tacitly supported pro-Russian paramilitary groups in eastern Ukraine (known as Donbass). In the wake of the protests, Ukraine has had to combat corruption on one hand and the threat of Russian annexation on the other.

Ukraine has sputtered in responding to both of these challenges. Political reforms seem to have limited corruption throughout Ukrainian politics. The new president, Petro Poroshenko, has established a new National Anti-Corruption Bureau with a strong prosecutor. He has instituted some judicial reforms and remodeled the police force. However, Ukrainian scholar Taras Kuzio has argued that these efforts are just lip service. In reality, the people nominated to operate these rehabilitated institutions are disregarding their popular mandates. President Poroshenko has appointed prosecutors that

ignore the human rights abuses against protesters during the revolution and the deep ties Ukrainian oligarchs (including Poroshenko) have to the political system. Oligarchs are routinely favored in political appointments and economic partnerships that favor their business interests. As Kuzio explains, federal prosecutors have not successfully prosecuted any member of the "ruling elite" in 25 years, and Poroshenko has changed nothing. As a result of this failure, Aivaras Abromavicius, Ukraine's economy minister, resigned while citing the government's ambivalence toward corruption that was reminiscent of President Yanukovich.

Efforts to resist Russian influence in Eastern Ukraine have also faced middling success. Ukraine and Russia have signed a series of cease-fires (most recently in September 2015), but these agreements have done little to stop low-level fighting and threatening Russian military exercises. Rebels operating with Russian support and weaponry committed over 80 ceasefire violations in just the first week of February, and hidden landmines constantly threaten the agreement. Additionally, Russia regularly conducts military exercises along their border with Ukraine, posing a clear warning to Ukrainian civilians and military. Along with their consolidation of power in Crimea – accompanied by a severe restriction of human rights to the native Tatar people – these military actions continually threaten Ukrainian sovereignty.

Ukrainian rebels and others argue that Russia has a right to control eastern Ukraine. Because of historic ties to the region as well as the Russian heritage of many residents in the Donbass, Russia should be able to support rebels' efforts. However, this sentiment is not universal. The eastern oblasts of Ukraine must vote for such a transition. If the majority of Ukrainians in these provinces really do reject Ukraine's anti-corruption initiatives and pivot to Western Europe, a vote would confer that message. While meddling and voter fraud is likely (as eastern Ukraine has faced such concerns in the past), both Russia and Ukraine would probably intervene, limiting how the vote is pushed. Additionally, independent, international verification could solve many concerns.

Addressing the corruption issues is a prerequisite to solving Ukraine's conflict with Rus-

sia. Without confidence in the government to tackle the demands of its citizens, Ukrainians will consistently look to the East as a source of security and stability. The culture of corruption, though, is deeply rooted in Ukrainian politics. In order for this cycle to end, the legislature must forbid the President from appointing the prosecutors that then investigate himself and other ruling elite. Whether through a nomination process or independent selection, anti-corruption officials must not answer to the leaders that they are tasked with prosecuting.

The most effective method to fight Russia might be to inhibit Russian influence from spreading outside the Donbass. Russia should not be allowed to actively support separatist movements, but stopping Russia's influence from spreading to surrounding areas is more feasible and even more important to the stabilization of Ukraine. The separatists are too weak to overthrow the Ukrainian government without increased Russian support. The military has only recently expressed a willingness to adapt its organizational and strategic policies to become more effective, but such efforts represent a radical shift in the resistant nature of the Ukrainian military. These reforms, combined with Russia's current focus on Syria, will contain the separatists' actions to low-level skirmishes that may violate ceasefire agreements, but will not threaten the future of Ukraine.

In reality, the failure of anti-corruption efforts pose a greater threat to Ukraine's stability than any Russian influence. Poroshenko – already facing lower public ratings than Yanukovich – must implement meaningful reforms to the justice system and interactions with the oligarchs that do not pander to the West in order to stave off another round of protests. The Ukrainian government will only be effective in combatting Russian propaganda once it proves to its citizens that it can defend and promote their desires. •

# NATO Enlargement

## The West Continues Its Dangerous Policy of Encirclement

- Andrew Beddow

Two years after the Euromaidan, the East-West confrontation over Ukraine has continued unabated. Ukraine's security situation has further deteriorated, sporadic fighting litters the Donbass with bodies, and Europe is neither safer nor more prosperous as a result. Yet, in spite of the West's abject failure to deliver on the promises of democratization, some in the West see Ukraine as a victory for the liberal end of history that motivates European and American foreign policy. After all, a key buffer state has been stripped from Russia's sphere of influence and the Russian economy is in freefall. The standard morality play that accompanies this view is almost entirely wrong, however, and likely to motivate Western policies that will make Europe – and the world – less safe, free, and prosperous. It is now accepted that the Ukrainian coup, precipitated by a longstanding policy of eastward NATO and EU expansion, was supported by the influence of Western efforts to 'promote democracy' in Eastern Europe. Western powers have maintained this policy for two decades in spite of persistent, vociferous and justified protests by the Russian Federation that such a policy would endanger Russia's vital security interests. Predictably, Russia did not tolerate a Western-aligned state on its border – a potential military threat located a mere two hundred miles from Moscow – and acted decisively to challenge this encroachment. Though they will likely choose to continue on their expansionist policies, Western nations would be wise to heed Russia's warnings and respect its national security interests.

The West, for its part, has not learned from the unmitigated failure of the Ukrainian gambit. Although a few prominent voices – John Mearsheimer and Henry Kissinger among them – have called for a reconsideration of NATO's expansionist policy, the vast majority of Western political leaders, both in the US and Europe, place blame for the crisis solely on the shoulders of Vladimir Putin. As Western leaders believe that the Washington-led Transatlantic order should not be perceived as anything other than benevolent, Putin's resistance to the values of that order is seen as inexplicable and Hitleresque. On this view, any effort to understand or accommodate Russia's genuine security in-

terests is "Munich-style" appeasement. Western and Russian elites disagree on what constitutes a logical security threat, and Western leaders point fingers at Russia while ignoring their own geopolitical failings. In the words of Secretary of State John Kerry, "You just don't in the twenty-first century behave in nineteenth-century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped-up pretext." Unfortunately, it would appear that Western nations are not held to this same standard.

This inability to understand and thus cooperate with Russia has led to a broad Western effort to contain and destroy Russia as a great power. Most recently, in spite of Russia's clear protests, NATO has announced its acceptance of Montenegro's application to its military alliance, a move which Russia's Foreign Ministry characterizes as "an openly confrontational step fraught with additional destabilizing consequences for the system of Euro-Atlantic security [...] from the Russian side." This warning, however, has fallen on deaf ears, as Western institutions are now considering the possibility of admitting Serbia to the European Union. Most worryingly, Sweden has indicated an interest in admission to the Trans-Atlantic alliance as well.

While Sweden's admission to NATO would constitute yet another provocative statement of 'Transatlantic unanimity' against Russian interests, Sweden's longstanding military cooperation with NATO means that such an expansion of the alliance would not drastically disturb the precarious balance of power in northeastern Europe. However, Sweden has maintained consistently that its accession to NATO status is contingent upon Finland's simultaneous admission, an unacceptable transgression against Russian security interests. Sweden and Finland constitute Russia's northwestern buffer, a vital shield against the threat of NATO naval forces to St. Petersburg. With their admission to NATO, Russia's heart, having already lost its southern protection with Ukraine, will be exposed to the Trans-Atlantic powers. Such a move, according to Jan Joel Anderson, Senior Research Fellow at the Swedish Institute for International Affairs, "would represent a serious geostrategic blow" for Russia that "would place NATO forces within arm's length of Russia's

strategic nuclear submarine bases" effectively turning "the Baltic Sea into a NATO lake".

Russia is not brooding silently in the meantime. Prime Minister Dimitri Medvedev has warned that, "Any expansion of NATO to Sweden and Finland would upset the balance of power in Europe and force a Russian response." Yet, as with Montenegro, Georgia, and Ukraine, this unequivocal statement of Russia's vital national interests and intentions will likely be ignored by Western policymakers, who give little thought to Russia's security and see Russia's conflict with the West in terms of the heroic eastward struggle for liberal progress. Western states fail to recognize how the distribution of power matters for declining powers, which is the underlying reality of this ideological conflict. Brussels' statesmen must not ignore Russia's interests in this matter.

What exactly will come of European security should the West continue on its course of marginalizing Russia is uncertain, but what is clear is that the idealist fantasy of a Russia transformed into a liberal, free market democracy will not come about any time soon. If the West's experiments in Iraq, Libya, and Ukraine have proven anything, it is that brute force cannot build the "shining city on the hill" that they desire. Russia is not simply yet another tin-pot, petro-fueled dictatorship for the West to ruin and forget, and, eventually, the Federation will be sure to remind its Western neighbors of this fact. The West has an interest in a stable and secure Russia, capable of maintaining a steady balance of power and participating, based on mutual benefit, in the preservation of a global order. What the West seems eager to create, however, is a Russia teetering between lash-out and collapse, rightfully resentful of its mistreatment at the hands of the Trans-Atlantic powers. The West's repertoire of policy responses could lead to the alienation of a vital partner, the retaliation of a great power, and eventually the destabilization of the world's largest nuclear state. •

# How Reformers in Iran Can Show the World They are the Real Deal

- Daniel Karr

The early-stage implementation of the Iran nuclear agreement has reinvigorated the debate over the deal's long-term effects. Critics of the agreement point to the influx of \$100 million that Iran will receive from sanctions relief, while proponents suggest that the deal will empower moderates in Iran and encourage rapprochement between Iran and the West. If Iran's pragmatists, including President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif, want to discredit opponents of the nuclear agreement and prove that reformist factions in Iran can make progress, they should look to their troubled, often-forgotten next-door neighbor, Afghanistan.

Using the revenue from recent sanctions relief, Iranian pragmatists should implement a strategy to disrupt the narcotics trade and Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Iran and the West have converging interests in weakening the Taliban and reducing the export of opiates from Afghanistan, and a successful counter-narcotic effort would demonstrate Iran's ability to work alongside the West.

Iranian and Western interests converge in reducing the export of opiates from Afghanistan, which would promote greater stability in the region. Afghanistan is the world's largest poppy cultivator and, as of 2014, the area under poppy cultivation expanded for the third straight year according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Not only is Iran a major transit hub of opiates exported from Afghanistan, but narcotics transited through Iran also wreak havoc on its own population. The Institute for the Study of War explains that 3 million Iranians are opiate abusers, and the country suffers from the highest opiate abuse rate worldwide.

The drug trade is intrinsically bad for Iranian internal interests, but it also poses a second problem for Iran because it helps fuel the Taliban insurgency. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Taliban receives between \$100 and \$150 million annually from trafficking opiates, and as the Taliban continues to make critical gains in Afghanistan's poppy-rich provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, this number is likely to remain high. Iran would prefer to weaken the Taliban insurgency because Afghan instability has burdened Iran, causing

over 800,000 Afghan refugees to flee across its border. It is therefore in both Western and Iranian interests for Iran to disrupt the drug trade and combat the Taliban.

To effectively fight the drug trade and deprive the Taliban of a key revenue source, Iran must learn from past counter-narcotic strategies that have been largely unsuccessful. NATO counter-narcotic efforts have primarily included two tactics: eradication of poppy plants at the source of cultivation and interdiction of opiates as they are transported in major quantities. Despite \$7 billion in US funding for counter-narcotic initiatives since 2002, opium cultivation has increased, revealing that a potential Iranian strategy must be different. Iran must instead focus on strategies that dissuade Afghans from cultivating poppy in the first place, which is 11 times more profitable than growing wheat according to the UNODC. Consequently, the Iranian effort must subsidize alternative industries and provide Afghans with work opportunities that are as lucrative as cultivating poppy.

It is true that simply subsidizing alternative industries is not a sufficient guarantee that the new areas of employment will be as profitable as growing poppy. Therefore, Iran must convince Afghans that there are other non-monetary costs to growing poppy, such as the fact that opium production is contrary to the teachings of Islam. According to a UNODC survey, among Afghan farmers who have never grown poppy, the most common explanation for not doing so is that cultivating poppy conflicts with Islam's values. This trend suggests that a public education campaign that aims to convince farmers that growing opiates is against Islam, coupled with robust alternative livelihood programs, could reduce poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and demonstrate Iranian reformists' ability to work productively alongside the West.

Iranian-Afghan relations have been strained recently, and this could potentially jeopardize the feasibility of an Iranian-lead counter-narcotic plan. Iran and Afghanistan have clashed over refugee issues, water disputes, and many Sunni Pashtuns in Afghanistan look to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for leadership and oppose a strong Iranian presence in their country. However, the increasingly deteriorating security environment in Afghanistan should compel Af-

ghans to prioritize stability over skepticism of Iran. According to research conducted by the Asia Foundation, Afghan optimism about the future of their country is at an all-time low. Additionally, the upcoming US withdrawal will only exacerbate instability and may further empower the Taliban, which has recently made territorial gains. Afghanistan's counter-narcotic strategy has largely relied on US military presence and funding, and senior US officials have raised concerns that as the US reduces its operations, drug trafficking will only increase.

The US withdrawal will also likely hurt the Afghan economy, which has relied heavily on US aid. As the economy slows, Afghan farmers will likely turn to growing poppy, and this will further boost the drug trade and provide more revenue for the destabilizing Taliban insurgency. These worrisome trends suggest that Afghans will put aside their differences with Iran in exchange for counter-narcotic assistance that will promote security and provide alternative work opportunities for Afghans.

Iran has a history of helping Afghanistan in times of instability and crisis. During the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s, Iran provided aid to the Northern Alliance to fight against the cruelty of Taliban rule. After the fall of the Taliban, the Northern Alliance was skeptical of a Karzai-led government, but the Iranian envoy to Afghanistan at the time, Javad Zarif, who is now Iran's Foreign Minister, persuaded the Northern Alliance to accept Karzai's rule. Zarif helped to preserve national unity in Afghanistan, and it is time for him to step up again. He must use the revenue from sanctions relief wisely and fight the narcotics trade to help stabilize Afghanistan. If implemented successfully, this will show the Iranian people, the country's hardliners, and the West that the nuclear deal was not just a fluke and that reformers in Iran have the will and the political strength to implement a foreign policy that solves problems and contributes to the greater good. •

# The Time Has Not Come

## Why Iraq's Kurdistan is Not Ready for Independence

- Ali Al Momar

Since 1991, three Kurdish-majority provinces in Northern Iraq have been autonomous. The autonomy came after decades of courageous fighting by Kurdish forces against successive repressive regimes that ruled from Baghdad. The last of these regimes, led by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, pursued a policy of 'Arabization' that involved the killing and uprooting of hundreds of thousands of non-Arabs in the northern part of the country. Following the fall of the Ba'athist government, the Iraq Constitution recognized the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan when it was ratified in 2005. However, the relationship between the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi central government is shaky. They disagree on major issues including the status of areas that both governments claim should be under their own authority, the KRG's exporting of oil without central government oversight, and the Kurdish Peshmerga operating outside of the scope of the Iraqi army.

In the summer of 2014, the KRG's president, Masoud Barzani, called for a referendum on independence after he expressed frustration with what he considered the central government's lack of seriousness about solving these issues. The referendum did not go ahead as Kurdistan's leaders said that fighting ISIL should be the top priority. However, in February 2016, Barzani repeated the call for another referendum on independence. Considering the state of the economy, the KRG's human rights record, and its democratic institutions, independence is not what is best for Iraqi Kurdistan.

Firstly, Kurdish politics are defined by a quasi-dynastic rule. Masoud Barzani's son, Masrour, is the head of the intelligence services and his nephew, Nechirvan Barzani, is the prime minister of the KRG. Qubad Talabani, the deputy prime minister, is the son of Jalal Talabani, a leading politician in Kurdistan. The Barzani family leads the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), while the Talabani family leads the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The two families and parties have dominated Iraqi Kurdistan's politics since the 1970s. The two parties' support is also defined by regionalism; as the KDP dominates political life in the provinces of Dohuk and Erbil, the PUK dominates in the province of Sulaymaniyah. In 1994, clashes

“Considering the state of the economy, the KRG's human rights record, and its democratic institutions, independence is not what is best for the Iraqi Kurdistan.”

between the KDP and PUK expanded into a 3-year civil war that left an imprint still visible on Kurdish politics today.

Masoud Barzani, who has been president since 2005, has overstayed his term limit. When his second term came to an end in 2015, the PUK along with the Gorran (Change) party, the Kurdistan Islamic League (KIL), and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) called for the president to resign and a new one to be chosen by parliament. Barzani and the KDP have refused and he remains president. This case reflects the polarization and weakness of the checks and balances Iraqi Kurdistan's political process.

Secondly, the human rights record of the KRG makes it unready for independence. In 2011, anti-corruption protests were held in Iraqi Kurdistan. The protests demanded an end to the entrenched patronage system that the KDP and PUK sponsor. Kurdish security forces responded by opening fire and detaining protesters. Moreover, the KRG did not push for any of the major reforms that the protesters demanded.

There are also worries about the rights of Turkmen, Arabs, Assyrians, Yazidis, and other minority groups within areas ruled by the KRG. In late 2014, KRG forces abandoned the mainly Yazidi city of Sinjar as ISIL took over. The KRG and its forces did not do enough to assist residents who were stranded on Mount Sinjar. It was the Syrian Kurdish forces of the People's Protection Units (YPG) that provided help. In late 2015, the KRG finally decided to launch an offensive to retake Sinjar. In the process, Kurdish fighters evicted dozens of Arab families living in the city. In the mainly Turkmen city of Tuz Khurmatu, Kurdish forces, along with Turkmen militias, were responsible for human rights violations against civilians as they removed ISIL forces from the area.

In addition to the political and human rights woes, Kurdistan's economy is not ready

for independence. Although considered attractive for foreign investment because of a relatively stable security situation, the economy is overly dependent on oil, has a bloated public sector, and is marred by corruption. Furthermore, the current dip in oil prices has made it difficult for the KRG to pay its employees and Peshmerga forces for many months now.

Many Kurds, like many Iraqis, are frustrated with how Iraqi politics are conducted. Corruption and incompetence, sectarian and ethnic differences, in addition to pro-Iran and pro-Saudi Arabia sentiments define political discourse. Kurds, however, are well-positioned to push for real reforms as they hold considerable power within the government in Baghdad. Hoshiyar Zebari, a KDP's spokesperson in pre-2003 Iraq, was the foreign affairs minister from 2003 to 2014, and has been finance minister since late 2014. Former prime minister of the KRG, Fuad Masum, succeeded Jalal Talabani to be President of Iraq. Kurdish parties hold over 50 seats in the 328-seat national parliament, a number that could be increased if Kurdish parties expand their appeal to non-Kurd constituencies. Moreover, the KRG-administered provinces receive 17 percent of the national budget. At the same time, the KRG collects its own customs at border crossings and Kurdish, along with Arabic, is an official language of Iraq.

An independent Iraqi Kurdistan today means a Kurdistan landlocked and unable to pay its civil servants and soldiers because of corruption and low oil prices. It means a Kurdistan where minority rights are not respected, and a government dominated by dynastic politicians who are not afraid to use force against opposition protests. An autonomous Kurdistan within a federal Iraq that pushes for pluralism is better for Iraqi Kurds than an independent, but unstable and repressive Kurdistan. •

# Fifty Shades of Grey

- Ryan Strong

Listening to the rhetoric this American political season, one might assume that ISIS cells are operating within every US city, simply a no-fly zone would solve the Syrian crisis, and the Iran Deal was the worst thing to happen to this country because now a nuclear holocaust is impending.

Certainly, that was hyperbole is based off a few sound bites, but Islamophobia – and Iranophobia – is pervasive throughout American society. Even Hillary Clinton has boasted that one of her proudest accomplishments was making enemies with “the Iranians.” It plays into the American public’s perceptions of Iran and its mischaracterized government. American political rhetoric lends itself to speaking in binaries – good vs. bad, us vs. them, etc. However, binaries simply reinforce false notions of the US’ role in the world and blind the public to the fact that the difference between actors in the Middle East is not simply black and white – it is varying shades of grey. As every country operates in this ‘grey’ zone, it makes no sense to label Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism when it is surrounded by far darker countries. It follows that building upon the pivot to Iran started by President Obama, and away from the Gulf States, would serve well the United States’ short and long-term interests in the region, as well as work towards eradicating some of the darkest spots on the region, namely radical Salafi jihadist terrorist groups.

Currently, one of America’s strongest relationships in the region is with Saudi Arabia. Historically, Saudi Arabia has pumped oil for the West and the US has sold weapons in return. Yet with the rise of fracking and the fact that Saudi Arabia is attempting to push US oil companies out of the market through over-supplying, it appears this economic relationship has soured. Still, however, the US provides Saudi Arabia with billions of weapons sales each year.

These purchases are not necessarily used for defensive purposes, as Saudi Arabia faces a minimal threat of attack. Elements of Saudi leadership have been linked to weapon sales to various Salafi jihadist terrorist groups across the Middle East and Central Asia. Some of these notable groups include al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, and ISIS. Moreover, Saudi Arabia (and Pakistan) assisted the Taliban in Afghanistan, even as the

**“...binaries simply reinforce false notions of the US’ role in the world and blind the public to the fact that the difference between actors in the Middle East is not simply black and white.”**

US was fighting to eliminate them. The reason the United States invaded Afghanistan was because of the September 11th attacks, yet 15 of the 19 plane hijackers were Saudi Arabian.

State sponsorship or collaboration with terrorist groups and human rights abuses extends beyond Saudi Arabia. Pakistan provided significant assistance to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as well as having served as an indoctrination and training ground for these radical groups. Turkey was previously found to be in direct contact with ranking ISIS officials and has committed human rights violations against its Kurdish civilians. Furthermore, Israel has been accused of supporting Jundallah and MEK, both of which are (or were formerly) US-designated terrorist groups, as well as drawing criticism from the United Nations Human Rights Council for its continued blockade of the Gaza Strip.

There is no denying that Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon and President Assad in Syria previously committed terroristic activities and human rights abuses, or that Iran is purportedly linked to the Khobar Towers terrorist attack, but Salafi jihadist groups commit atrocities on a far greater scale and threaten regional stability. Moreover, both Hezbollah and Assad have political legitimacy in their respective countries. Therefore, it is senseless to label Iran as the biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world, as it only further perpetuates the false binary that it is one of the few ‘bad’ players in the region.

The United States’ list of state supporters of terrorism has never reflected the truth either, only American regional ambitions. Ronald Reagan removed Iraq from the list in 1982 so American arms manufacturers could sell weapons (as well as the components for chemical warfare) to support Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq War. George H.W. Bush then added the country back on after it invaded Kuwait.

The United States and Iran have made positive strides in the last few years thanks to President Rouhani and President Obama. The world

is in the process of lifting sanctions against Iran and billions of dollars of foreign direct investment are flowing into the country. However, US sanctions against Iran for its status as a state sponsor of terrorism remain in place. Due to this, American firms and individuals cannot legally sell to or operate in Iran. Moving forward, it makes the most political and economic sense to remove Iran from this list.

The 20th century is over – successful US foreign policy can no longer revolve around policing the world. Continued unilateral action against Iran will not work as Iran has and will continue to abide by the nuclear agreement. So as Iran chooses to receive payment for oil in Euros, sign a \$600 billion trade deal with China, buy hundreds of planes from the European Airbus instead of the American Boeing, and invite European firms to invest in the country, American firms are the only group that is hurt by the continued sanctions on Iran.

Removing Iran from the list of state sponsors of terrorism can initiate economic diplomacy between the two countries. Although certain hardliners in Iran may be against American policies in the region, the country’s leadership has said it would more than welcome American companies and investment. With a population of nearly 80 million and an economy projected to grow up to 8 percent for the next five years, or 47 percent in total, the Iranian market is a huge missed opportunity for American firms. Moreover, cultivating a more amicable relationship with Iran could lead to coordination and cooperation on eradicating these radical Salafi jihadist terror groups, namely ISIS, which have made devastating attacks on US soil and taken American lives. •

# A Two Front Battle

## Women's Rights and Reforms in Saudi Arabia

- Misba Saleem

For the first time this past December, women were permitted to vote and run for office in Saudi Arabia's municipal council elections. 978 women and 5,938 men vied for 2,100 seats. In the end, 20 women were elected, a modest yet surprising result given the impediments to voter registration efforts and the barriers female contenders faced in campaigning. Yet, while the West may view this as substantial progress, most women within Saudi Arabia actually desire changes on systematic issues, such as access to work opportunities and domestic issues like the guardianship laws. Despite a clear agenda, campaigns for reform have contended with a difference in internal and external pressures. Internally, there is a rift between conservative women who treasure the uniqueness of their traditional culture, and more liberal women who seek to introduce new rights from social convention, thereby introducing new behaviors. Externally, international organizations and activists have prescribed Western models of rights to evaluate Saudi women, and have disproportionately focused on women not having the right to drive or dress restrictions, which are smaller issues by Saudi women's standards. The systematic rights and changes sought by reform campaigns will be implemented when the international conversation shifts from what is best for Saudi women, to what Saudi women determine is best for themselves.!

Internally, the main issue of contention is the male guardianship law, which requires a related male, be it a father, a brother, or even a son, to accompany a woman in public. Women must also seek permission to obtain a passport, attend college, or marry. Most places of work have separate office spaces for men and women (though gender-mixed workplaces also exist). Restaurants have separate lines and seating areas for single men and for families. At the supermarket, men and women cashiers are separated. Gender separation also extends to the ability to represent oneself in the courts, the restriction on women to drive, and until recently, access to ID cards necessary for handling family affairs and travel. Women, especially those who have been forced to quit work by a guardian or who have lost custody of their children after divorce, have criticized the law as problematic. Coun-

“Saudi women's campaigns prioritize reforms in access to jobs, male guardianship laws, ability to run entrepreneurial businesses independently, and domestic rights...”

ter-reform campaigns, such as “My Guardian Knows What's Best For Me” have collected over 5,400 signatures, arguing that the law promotes chivalry, compassion, and caretaking among men. Additionally, the campaign criticizes the mixing of men and women as an inappropriate influence of Western culture.!

Despite the contention over male guardianship, most women agree on the need for increased access to work opportunities. According to statistics from the Saudi Ministry of Justice in 2011, 40 percent of divorces initiated by women were a result of husbands asking their wives to leave their jobs. Today, economic concerns have shifted many male attitudes towards female employment, as a second source of income is often welcome. Despite Saudi women's desire to work and their qualifications (60 percent of university graduates in Saudi Arabia are women and women hold more advanced degrees than men according to the World Policy Journal), women's access to work opportunities still trail their male counterparts'. According to a 2015 Jadwa

Investment report, women's unemployment stands at 33 percent, versus 6 percent for men. This difference is largely due to limited areas of “suitable” work for women, such as medicine, education, and social work. As of 2005, women were able to study law, but could not apply for licenses to practice until 2013, a change that was prompted by petition of 3,000 female law graduates presented to King Abdullah in 2012.!

Despite the focus of Saudi women's campaigns for rights and reforms, their representation in international media fosters an image of Saudi women as voiceless, somehow imposing subservience upon themselves. In reality, the case is very much the opposite; Saudi women have their own needs, values, and priorities. International organizations and activists have placed disproportionate attention on dress requirements and the restriction on women to drive. This misplaced attention comes at a cost

of misunderstanding religious and cultural factors. Many Saudi women value modesty, or even feel it empowers them in the workplace.!

In terms of the restriction on driving, women's campaigns prioritize reforms in access to jobs, male guardianship laws, ability to run entrepreneurial businesses independently, and domestic rights before even considering the right to drive, which has become to many an over politicized sideshow to the real issues. As of late, driving has become less of an inconvenience and cost due to the popularity of apps like Uber and Careem. In fact, Uber is so popular among women that they make up 70 percent of the customer base, and the company aims to expand trips by 50 to 60 percent in 2016, according to Bloomberg.!

**In 2013, King Abdullah decreed a quota of 20 percent women's membership in the Shura Council, appointing 30 women to the formal advisory body that proposes laws for approval by the King. In late 2015, the Interior Ministry began to issue family ID cards to divorced women and widows, allowing women to register children for school, have access to records, give clearance for medical procedures, and manage employment procedures without approval from a male guardian or court. Both of these reforms, either largely unrecognized or dwarfed by continual condemnation for the driving restrictions, typify a sort of selective recognition by the West. It is the failure of the West to recognize progress on Saudi women's own terms that undermines progress from the outside. Until the international dialogue shifts from evaluating what is best for Saudi women and prescribing Western models, campaigns for reforms and systematic change will continue to fight a two front battle. •!**

# Oman, The Mediator, and its Role in Yemen

- *Brendan Failla*

While most coverage of the Iran nuclear deal focused on the meetings in Geneva and Vienna between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany), it has been reported that Oman served as a mediator between the US and Iran and ensured early progress in the nuclear talks. As early as 2012, it is purported that American and Iranian officials held bilateral meetings in Muscat before hammering out an interim nuclear agreement in 2013. Oman's contribution constructed the foundation for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action's (JCPOA) eventual success. This story is not rare for Oman as it has often acted as a mediator in the region while pursuing diplomatic relations with all relevant actors. Oman's Sultan Qaboos Bin Said al-Said has effectively created a unique balance unseen in other Arab nations, possessing the ability to cooperate and maintain contacts with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and major Western nations like the US and the UK. It exercises a foreign policy largely independent from its heavyweight neighbor, Saudi Arabia, while simultaneously strengthening bilateral relations with Iran that date back to the 1970s. Oman, with its Ibadi Muslim identity, also lies outside ideological struggles between Sunni and Shia powers. It is evident that future UN-sponsored Yemen peace talks should incorporate Oman's diplomatic prowess and close connections with multiple nations often at odds with each other.

When Saudi Arabia managed to reel in support from traditional Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League allies for its coalition against Houthi rebels and former Yemeni President Saleh loyalists, Oman did not partake. The Sultanate became the only GCC and Arab League member not to join the Saudi-led opera-



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry meets with Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said Al Said in Muscat, Oman, on May 21, 2013. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

tions. This is not the first time Oman exercised its policy independence in the Arab world. For instance, in 1979 when the Arab world cut ties with Egypt over its peace treaty with Israel, Oman did not follow suit. Oman also refused to back Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and instead hosted ceasefire talks between Baghdad and Tehran. More recently in 2014, Oman did not recall its ambassador from Qatar as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates did. Additionally, Oman avoided downgrading ties with Iran following the attack on a Saudi embassy in Tehran earlier this year. Oman's refusal to participate in Saudi's "Operation Decisive Storm" campaign in Yemen not only preserved its long-standing neutrality, but also made it the only Gulf Arab monarchy that Houthi representatives might trust. Diana Alghoul, of the Middle East Monitor, argues that Oman's non-intervention in Yemen allows it to effectively hold a "doubled-edged sword" in the Yemen conflict. The Atlantic Council agrees that Oman has effectively

built a "diplomatic bridge" between the West, its Sunni allies, and Iran.

Oman has utilized its independence and neutrality to conserve its foreign policy and suit both its domestic and foreign interests. When speaking about Oman's policy on Yemen, Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi asserted that "Oman is a nation of peace" and it will sustain its policy of supporting peace initiatives. He emphasizes that Oman's absence from military operations in Yemen is central to its approach: "We cannot work on peace efforts at the same time we would be part of a military campaign." Accordingly, Oman has already served as an intermediary in consultations between parties on the Yemeni conflict, and as a facilitator for previous contact between US officials and Houthis. Media reports note that in early March of this year, Iranian-backed Houthi rebels sent a delegation to Riyadh to meet with Saudi officials at the urging of Oman. Mohammad Abdel-Salam, who serves as the Houthis' main spokesman and advisor to

Houthi leader Abdel Malek al-Houthi, led this delegation and had previously attended talks in Oman before UN negotiations in Geneva last year. If similar measures to build trust between Houthis and the Saudi coalition pick up, Oman is poised to accelerate engagement. This past fall, Oman harnessed its channels of communication with the Houthis to secure the release of two Americans, three Saudis, and a British hostage. In other cases in Yemen, the Sultan aided in securing the release of a US journalist, a World Bank employee, and a French national. Oman even pushed Iran to release detained American hikers in 2011. In relation to its domestic interests, Oman has reinforced historic ties with Iran. The two nations agreed to a \$60 billion energy deal in 2013 that involves a marine pipeline, and Oman continues to seek greater trade, investment, and economic cooperation with Iran, especially in a post-sanctions environment that will benefit its own economy. However, with Omani-Iranian relations in mind, it is important for Oman to uphold its neutrality, as tipping too far towards Tehran or Riyadh could damage its credibility and consistent diplomatic balance by isolating one partner at the expense of the other.

It is also in Oman's interest to bring an end to this conflict due to the potential internal security threats on its southwestern border. Groups like Al-Qaeda have exploited the Saudi-led Arab coalition's focus on the Houthis and pro-Saleh loyalists. Al-Qaeda consolidated control along the coast in Hadramout province, seizing the largest port city of Al Mukallah in April of 2015. Moreover, Daesh – the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) – has pursued greater influence as well. It has unleashed numerous deadly bombings against Shia and Houthi mosques in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa in an effort to stoke sectarian tension and disrupt attempts to restore Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi's internationally-recognized government. The conflict has indirectly accommodated groups like Daesh's Wilayet (Arabic for province) Sana'a and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), who lie

outside of the Saudi-led coalition's priorities yet still pose a direct threat to Yemen and beyond.

With questions arising over the health of Sultan Qaboos, observers are wary of Oman's future stability. Any transitional tensions within the Omani government following the death of Sultan Qaboos could be exploited by AQAP and Daesh should a conflict erupt. In fact, the Dhofar Rebellion is fresh in the mind of Omani leadership. Throughout the 1960s and seventies, an Iranian and British-backed Oman launched a counterinsurgency campaign against a Chinese and South Yemen-backed Marxist insurgency in the southern Dhofar Governorate along the Yemeni border. With an eye towards Yemen, Qaboos and his government are keen to restore a legitimate government, bring an end to a conflict that may pose a threat to Oman's security interests, and prevent insurgents from crossing its borders yet again. Therefore, it is not only in the international community's interests to seek Oman's help in ending Yemen's bloodshed. Oman has a large stake in Yemen's stability and is motivated to achieve peace.

While a political settlement in Yemen seems out of reach at the current moment, Oman is a necessary counterpart to any negotiations and should coordinate with the UN-led efforts while also pursuing diplomatic endeavors of its own. Thus far, the UN-led efforts have faltered, and it offers potential for regional actors to work towards a solution where the UN has failed. With access to all actors in the Yemeni conflict and a unique legacy of assuming the role of a third-party mediator in Middle Eastern disputes, Oman may represent Yemen's best chance to overcome intransigence. •

# In the Saudi-Iranian Rift, Lebanon is the Real Loser

- Ali N. Habbab

When Saudi Arabia announced in February that it would cancel a \$4 billion aid package to the Lebanese government and armed forces, it set off a political firestorm throughout the country, and threatened to upset the delicate balance that has maintained relative peace during the Syrian conflict. The Kingdom explained that it took this step because it did not have confidence in the Lebanese government's ability to shake off the influence of Iranian-backed Hezbollah, the Shi'ite militant organization that has been at war with Saudi-backed rebels in the Syrian civil war. The move is part of Saudi Arabia's new, more aggressive strategy to counter what they perceive as growing Iranian power in the Arab World. Although the decision might boost the Kingdom's regional credibility, it is clear that as Saudi Arabia and Iran duke it out on the international stage, it is Lebanon that comes out the loser.

Saudi Arabia followed up the cancellation of the aid package by issuing a tourist warning to Saudis traveling to Lebanon, a central aspect of the nation's tourist industry, as well as by blacklisting several Lebanese businesses and individuals it accused of having Hezbollah connections. More recently, and perhaps most consequentially, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization, sending a clear warning to the Hezbollah and its chief sponsor, Iran.

While these actions do in fact increase the pressure on Hezbollah and Iran, the stability of the Lebanese state has taken the brunt of the blows, with pro-Saudi and pro-Iranian factions within the country sharpening their rhetoric and trading a war of words over who is to blame. To make matters worse, the country is in the midst of a presidential vacuum that started in 2014, and the increase in polarization will only continue to deny Lebanese Christians a voice in the country's unique sectarian-style government. Lebanon's government was already gripped by paralysis, unable to solve a garbage crisis that began when the nation's only municipal landfill was closed in 2015. The moves by Saudi Arabia have also reignited long-standing tensions between Lebanon's Sunni and Shi'ite populations, which have been at odds over the Iran-Saudi Arabia rift for more than a decade.

“Saudi-Iranian tensions have been fueling conflicts from Syria to Yemen, and Iraq to Bahrain, but perhaps nowhere more potently than in Lebanon.”

Iran's financial and military support of Hezbollah has made it the target of much criticism inside Lebanon and beyond. As Iran has attempted to propel its influence in the Arab World, it has only ratcheted up its support of Hezbollah, much to the dismay of Saudi Arabia. Iran's powerful influence over Lebanon was demonstrated in the January flashpoint that led to the cutting of ties between Tehran and Riyadh. Following the execution of Shi'ite cleric and Saudi dissident Nimr al-Nimr, Iranians set fire to the Saudi embassy, and soon Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies resolved to close relations with Iran. The Arab League signed a letter of condemnation over Iran's response to what Saudi considered an internal affair, and Lebanon was the lone member to refuse to sign the letter. This followed Lebanon's refusal to join Saudi Arabia's anti-terror coalition in December, an act that also left the Saudis feeling spurned. These actions show that as long as Iran and Saudi Arabia continue to use Lebanon as a proxy in their cold – but increasingly hot – war, Lebanon's political system will remain fractured and incapable of keeping peace.

It is no secret that a stable, functioning Lebanon needs Saudi Arabia by its side. The Saudi-Lebanese relationship has pumped billions of dollars into Lebanon's fledgling economy, and recent actions threaten to choke off Lebanon from Saudi investment. According to Business Insider, 25 percent of Lebanon's exports go to the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council, and nearly 6 percent of Lebanon's GDP comes from the remittances of Lebanese working in the Gulf. Lebanon cannot risk losing its economic lifeline to its oil-rich Arab partners, and yet, Saudi pressure is unlikely to shake Iranian and Hezbollah influence in the country. In addition, the Saudi-Iranian conflict in Lebanon has implications beyond the nation's borders, leading to increasing concern from foreign actors.

Lebanon currently hosts over 1 million Syrian refugees, constituting more than 25 percent

of the fragile state's population. It has struggled to provide humanitarian aid and adequate services to the refugee population and is quickly transforming into a springboard for refugees to travel to Europe. The instability fueled by the Iranian-Saudi crisis has stoked fears that the rate of refugees fleeing Lebanon for Europe could accelerate dramatically, increasing the burden on European nations. As a result, and in a somewhat surprising move, the Obama Administration has both publicly and privately warned Saudi Arabia to tone down its pressure on the Lebanese government. In fact, according to the Wall Street Journal, a U.S. official called the Saudi actions “a significant overreaction.” This suggests that the international community is beginning to recognize the real threat that the Saudi-Iranian rift poses to Lebanon, and future reactions will be important to watch.

Saudi-Iranian tensions have been fueling conflicts from Syria to Yemen, and Iraq to Bahrain, but perhaps no more potently than in Lebanon. The Lebanese economy lives and dies by the stability of the state's fragile security situation. Without stability, there will be no tourism, no investment, and no industry. The conflict in Syria has already taken a significant toll on the country's economic growth, internal stability, and rattled the balance of power created by the 1990 Ta'if agreement, which ended the nation's 15-year civil war. Any semblance of normalcy requires that both Iranian and Saudi interference in the country's internal affairs be limited to the role of a positive, cooperative partner. If Lebanon continues to be used as a proxy in the struggle between Tehran and Riyadh, the prospects for peace and prosperity will only move further and further away. •

# Behind Closed Doors

## Informal Socio-cultural Dissidence in Iran

- *Nisreen Salka*

Under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 sought to dismantle flagrant corruption at the highest levels of government. His promise to hold politicians accountable through religious values institutionalized the Islamic Republic, a constitutional theocracy that blends Napoleonic and Islamic laws. Such conditions limit sociopolitical influence, and so Iranian citizens express their independence in a private cultural jihad that reduces the Islamic Republic's sphere of influence in personal affairs.

The contested re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009 devastated the economy and strained foreign relations, popularizing the election of reformist Hassan Rouhani four years later. Rouhani's acceptance of Iran's censorship practices stems not from disinterest, but from limited political influence to change the status quo. Strategically ignoring that which he cannot change, Rouhani instead fosters an educated middle class through economic and diplomatic reforms.

His concessions to Western powers succeeded in lifting crippling economic sanctions, increasing vital crude oil exports by 500,000 barrels per day. As a result, GDP per capita rose 305 percent over the past decade to \$17,800. The flourishing middle class dilutes the clergy's economic influence, and reallocates financial controls to the citizens. No stranger to brain drain, such improved standards of living promise to slow the annual emigration of 150,000 Iranians in search of employment. Retaining the highly educated within its borders, Iran now holds a distinctively different demographic than it has in years past.

Under Ahmadinejad, only 34 percent of adolescents pursued post-secondary education. By May 2015, the expansion of Azad University to 100 campuses holding 1.5 million students increased that proportion to 84 percent. Of those students, 65 percent are women. In contrast to a foreign study of older generations, the increasing legitimacy of domestic educational institutions concentrates trained professionals within the country. Attracted to academic and economic opportunities, Iranian youth elevate productivity to unprecedented levels. Scientific output has increased by 575 percent in the

past decade, and the nation has published three times more books than all other Arab nations combined.

Access to higher education instills intellectual curiosity, thus emboldening citizens to search for alternative information sources despite strict censorship laws. Ironically, Rouhani's \$4.5 billion investment in improving Internet speeds serves that purpose, increasing national bandwidth by 250 percent in the past year. Convenience benefits underground systems, virtual private networks (VPNs) that affordably bypass government controls for \$1 per month. The structure successfully circumvents blocked social media sites with a quarter of the population now operating registered Facebook accounts. Furthermore, 70 percent VPN usage among adolescents surpasses national Internet penetration, indicative of the desire for alternative information sources.

Exposure to such open communication underwrites the indigenization of foreign standards to traditional values. Despite the prohibition of pre-marital intercourse, the average Iranian woman loses her virginity 1.3 years earlier than her American counterparts, and the average Iranian man 1.9 years earlier. Often delaying marriage until their late twenties, they thus have a gap of about ten years to engage in periodic pre-marital intercourse. Nevertheless, the birth rate dipped from 3.9 percent in 1986 to 1.2 percent in 2012, the fastest drop ever recorded internationally. The implication of birth contraceptive utilization and non-marital intercourse suggests that Iran's de facto sexual norms differ significantly from those insinuated under law.

Collective dissent against such morality laws is most prominent in the resurgence of popular culture in private spaces. Although Iran requires government permits for mass publication or public performances, artists evade the restrictions through informal distribution networks. Word-of-mouth advertising monetizes their endeavors, and the youth culture benefits from individualized artistic expression. For instance, government officials removed producer Mehran Modiri's satirical television program *Shabihaye Barareh* from the air within a year of its debut in 2006, but private financing of the DVD ensures its survival.

The cultivation of cultural capital in the private sphere now fuels the slow integration of popular culture into the public sphere, regardless of government mandates. Billboards endorse celebrities rather than public officials, and the best-selling album *Neither Angel, Nor Satan* decries religion as an institutional obligation. Public restrictions on male-female interactions accelerate private displays of affection in the bedroom, instigating a sexual revolution. At the forefront of cultural change, the educated youth derive inspiration from sites that sidestep domestic censorship laws and celebrate personal independence. The informal insurgency thus counteracts government enforcement of compulsory religious practices, rejecting that which now constitutes nothing more than political rhetoric. •

# The Forever War

- *Graham Steffens*

This September will mark the 15th anniversary of the United States' longest war: the War on Terror. Nearly 15 years ago, the United States began what it hoped would be a quick and decisive set of campaigns designed to reinforce governments across the world, particularly in the Middle East, and to ensure that terrorists would never have the capacity to kill thousands of Americans again. Fast forward to today and this goal evades the United States. The Middle East continues to collapse in upon itself, the Taliban are resurgent in Afghanistan, and Islamic terrorists are able to strike Western governments with frightening regularity. There is no end in sight. The United States faces a war with no time horizons. The United States faces a war with an ever-changing enemy. The United States faces a war that its people are sick of, yet a war which it has no choice but to fight. If the United States has any hope of successfully weathering this 'forever war,' it will have to accustom itself to a new type of battlefield and throw away its conventional concept of war.

Every war America fought up to the 21st century came with a reasonable time horizon. Even America's previous longest war, the Vietnam War, had a definite end. That end came when the American people decided they no longer wished to fight communist insurgents in the jungles of Southeast Asia, a decision which they could make with relative security. Yes, the loss of Vietnam would be a supposed victory for Communism, but the enemy never posed a direct threat to American civilians. Compare that to today's wars, where a single individual terrorist can deal more damage to American civilians, property, or interests than any Vietcong guerilla ever could. America cannot back out of the War on Terror as it could the Vietnam War, because backing down poses a far more direct threat. Anywhere the disease of radicalism is allowed to fester threatens the West.

This threat is most prevalent in the Middle East. Be it Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Libya, or any moderately unstable state, America has a vested interest in using military force to degrade the threat. A terrorist training camp allowed to operate anywhere is a threat everywhere. A single radicalized individual can infiltrate the West and cause a half-dozen casualties. A group can

cause hundreds. America cannot extract itself from engaging these threats and these threats will not disappear anytime soon. Enter the forever war. Enter the need for America to reexamine its concept of war itself.

America has a long running tendency to believe it is either at war or at peace. In the average American mind, there is no grey area between these two concepts, which is actually vastly different from many countries throughout history. Many European countries are more comfortable with this concept of grey conflict areas because they have a history of colonial policing. The military would operate permanently in the field to keep the colonies under control, while the civilians back home would reap the benefit. Low-level conflict was to be expected because of the nature of maintaining colonies. Americans prefer big, decisive battles that decide the victor quickly and then 'bring the boys back home.'

This concept conflicts with the nature of the War on Terror. This war requires destroying terrorist threats wherever they may appear and America has no hope of guaranteeing stability throughout the Middle East, let alone the rest of the world, and thus America will constantly be engaged in low-level conflict. The War on Terror will only end when there are no more terrorists, which will not occur any time soon. America must therefore embrace the low-level type of war that it traditionally resents. There are two key ways that America is beginning to do this: utilizing Special Forces more than ever before and embracing drone strikes as a critical way to decapitate enemy leadership.

Special Forces are quickly becoming the tip of the spear in the War on Terror. The ability to operate alongside local populations, maintain a small footprint, and strike enemy positions quickly make Special Forces the preferred method of fighting low-level warfare. They do not require the funding of a full brigade of soldiers and can function discreetly so as not to cause backlash from the population they are trying to protect. These highly trained soldiers are already being used in raids into Syria and Iraq to capture high value targets, such as one of the Islamic State's top chemical weapons experts



This image is a work of a U.S. Army soldier, taken or made as part of that person's official duties. STAFF SGT. JEREMY D. CRISP.

in February 2016. US Special Forces also carried out a similarly successful raid in May 2015 that resulted in the death of senior IS official Abu Sayyaf and the capture of his wife, Umm Sayyaf. Without a doubt, they continuously carry out

other, innumerable raids behind closed doors to discretely accomplish similar objectives. They represent minimal commitment for maximum effect.

Drone strikes are subject to heavy criticism for their civilian casualties, but if used in conjunction with Special Forces, have the potential to be extremely effective in degrading enemy combat power. Data shows that actual civilian casualties due to drone strikes are far less than civilian casualties due to conventionally deployed soldiers. If used properly, civilian casualties can be kept to a minimum while still accomplishing US strategic objectives. Most recently, coordinated drone strikes mortally wounded top IS commander Abu Omar al-Shishani, robbing the group of valuable leadership. Using drone strikes to knock out these key enemy assets while Special Forces carry out covert missions of their own or in conjunction will be far more effective than entangling the US in a costly conventional ground invasion, something the American public usually does not consider.

Americans balk at this strategy. Unlimited use of military force largely shielded from public view and fought by a force operating in a moral grey area goes against everything Americans believe to be 'just' war. But consider the other options. Large-scale deployments to control populations already sick of American occupation will win few fans. Completely abandoning the War on Terror, thereby abandoning Iraq, Afghanistan, many nations in Africa, parts of Pakistan, and countless other countries will lead to chaos. The United States is too invested to walk away. America must therefore embrace the role it was reluctantly drawn into. It must reconcile its concept of war with modern battlefield realities. It must commit to fighting the Forever War. •







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