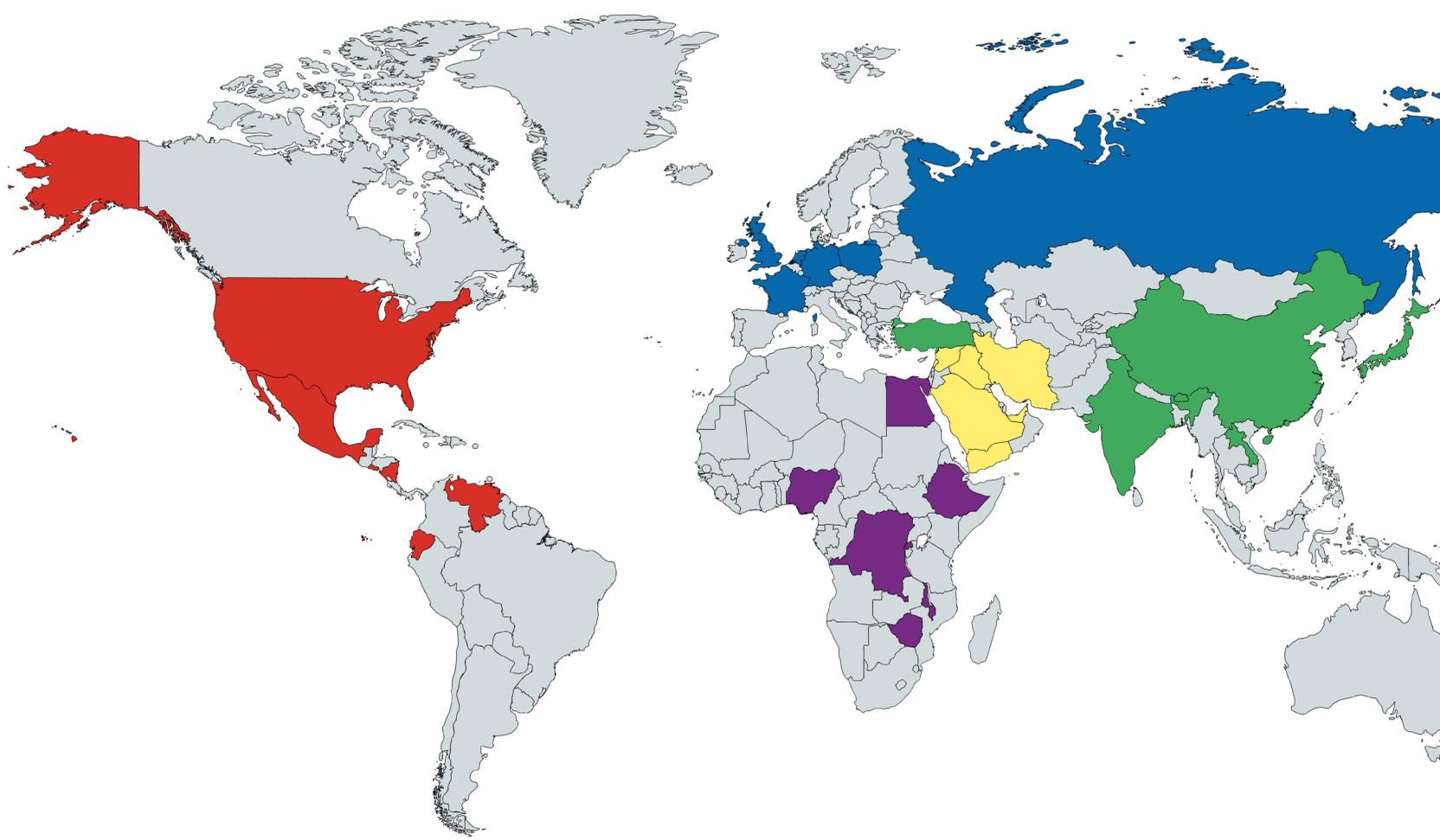


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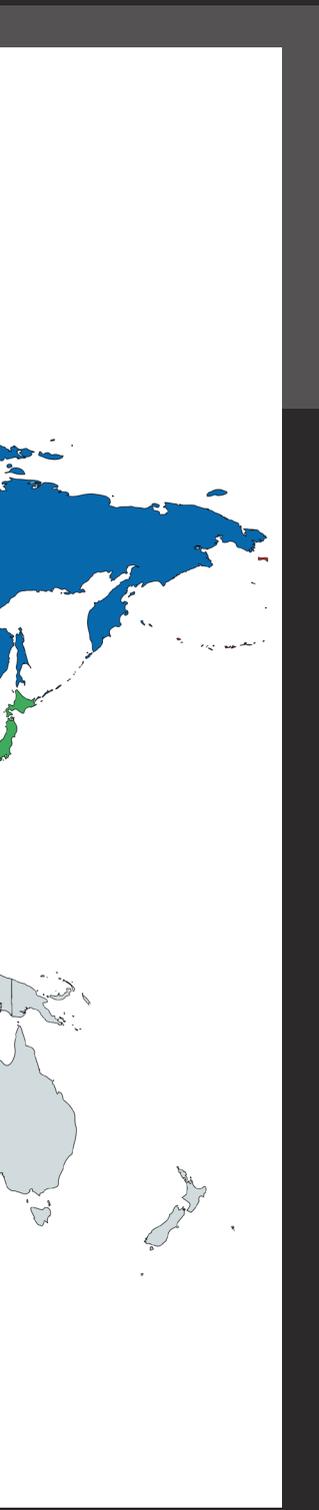


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LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Kintsugi, loosely translated to 'golden repair' is the Japanese art of mending broken pottery by fixing it with a gold brushed lacquer that honors the piece's history. Rather than reattach the pieces with an invisible glue, the gold calls attention to the fractures, and instead of hiding them, it adds value to them, with a literal 'golden' fix.

2020 has exposed a number of cracks in our world-system and the many millions of people who have been allowed to fall in between them. Globally, partisan divides have become more entrenched, the wealth gap only grows, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed just how fundamentally ill-equipped and/or unwilling we are to protect the most vulnerable around the world. This semester, on campus and from home, our writers have highlighted some of these schisms.

Staff writer for Africa, Olivia Howard discusses how while bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change, African youth activists get pushed out of the spotlight and global dialogue on mitigation of its effects -- widening the divide between those who cause and those who experience the effects of climate change.

Staff writer for Asia, Paul Bascobert, and for the Middle-East, Ethan Concannon each discuss the practice of putting "money over morals" in the case of countries which have opted to turn a blind eye to the abuses of Uighur muslims by Beijing, in favor of aid money from China's belt and road initiative. Each of these articles spotlight countries which allow a vulnerable minority to fall through the cracks to gain economic advantage.

Then, a series of articles by regional editor for Europe, Megan Rossiter, regional editor for the Americas, Grace Bristol, and staff writer for Asia, Archana Prabhakar address the Coronavirus. These articles range from identifying controversial policy responses by countries which seem to be doing little to protect those who need it, to how climate change policy and pandemic policy can be at odds, to the ways COVID-19 has displayed and deepened social and economic inequalities around the world.

As students, we see our world and its cracks, as being "fractured but not broken." We recognize while picking up the pieces that we inherit these problems and subsequently have a voice in how to fix them. We can choose to glue things back together, to hide the cracks and fractures, push and pull and force things back to the way they were, rarely acknowledging that which was exposed, or, we can fill them with gold.

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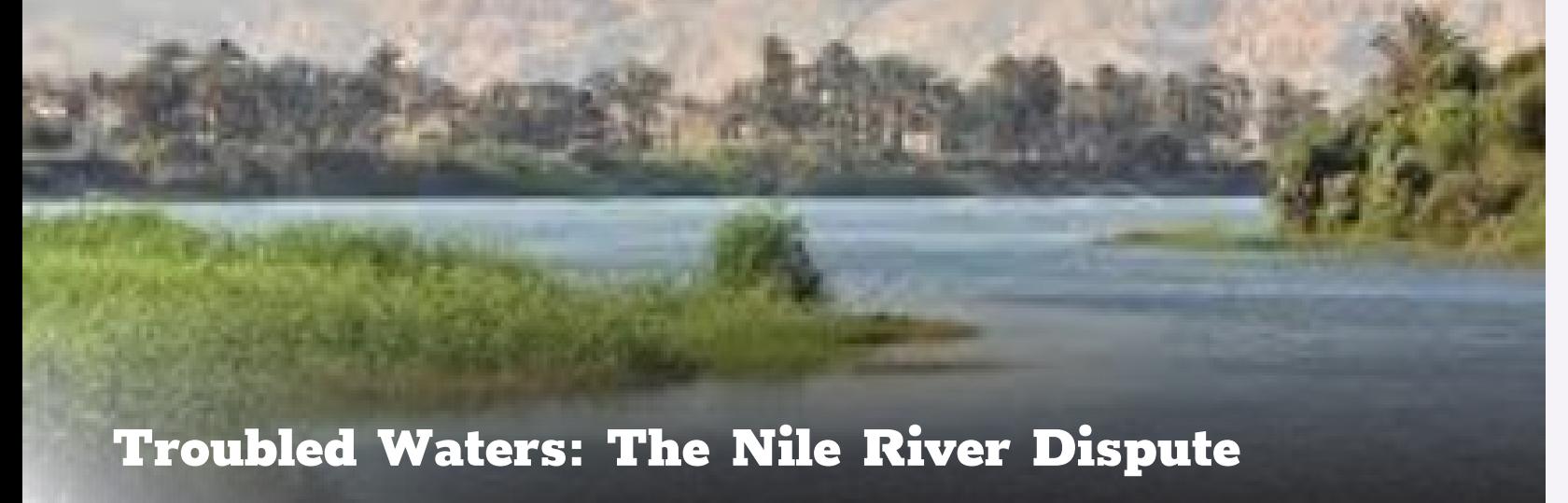
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Troubled Waters: The Nile River Dispute

Nesma Daoud

The Nile isn't a mere, trivial source of water. It's more than that. Standing witness to ancient history, the Nile has nourished civilizations, empires, and livelihoods. It meanders from Lake Victoria to Egypt, and along the way, has long tended to the lush, green, picturesque landscapes lining its banks. Revered as the source of many a good fortune, the Nile has and continues to breathe life into the countries it flows through. Colonization, and the subsequent scramble for Africa, however, have permanently disrupted this harmonious routine as it carved borders and treaties to exclusively suit the colonial system. This colonial legacy has manifested itself today in the Nile dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt, two significant geopolitical powers in Africa. Egypt fiercely contests the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as it threatens Egypt's water supply. The North African country has appealed to the U.S. to mediate negotiations with Ethiopia, and has even hinted at its willingness to go to war if necessary to protect its access to the Nile and the prosperity it offers. Caught in the middle is Sudan, who for the first time has sided with Ethiopia instead of Egypt in the longstanding Nile dispute, because access to the Nile is so integral to economic security. To resolve this dispute, Egypt and Ethiopia must dissolve the colonial remnants at the heart of it, in order to oversee equitable distribution of the Nile from the GERD. In doing so, the creation of a new Nile agreement will prompt the cooperation necessary for

greater future regional and economic integration.

The longest river in the world, the Nile stretches across 11 countries in its journey of 4,000 miles from the equatorial rivers that feed Lake Victoria to its final destination in the Mediterranean Sea. Among the countries that share the Nile, Egypt and Ethiopia have the most at stake. Egypt, a desert nation of 100 million people, relies on the river for 90 percent of its freshwater needs. For the average Egyptian, Egypt will cease to exist without the Nile. Egyptian farmers already attribute their struggling farms to dwindling irrigation from the overburdened Nile, the river at the very heart of Egypt's identity. Already, the Nile is subject to pollution, climate change, and Egypt's growing population. The GERD, an immense hydroelectric dam being built on the Nile 2,000 miles upriver, in Ethiopia's lowlands, endangers Egypt's already constricted water supply, and is set to start filling this summer.

Similarly, Ethiopia contributes to the majority of the Nile's waters with its three tributaries, the Blue Nile, Sobat, and Atbara, carrying approximately 84 percent of the total runoff in the Nile. For Ethiopia the Nile is also central to the country's identity, and with a growing — but resource-poor — economy, the country is eager to develop its vast potential for hydroelectricity generation in the Nile basin to become a regional hub of electric power exports.

Since 2011, officials from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan have quarreled over the dam. In Egypt, not only do ninety-five percent of Egyptians live along the Nile or in its brimming delta, but the river also provides for nearly all of its water. The

source of the dispute isn't the construction of the dam itself, but instead over how quickly the GERD should be filled. Egypt worries that filling the GERD too quickly, over Ethiopia's goal of four years, will drastically reduce its water supply. Fearing for a drought during the filling period, Egypt has argued that the dam should be filled over 12 years or longer.

Ethiopia's leader, Abiy Ahmed, asserts that Egypt's fears are overblown. Indeed, according to hydrologists, the more immediate issues facing the Nile are population growth and climate change. Egypt's population increases by one million people every six months, a rate that the UN predicts will lead to water shortages by 2025. Compounding upon this, rising sea levels jeopardize Egypt's low-lying coast and push saltwater inland, and in doing so, tarnishing fertile land. In turn, Ethiopia argues that storing the water upstream will make it less prone to evaporation than in Egypt, where it's drier.

Beyond these surface-level technical arguments, however, the dispute is mainly fueled by politics. For centuries, Egyptians were the "unchallenged masters" of the Nile. In 1970, Egypt's leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, oversaw the completion of the Aswan High Dam, and in doing so, tamed the Nile's seasonal flows and transformed Egyptian agriculture. Egypt justified its dominance over the Nile by citing the colonial 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that granted Egypt veto power over any construction projects along the Nile and its tributaries. Additionally, a Treaty in 1959 allocated the majority of the Nile's waters to Egypt, with some allotted to Sudan. This treaty, however, did not recognize

the rights of upstream countries like Ethiopia. Understandably so, Ethiopia does not recognize these treaties.

Today, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi is a military strongman, who is sensitive to notions that he is lax on Egypt's security. Likewise, Ahmed, who faces elections this year, is under pressure from Ethiopians, who helped fund the dam by buying government-issued bonds. He essentially needs to deliver the GERD to fruition to confirm Ethiopia's place as a rising African power. Complicating these already tense relations is the West's meddling in the region. Negotiations brokered by the White House and World Bank have yet to reach a solution, as Ethiopia claims the U.S. favors Egypt due to their geopolitical ties. Indeed, President Trump has dubbed el-Sissi as his "favorite dictator." However, in order to reach an equitable solution, Ethiopia and Egypt need to dismantle the colonial-era treaties and deter the West's involvement to reach an agreement that actually suits both countries' needs. Although Egypt has dominated the Nile for years, it still needs access to ensure its survival and economic security. Ethiopia also needs to deliver on the GERD's promise of economic prosperity. Because of this, unity in the region is especially critical. Without regional cooperation, these countries will unnecessarily struggle on their post-colonial journeys of developing economically and democratically. Eventually they will have to face the greatest threat of all: the detriments of climate change, an endeavor that is impossible to resolve without regional cooperation.

Strong Leadership Shines Light On Disability Rights in DRC

Rachel Milner

The term “disability” has gone through a metamorphosis in the last decade. Alongside a change in its meaning has been a reform in international policy. Across the world, the definition and treatment of those with disabilities varies widely, so the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) sought to provide a common framework for countries to establish that those with disabilities deserve the same opportunities as any citizen. This is vital internationally, especially with vastly differing human rights policies depending on the country, and disability rights need strong advocates to bring forth bills and push for progress in the name of the convention. A shining example of this has been the work of Irène Esambo Diata, the first minister for people with disabilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who has been working to recognize the international standards set by UNCRPD.

In 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted. The purpose of the convention was to change the concept of disability from people who are “objects” of charity to people who are deserving of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was opened to signatories in 2007 and went into force in 2008. While the vast majority of countries became signatories, implementing

the mission of the UNCRPD has proved difficult for many countries.

Many nations have to pass reformed legislation in order to align their disability rights laws with the CRPD, and this requires ensuring this topic is a priority in legislative agendas. Furthermore, countries have financial concerns in terms of restructuring institutions to accommodate equality for those with disabilities. While all aid-giving countries must now address disability in their programs, this does not necessarily address the changes needed in the private sector as well. This has resulted in slower progress in less wealthy nations as well as in countries that have pressing humanitarian problems that have to be dealt with.

An important step, especially in countries without clear language on disability, is adopting the definition set by the UNCRPD to establish the groundwork for future legislation. Making it possible for individuals to fight discrimination in court is vital to ensuring human rights are protected. This initial step can lead to further action, which is precisely what Esambo has been working on in the Congo.

Esambo is a veteran in the fight for human rights in the Congo. As one of few female lawyers, Esambo has also been appointed as counsel for the International Criminal Court. She has worked on implementing UN Resolution 1325 which

details the disproportionate impact of conflict on women. Additionally, she has been championing disability rights for millions in the DRC, where disabilities are sometimes seen as the result of witchcraft, especially with regard to younger children. Esambo has dedicated her career to recognizing marginalized identities that are disproportionately affected in conflict.

DRC has multiple humanitarian crises; it has the highest number of internally displaced citizens in Africa due to ongoing violent conflict, millions suffer from food insecurity, and it is further complicated by political and economic instability. While these issues pose great challenges for the government and population, Esambo continues to

supportive of disability rights, but it is reported that these have not had any actual impact on citizens' lives. Furthermore, there is no reliable data in the DRC about disability. While the Congo ratified the UNCRPD in 2015, action needs to be taken to channel rhetoric to actual protections.

The reintroduction of a past disability rights bill into the Congo's Parliament brings hope to millions of Congolese citizens, and Esambo has brought international attention to the process as well. By bringing together Congolese officials, UN officials, and international organizations including Human Rights Watch to provide input on the bill, there is an increased likelihood of its passage. Almost as importantly, the

“ **Across the world, the definition and treatment of those with disabilities varies widely, so the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** ”

fight to ensure that those who experience further marginalized identities are receiving the visibility and support they need, especially within these contexts.

The current DRC Constitution states that those with disabilities are “entitled to specific protective measures” but no bill has been passed to plainly state the measures. Discrimination on the grounds of disability is also prohibited, and those with disabilities are meant to be represented in all institutions and levels of government. However, nowhere in the constitution is a definition of disability to be found. There are other pieces of legislation

announcements surrounding the new bill might ensure that the language is legitimately enforced through legal channels, especially with Esambo as Minister.

Irene Esambo's work displays the importance of strong leadership and advocacy especially during times of crises. While many countries have understandably had to sideline certain human rights efforts in the face of mounting issues, DRC's bill is an example of how strong leadership within an individual country can advance the goal of creating a more inclusive nation.

The “Tipp-Ex Election” Demonstrates the Strength of Malawian Democracy

Sebastian Leder Macek



Few would have thought that Tipp-Ex – a correction fluid which competes with Wite-Out and Liquid Paper—would become a central issue in Malawi’s most recent election. Yet, it did. As results were tallied for the race between incumbent President Peter Mutharika and challenger Lazarus Chakwera, Mutharika appeared to have secured a second term. But, opposition parties and legal authorities raised questions about the results. Investigations into the Electoral Commission (EC) found that ballots had been altered using Tipp-Ex. Though Mutharika was declared the winner, the election became known as “the Tipp-Ex election” and Mutharika as “the Tipp-Ex president.” Ensnaring protests and court challenges culminated in a decision made by the Constitutional Court, eight months later, which overturned the results and ordered that new elections take place.

The success of this campaign litigated through dissent and the courts is a promising step forward for Malawian democracy. In a country with few democratic traditions, the courts took unprecedented action to ensure free and fair elections. Given the clear issues in ballot-processing, the court’s decision was not only necessary, it demonstrated the promise of democratic institutions and independent judicial authority in Africa. Yet, the decision alone is not enough. Electoral laws must be changed to ensure that new elections confer legitimacy on the government and the democratic process as a whole.

The value of this decision can be better understood in the context of Malawian democratic

institutions. Malawi existed under colonial rule for nearly a century before achieving its independence, only to be controlled by a one-party dictatorship until 1994. Following the collapse of the dictatorship, electoral democracy has persisted, though there have been multiple attempts by political leaders to consolidate power. The country’s first president, Bakili Muluzi, attempted to eliminate term limits and was only denied by popular backlash and resistance from the courts. The country’s second president, Bingu wa Mutharika, was Muluzi’s handpicked successor and paved the way for his brother Peter to become president. Peter Mutharika, in his first term, faced popular dissent amidst corruption scandals and policy failures. As a result, Malawi has experienced decreasing trust in democratic institutions; Afrobarometer found that trust in the EC fell from 49 percent in 1999 to 34 percent in 2019 while support for holding elections to choose leaders fell from 78 percent in 2003 to 55 percent in 2017. In fact, the courts are one of the few institutions in the Malawian government which the public viewed as trustworthy. In this context, the court’s decision served a corrective function for deteriorating trust in Malawian institutions.

The court decision became a focal point for civil society and civic participation; the public closely followed the case and was instrumental in its success. Even then, judges had every incentive not to pursue the case. As in many countries across the world, there were issues with the election, but they were not so blatant that it would have been impossible to ignore them. Judges in neighboring Zambia did

just that in 2016 when they dismissed election grievances on a technicality and bowed to presidential pressure, in the process undermining faith in the country’s government. Yet, even though judges faced intimidation and bribes, they used the case to push for a higher standard of democratic practice. In so doing, they asserted their judicial independence, bolstered democratic institutions, and showed how courts in other fledgling democracies could do the same. The new elections offer a chance to strengthen political freedoms and belief in democracy. If this move is successful, it can inspire grassroots organizations and judges across Africa to be more willing to defend democracy.

Beyond how the decision strengthened democratic institutions, its emphasis on democratic legitimacy will reinforce Malawian democracy in the future. First, the court’s decision capped off a series of popular protests which exhibited a level of political mobilization unseen in most African democracies. This decision can encourage future movements. Second, the court called for structural changes that would increase the legitimacy of future elections. Judges criticized the EC’s handling of the election, paving the way for new reforms in the institution while also ruling that candidates need to win more than 50 percent of the vote in order to take office. These changes benefit the long-term practice of democracy in Malawi and will increase the legitimacy conferred on the government by its constituents.

Yet, the decision alone will not guarantee democratic progress in Malawi. In 2017, Kenya’s high court became the first in an African

country to overturn an election due to discrepancies. At the time, the decision was celebrated. But, after the reelection of President Uhuru Kenyatta was overturned, his rival Raila Odinga called for wide-ranging electoral reforms. Kenyatta rejected any changes while judges and electoral commission staff faced threats from the president’s party to not enforce electoral reforms. This led Odinga and his party to boycott the new elections, handing Kenyatta a victory that was stained with illegitimacy. The net result of the ruling was to further undermine trust in the Kenyan government and the courts.

Political leaders and democrats across Africa should have this example in mind when planning for the next election in Malawi. There are signs of a backlash by Mutharika’s party as they appealed the ruling, unified with a smaller party, and have jailed several human rights activists in recent weeks. Yet, there are also signs of hope; the government’s appeal was dismissed and the new elections will proceed on schedule. Additionally, the opposition parties have committed to participating in the new elections. The way forward for Malawi is to pass the structural reforms which the court called for, and which failed to materialize in Kenya. These include increased oversight of the EC as well as the adoption of a runoff in presidential elections to ensure that a winner must receive the majority of votes. If these changes can be realized and a fair election is held, regardless of who emerges as the winner, it can serve as a template for grassroots activists and the courts across Africa for how to strengthen democracy.

In Rwanda, Paul Kagame's Miracle Comes at a Cost

Zack Blumberg

In the summer of 1994, Rwanda experienced one of the most devastating genocides in world history. Hundreds of thousands of Rwandan citizens, primarily ethnic Tutsis, were brutally murdered over the course of just 100 days. Oftentimes, intense warfare and mass murder has scarred countries for decades, preventing them from ever truly rebuilding, developing, or moving forward. Yet, in less than three decades, Rwanda has undergone a miraculous recovery, and accredited global news outlets such as Al-Jazeera now describe the country as "Africa's most inspiring success story" and a "feminist utopia." However, like all things that seem too good to be true, there's a dark underbelly to Rwanda's recovery: while the nation has expanded women's rights and grown economically, this has come at the expense of democratic development and civil rights.

Rwanda's post-genocide revitalization is largely the work of one man: President Paul Kagame. Kagame began his career in the military, where he was widely regarded as an excellent leader. As a general during the 1994 civil war, he fought to end the genocide and restore order. Once the post-genocide government was installed, Kagame served as both vice president and defense minister from 1994 to 2000, before assuming the presidency in 2000 after former leader Pasteur Bizimungu passed. In his time as president, Kagame has pulled off some extraordinary feats, helping develop Rwanda to a degree which few could have predicted. Outside of simply maintaining stability in a highly volatile political environment, Kagame's most notable successes are growing Rwanda's economy, expanding the role of women in politics, and improving national health programs.

Economically, Kagame has worked to make Rwanda an attractive location for foreign investment. As part of this campaign, Kagame has focused on eliminating corruption, improving infrastructure, and creating a culture of governmental transparency. This has clearly worked; today Rwanda

is rated as the second-best country in Africa for doing business, and has experienced massive economic growth. Rwanda's economy has expanded by at least 6 percent every year since 2014, and is projected to expand even more in the near future. This growth is reflected in Rwanda's GDP, which skyrocketed from \$1.7 billion in 2000, when Kagame took over, to \$9.1 billion today. In recent years, Kagame has also stood out as one of the first African leaders to understand the potential economic

equality, but to surpass it.

Additionally, Kagame has also done a great deal to improve healthcare in Rwanda. As president, Kagame has made both ante and postnatal health care much more accessible, which has led to a 77 percent drop in maternal mortality between 2000 and 2013. In tandem with that, Kagame has worked to improve Rwanda's health system across the board by offering a larger number of free preventative treatments and ensuring



benefits of the African Union, and he now serves as its chairperson.

While Kagame's economic exploits are impressive, most of his global recognition has come for his continued efforts to empower women politically. Numerically, Rwanda's progress is staggering: its national legislature is 64 percent women, the highest rate of any country in the world. Furthermore, Kagame's presidential cabinet is also composed mainly of women, at 52 percent. Women's outsize presence in Rwandan politics is not merely a coincidence, but rather the result of a concentrated effort spearheaded by Kagame. In 2003, he passed a law mandating that at least 30 percent of parliament's seats went to women. This was part of a broader pledge made by Kagame to not only catch up to the West on gender

widespread access to vaccines.

These policies have helped combat diseases such as HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis. Largely because of these policies, Rwanda's life expectancy has increased from 48.4 to 67.1 during his time as president. While Rwanda's development may appear to be a miracle, Kagame is far from perfect, and his economic and social accomplishments are only one side of the story. As president, Kagame has used Rwanda's political stability as a mandate to implement his political agenda. However, this stability comes primarily from his violent, inhumane repression of both dissidents and independent media, with U.S. Department of State reports indicting him for things such as "arbitrary killings by state security forces; forced disappearance by state security forces; torture by state security

forces including asphyxiation, electric shocks, mock executions; arbitrary detention by state security forces; political prisoners."

Politically, Kagame has effectively silenced opposition parties and dissenting ideas, as evidenced by the presidential 2017 election, in which Kagame won 98.8 percent of the vote. Prior to the election, the National Election Commission disqualified many opposition candidates, and there were reports of ballot stuffing on voting day. Additionally, Kagame and his party, the RPF, consistently promote the widespread dissemination of propaganda and the usage of voter intimidation. In 2019, a pattern emerged of opposition leaders simply going missing, further exposing Rwanda's political problems.

In addition to repressing opposing political forces, Kagame has also worked to destroy freedom of the press and limit critical and investigative reporting. Kagame established formal restrictions on the press, including a law criminalizing "humiliating" government officials in both speech or print, which carries up to seven years of jail time. More broadly, Kagame has also promoted a culture of self-censorship among journalists and media outlets, who are discouraged from causing public unrest or instability with their work.

Ultimately, Kagame's reign in Rwanda is difficult to evaluate, because he has maintained power nefariously, but simultaneously used that power to advance some legitimately good causes. Although Rwanda is stronger economically and more accepting of women in politics than it was two decades ago, these developments have not come about organically or democratically. Instead, they are the product of Kagame's violent and repressive leadership. With that in mind, political experts and geopolitical analysts can acknowledge Rwanda's development, but should probably take a closer look before referring to Kagame's dictatorial regime as "Africa's most inspiring success story."



Booming: Nigerian Contemporary Art

Elizabeth Yoon

Nigeria's Art X Lagos art fair concluded on a Sunday night in November, ending a week of bright flashing lights, live performances, and gallery showcases. Art X — previously branded as Art X Lagos — expanded in 2019 for its fourth “edition” of West Africa's first international art fair, increasing its number of galleries from 18 to 22 and changing its venue. The organization states that its mission is to “showcase the best and most innovative contemporary and modern art from the African continent and its Diaspora.” It was thus founded with the intention of promoting African artists and has since become essential in developing Lagos as a cultural and artistic hub.

Nigeria has gained increased attention as an artistic hub thanks to the industrious efforts of individual artists and the Art X organization. Despite narratives of a lack of provincial resources or insufficient talent, a contemporary African Art market has gained increasing prominence on the international stage. However, the flourishing market is bubbling and will require careful government promotion and future investment to prevent the ripple effects of a bubble bursting, taking down the flourishing industry with it.

The art fair's success and conception coincides with a rising global interest in African Contemporary Art. After a long period of international negligence and disregard, international auction houses like Bonhams and Sotheby's have started featuring more and more contemporary

African art. Sotheby's opened their first “Modern and Contemporary African Art” sale in London in 2017. In addition, in 2015, the 1-54 African Art Fair expanded into the center of the art world: New York City. An increased industry recognition spurred Western collectors and museums to rapidly attempt to catch-up. Last year, the MoMA in New York announced that Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, who specializes in African art, will join its staff as a curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture. He previously worked at the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the MoMA hopes the curator will help better internationalize the museum's collection and gallery presentations.

There is the concern that, like with many of Africa's resources, the boons of this newfound focus on artists will be to the detriment of the local people and creators. The rapid interest in African art concerns some onlookers that the spotlight will be fleeting and burnout creative masters. Where African contemporary art once was capped at five-figure price tags, its celebrated pieces now regularly sell in the upper hundred thousands and millions of dollars.

A bubble is forming in the African Contemporary market as international and local investment increases. Ben Enwonwu is often used as an example as the most prominent African Artist whose art circulates through the international art world at enviable prices. His painting “Tutu” was advertised as the “African Mona Lisa” by many international news organizations, including the New York Times

and the Guardian. He was also the first Nigerian artist to acquire international fame, when he was commissioned to sculpt a bronze Queen Elizabeth II in 1956. Now, posthumously, his artwork fetches up to \$1.2 million at Bonhams, despite the estimated cost being merely \$300,000.

A more modern example of the increasing status of African artists is another Nigerian artist, Njideka Akunyili Crosby. While her work previously sold for more modest prices in the thousands, her 2012 piece “The Beautiful Ones” sold for \$3 million in 2017. However, for the artists themselves, having one's artwork fetch higher prices leads to bigger concerns of sustainability. Oftentimes, the artists themselves don't see a large fraction of the sale cost. Njideka Akunyili's “The Beautiful Ones” initially sold for \$200,000 before being put to auction five years later for \$3 million. Akunyili disclosed to the Wall Street Journal that the rapid escalation of the African art bubble and her own prices concern her. If her pieces continue to vigorously outpace their estimated values, her other work gets priced differently, and some buyers will eventually lose interest. This loss of interest will signal the popping of the bubble.

Art tends to create bubbles where pieces sell for prices high beyond their value price. The Wall Street Journal reports that in 2017, “global auction sales totaled roughly \$28.5 billion, up 27 percent from the year before.” This is in part due to Art being used as a means to transfer wealth. Instead of exchanging

\$1.2 million, for example, you can exchange a Klimt. Moreover, Art is also used to launder money. And with art having no specific material value, estimating a financial bubble is hard to predict. Commentators have been predicting a bust in the global art market since 2013.

In 2006, India was in a similar situation. Beautiful shaded images of buddha and abstract gilded spiraling depictions of elephants were all the rage before the Indian art bubble burst in 2007. On the denouement, the nation smothered the remaining market interest and its own citizens' ability to collect and appreciate art. The nation taxes imported art at 15 percent, a cumbersome cost that hobbled an already unsure market that was severely overcorrected.

This negative market reaction is due in part to the Indian government's unwillingness to invest in their soft power resources. With existing financial strains and growing bureaucracy, big Indian artistic names from 2007 only ring a vague bell of recognition in 2020. African governments can attempt to lessen the negative impact of a bust in the African art boom by following the work of wealthy collectors and continuing to invest in their artists and art. While violence and civil unrest persist in Nigeria, leaders in the Nigerian art world herald art as a means to transmit culture and as a mode of soft power. As the founder of Art X Lagos told the Africa Report, she “created the art fair to build that bridge that would enable a curious European or Asian to travel to Nigeria and actually see for themselves.”

African Youth Climate Activists' Vital Role in Global Revolution

Olivia Howard

In January, The Associated Press cropped Vanessa Nakate, 23-year-old Ugandan activist, out of a photo with Greta Thurnberg and other Fridays for Future activists. Nakate, who sells solar batteries 66 hours per week, responded on Twitter claiming, "You didn't just erase a photo. You erased a continent. But I am stronger than ever." The African youth climate movement is comparable to most social movements, yet traditional media refuses to proportionally report and champion successful youth activists, who traditionally lack credibility in elderly-centric communities. Additionally, many African countries even fail to focus on community-specific activism. For example, a study by the University of Oxford revealed that in The Guardian, Nigeria's most prevalent newspaper, over 65 percent of climate change articles dealt with international scenarios. Stories with a human-centric narrative accounted for only two percent of stories. In South Africa, 70 percent of The Mail & Guardian articles had no mention of South African or African content. Brown University Researcher Sonya Gurwitt, in a study of 13 print news organizations, found that the rare reports on African activism focus on conferences and non-governmental organizations, rather than the content of individual ideas.

Despite these setbacks, youth activists across the continent have utilized non-traditional forms of communication, such as Twitter, to gain intercontinental recognition. African youth climate activists are essential to combating climate change, yet coverage within and outside the continent submits to a Western bias that invalidates many varying and intricate African perspectives. Transnational and trans-continental journalists must recognize new forms of activism in order to link grassroots efforts with systemic and structural change. Traditional

media is necessary to legitimize non-traditional but integral forms of climate activism.

African youths are disproportionately affected by climate change, and subsequently are the most knowledgeable about effective solutions. In other words, they are indispensable to the global narrative. Although Africa accounts for only three percent of the world's carbon emissions, it is the most vulnerable to climate change. Over 80 million people rely on the Congo Basin rainforest, and by 2100 it could be completely destroyed. Because Sub-Saharan Africa often relies on rain-fed agriculture, many countries such as Malawi are uniquely susceptible to temperature increases and cyclones. African youths specifically face the majority of the consequences from Africa's climate vulnerability. According to the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative, youth constitute the majority for many African countries. Seventy-seven percent of the Ugandan population is 25-years-old or younger and 16 is the country's median age. Youth activism is therefore not only imperative, but extremely urgent, to listen to and implement change.

African climate activists have already produced innovative solutions and messages that would be beneficial in a global media context. Chido Govera, a Zimbabwean farmer and educator, promotes mushroom farming as a sustainable source for food. Govera pioneered new techniques for commercial use, such as growing mushrooms from coffee grounds. Using her foundation, The Future of Hope, she has trained 1,000 people transnationally. South African activist Ayakha Melithafa, along with 16 other youths, filed a complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for its failure to sufficiently address the climate crisis. Melithafa specifically advocates for diverse voices in climate activism claiming, "It's very

important for poor people and people of color to go to these protests and marches because they are feeling the wrath of climate change the most." Kelvin Doe, a 21-year-old from Sierra Leone, built a generator for his community out of recycled batteries, metal and tape, lighting people's homes and powering a community radio station. Creative and effective solutions are plentiful, and media coverage is necessary to dissipate not only these solutions, but the solutions that have not yet been reported at all.

Some may claim, including Luc Gnacadja, Benin's former environment minister, that extreme youth protests may not translate well into a cultural setting that disapproves of questioning elders. Greta Thurnberg's scathing United Nations speech, in which she reprimanded previous generations' climate change apathy, would not effectively pressure Benin decision-makers. Likewise, Kevin Ossah, a 22-year-old Togolese activist, highlights that Thurnberg's public protests of criticism and expression aren't viable methods in some local areas due to fear of persecution from authoritarian regimes. Instead, Ossah focuses on concrete solutions ranging from planting trees to writing government employees. Vanessa Nakate also worries that Ugandan citizens cannot focus on combating climate change while some live day-by-day. Environmental disturbances disproportionately affect women who must walk up to six hours per day for water, which might only increase with longer drought seasons and are perpetuated by missing school. Thus, the ability to protest only diminishes with increasing climate change effects.

These issues, however, only prove how essential youths actually are. Many African activists have worked through solutions to local issues that could provide a framework for other culturally

similar, non-industrialized countries.

These local concerns do not disprove the need for macro-scale activism; they indicate such community-specific practices must be normalized within local government hierarchies. In other words, traditional and reputable media, media that influences elders and officials, must recognize youths' efforts. African youths' bottom-up practices must be partnered with legal, systematic support in order to define a model for similarly-structured countries. Clive Barnett and Dianne Scott's study on post-apartheid environmental justice found that dualistic strategies that utilize both institutionalized organizations and informal, inclusive engagement, were most effective for enacting environmental change. Barnett and Scott determine a clear division between state-sanctioned change and opposition-led, neoliberal growth models. However, they ultimately found that it is unwise to assume social movements must remain separate from the state.

This is not a call for a green revolution on the African continent — that has existed for decades. Rather, in order to achieve sustainable global change, media outlets must highlight pre-existing revolutionary solutions. This includes significant coverage for African youth activists in international media, such as the BBC, and in national media, such as Nigeria's The Guardian. National governments should provide consistent platforms for youth activism, in the form of community forums or collaboration with elders. They must seek to legitimize already-existing and essential voices. Media's portrayal of Africa as a singular, destructive entity provides a scapegoat for inaction and apathy. We must highlight the many stories of climate justice in order to subdue a narrative of hopelessness in the crucial next decades, years and months.

Correa versus Moreno: A Battle for Ecuador's Future

Jordan Halpern

Following a wave of protests at the end of 2019, Ecuadorian politics was reaching a boiling point. Tensions calmed in the following months, but this is subject to change as Ecuador's "trial of the century" began on February 10th. Former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa and more than 20 associates from his administration face charges of bribery and corruption. Despite facing three to five years in prison, Correa shows no intention of relinquishing his political career, and he may be able to manipulate his legal predicament to his political benefit. If his defense team manages to prolong the trial until the Presidential General Election in 2021, under Ecuadorian law, Correa could run for Parliament; if he won, he would be exempt from prosecution under parliamentary immunity. Given Correa's importance as a political figure, the trial will play an integral role in the 2021 election, and in turn, will shape the trajectory of Ecuadorian politics.

The impending political battle stems from two key Ecuadorian political players: former president Rafael Correa and current president Lenin Moreno. Correa served as president from 2007 to 2017, with Moreno as his vice president during his first term. While in office, Correa implemented highly popular socialist policies, increasing taxes on the wealthy and investing heavily in infrastructure and public programs such as schools, publicly-funded pensions, free health care, and housing. Moreno, seen as his protégé and ally, worked closely with Correa during his term as vice president. The massive overhaul of Ecuador's social and economic hardship, dubbed *La Revolución Ciudadana*,

or *The Citizen's Revolution*, boosted Correa's approval rating to almost 80 percent. Even with the corruption and bribery accusations hovering over his head at the end of his term, stemming from allegedly accepting illicit campaign funds in 2013, he still held nearly 70 percent approval rating.

Correa's term expired in 2017. As president of the party, *Alianza PAIS*, he nominated his vice president, Lenin Moreno, in hopes that Moreno would continue his legacy. However, upon taking office in 2017, Moreno slowly began to abandon the promises he had made on the campaign trail; shortly after taking office, his stance began shifting from Correa's socialist ideology to more neoliberal, pro-American ideas. In a stunning betrayal, Lenin began to systematically repeal the Correa-era policies and practices, reducing spending on public programs and passing pro-bank policies. The bitter conflict between the two politicians and competing ideologies is embedded in the country's political culture, from government spending to Ecuador's Amazon region. A major difference between the two surrounds WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, to whom Correa famously provided refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy. Moreno allowed British police to enter the embassy to arrest him in April 2019. In a response on Twitter, Correa called Moreno, "The greatest traitor in Ecuadorian and Latin American history," claiming allowing the arrest is a "crime that humanity will never forget."

Tensions came to a head in October of 2019 when Moreno abolished fuel subsidies. The move sparked massive protests. Starting in early October, eleven consecutive

days of demonstrations against the Moreno administration made international headlines. Although these protests started as peaceful marches against the policy's replacement, they soon evolved to demand Moreno's removal. His approval rating, previously at 77 percent upon taking office in 2017, plummeted, reaching a sub-30 percent approval rating. Regardless of Correa's legal status or government position, he is undoubtedly a key figure in the country and has considerable influence in Ecuadorian politics. Moreno even accused Correa of remotely orchestrating the protests as an attempted coup. Correa, in self-imposed exile in Belgium, denies the claims.

As of now, neither Correa or Moreno will be running for president in 2021; however, the battle between Correa and Moreno persists vicariously through their political allies. Jaime Nebot, former mayor of Guayaquil, has close ties to Moreno; a Nebot presidency would likely closely resemble the anti-Correa policies of the Moreno administration. In 2018, Correa was ordered to be arrested for an alleged botched kidnapping—the man, Fernando Balda Flores, is now running. Further complicating the increasingly complex election, Correa's allies face a unique political issue: the corruption trial. More than twenty high-ranking politicians, administrators, and government actors that aligned and allied themselves with Correa are facing charges of bribery and corruption. If convicted, they will be barred from running for political office. This would be a devastating hit to Correa's policies. The trial, which has the potential to forbid dozens of Correa allies from holding political office, will also have a

major impact on Rafael Correa's political future.

If Rafael Correa himself is convicted, he will be barred from running for political office, as under Ecuadorian law, those convicted of bribery, embezzlement, or illegal campaign enrichment are disqualified. However, if he can prolong his trial until February 2021, he can run for parliament and gain parliamentary immunity, shielding him from prosecution. This is not out of the question. The case, which was scheduled to begin on February 10th, was suspended pending an appeal from Correa's defense team. His lawyers filed a motion against the panel of judges, Iván León, Marco Rodríguez, and Iván Saquicela, claiming they are unable to remain impartial; Correa accuses Moreno of charging him as part of a political plot to disqualify him from running, dismissing the investigation and charges as a partisan witch hunt. If he can get the case dismissed, or if he is found innocent, Correa would be legally entitled to run for office. In an interview, Correa explains, "If it's necessary, I will go back. I would have to be a candidate for something, for example, vice president."

Ecuador is one of the few Latin American countries that has not faced a right-wing, authoritarian shift. Both Correa and Moreno are liberal. As frustration among both grows, there is immense risk of falling in line with their counterparts. Cuts in social programs have already caused massive social unrest; with increasing social and economic instability across the country, especially considering the impending 2021 Election, the political future of Ecuador remains unsettled.



Fighting a Losing Battle: Alberto Fernandez and a Struggling Argentinian Economy

Alberto Della Torre

On the night of October 27th, 2019, Alberto Fernandez became the new president of Argentina. Fernandez, a formerly obscure political strategist and university professor, defeated the incumbent president Mauricio Macri by a margin of 8 percent. While Fernandez and his Vice President, Cristina de Kirchner Fernandez (CFK) (no relation) celebrated with ardent supporters in Buenos Aires, the festivities quickly came to an end. The same night Fernandez declared victory, Argentina's government imposed stricter capital controls to protect its foreign-currency reserves, as the central bank feared new interventionist policies from the new administration would hurt the market. The slew of economic problems that Alberto Fernandez now faces will lead him into a lose-lose situation: he either faces a collapse of the Argentinian economy for a second time this millennium, or he risks losing his electoral mandate by issuing austerity measures trying to fix the economy.

Fernandez's victory against Macri was not surprising. Any candidate running against Macri would have most likely won, as the former president was unpopular in the final two years of his administration. At the height of his administration, Macri only reached a 37 percent approval rating. During the beginning of his tenure, Macri's government devalued the Argentinian Peso. Consequently, inflation rose and put basic living costs out

of reach for many Argentinians. During Macri's first campaign, he emphasized his promise to alleviate poverty – "zero poverty" became a mantra of his campaign. In reality, the Argentinian poverty rate rose from 29 percent to 33 percent under his governance. In an attempt to fix the economic problems, Macri sought the help of Argentina's boogeyman: the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Macri secured the IMF's largest loan ever of \$57 billion in order to restructure the country's finances. The IMF is a hated institution by a majority of Argentinians, because the 'prescription' the fund gives comes with strings attached, namely austerity measures, and has previously led to economic implosions, as admitted by the IMF itself. After Argentina received the IMF loan, the economic situation in the country worsened. Inflation rates skyrocketed to 50 percent. It is projected that the Argentinian GDP will decrease by 1.2 percent by the end of 2019.

Macri did inherit a problematic Argentinian economy from Cristina Fernandez. The current vice-president led a shambolic populist government. She assumed the presidency from her late husband, Nestor Kirchner, in 2007 and remained in office until she was term-limited in 2015. During her presidency, CFK pushed a populist agenda that focused on providing government assistance to the poor of the country. Her

most popular policies included programs such as national child-care allowance, and funding the public pension fund, which appealed to low income groups. However, at the start of her second term, Argentina suffered a recession, largely due to rising inflation from increased government spending. During her tenure, controversial actions, such as nationalizing the national Argentinian airline, Aerolineas Argentinas, and the Argentina oil company, YPF, were regular occurrences in the CFK administration. By the end of the administration, the government lied about official economic indicators, though it couldn't mask the fact that high inflation left Argentina teetering on the edge of an economic collapse.

Alberto Fernandez's proposed economic policy is vague but has a real chance of threading the needle between providing necessary aid to the Argentinian people and maintaining confidence with the International Monetary Fund. Coming from a populist perspective, Fernandez has stated that his plan of action for the loan payment is to renegotiate with the IMF to extend the payment period. By doing this, Fernandez is lightening the economic load on his government and giving the economy room to grow without stressing about impending IMF payments. Nevertheless, the president will find a plethora of challenges, political and economic, throughout his presidency.

The problems could start within the government. It has been widely speculated that Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner is playing the long political game and is using Alberto Fernandez as a prop to regain political power. She did not run for the presidency directly because many Argentinians still have a bad taste in their mouths from when she left office. Furthermore, CFK is currently caught in a scandal in which she is being prosecuted for corruption. The power-hungry populist could have a huge sway in how the government pursues its policies and political goals. She still has a large base of electoral support that will empower her actions inside the government. She will be pushing an aggressive populist agenda that runs exactly contrary to the wishes of the IMF. Her maligned economic track record when in power could prove to be destructive for this new Fernandez administration. The IMF is also putting a tight leash on the Argentinian government, because they fear it will default on another loan, which would be the second this millennium. Given the current situation, the newly elected president will find very few favorable directions to take his government in. Alberto Fernandez will have to choose to either follow through on his tough stance toward the IMF which could lead to economic hardship, even a national default on debt, or he could cooperate with the IMF and risk losing his electoral mandate from the Argentinian people.



Nicaragua Needs Trade, but Trump Isn't Buying

William F. Brown

In the wake of massive protests against President Daniel Ortega and his regime, Nicaragua is now facing a new threat: the loss of a trade deal with the United States. Like many wide scale protests, the fundamental issue at hand was of a very narrow focus. Protesters were marching against a change to the nation's social security plan, but the focus rapidly expanded to encompass systemic issues within the country's leadership. The size of the protests grew in tandem with the breadth of its scope. In January, officials representing American President Donald Trump brought up the idea of removing Nicaragua from the CAFTA-DR trade deal due to the rising tide of violent crackdowns on protests and general dissatisfaction with the leadership in place. This trade agreement, signed by President Bush in 2005, allows for free trade between the United States and a variety of developing economies in Central America. The deal has shown to bear fruit. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the trade between the U.S. and the seven nations involved in the agreement totaled almost \$60 billion in 2019, up from nearly \$58 billion the year prior.

The economies of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic benefit the most due to the trade agreement. For example, since the deal was implemented, nearly fifty percent of the exports coming out of the

Dominican Republic went to the United States. All of this is to say that, so far, the agreement has been mutually beneficial. Due to Nicaraguan political instability and protests against President Ortega, who has been accused of dictatorial behavior such as removing term limits and appointing his wife as Vice President, the Trump administration is threatening to remove the nation from the deal. The U.S. has made it clear that they do not want to support "non-market economies" with trade. This is not a good idea. Instead, the U.S. should focus on measures that would not create a vacuum for nations such as Russia and China to fill, and actions that would not further inhibit life for everyday people in the developing country of Nicaragua.

As previously stated, this trade deal has been incredibly beneficial to the people and economy of Nicaragua, not to mention its benefits for many small businesses in the United States. Additionally, major corporations such as Kimberly-Clark rely on the trade deal to import supplies such as tissues, face masks, toilet paper, and other medical supplies at low cost into Nicaragua. With the current global pandemic in full force, removing this pipeline of goods could be both economically and physically devastating. The Trump administration should not try to save Nicaragua from a dictatorship by putting its people in further danger, which is precisely what removing

them from the CAFTA-DR would do.

Pulling out of Nicaragua would also leave a massive trade vacuum for this burgeoning economy. Exports would need to find new homes, and the nation would need to find new ways to import goods. The most likely country to fill this void is China, followed closely by Russia. China's interest in the region has been growing for decades, and it has not slowed down. According to the Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa*, Nicaragua is still in talks to build a canal across the nation with Chinese funding as a means to compete with the Panama Canal. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Russia reportedly has military bases in Nicaragua, as the two nations have been closely tied since the 1980s, and Russia has been building a relationship with President Ortega in particular for years. If President Trump tries to remove Nicaraguan access to free trade with the U.S., it would only push Nicaragua to work more heavily with China and Russia.

Nicaragua, before the beginning of the protests in 2018, was consistently ranked as one of the safest Central American countries. The unrest has already driven thousands of people to flee to nearby Costa Rica, and some to come to the United States. It is a stated policy goal of the Trump administration to decrease immigration from Latin America. Still, if Nicaragua were to be removed from the

trade deal, it would only spur more people to leave the nation and seek refuge elsewhere. According to Nicaraguan newspaper *Confidencial*, the CAFTA-DR trade deal creates almost 125,000 jobs in the country. The sudden disappearance of these jobs would cause more people to head for places such as the United States. The current administration would be trading one problem for another.

Instead of taking such extreme measures, like total removal from the free trade agreement, which could cripple the economy of a developing nation and set the stage for more Chinese and Russian influence in America's backyard, the Trump administration and the UN should try to reopen talks between the Ortega regime and opposition leaders. They should also consider imposing more substantial sanctions on targeted government officials and encourage allies to do the same, as these sanctions would not harm the nation as a whole. President Ortega needs stability and trust from the international community if he wants to stand any chance at staying in power for much longer, and the best chance at making a deal is through internal talks facilitated by the UN. Any rash action could further destabilize the nation, thereby increasing present bloodshed and spurring a massive shift in economic alliances for decades to come.

Coronavirus in Venezuela: The Enemy Maduro Cannot Escape

Grace Bristol

Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro is feeling the strain as his socialist regime struggles to maintain power amid mounting pressure for his resignation. Maduro's legitimacy was called into question when opposition leader Juan Guaidó declared himself acting president on January 23, 2019. The United States heads a coalition of more than 50 nations that have since recognized Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate leader after Washington accused Maduro of fraudulent presidential elections in 2018.

Furthermore, on March 26, 2020, Maduro was indicted in the U.S. on charges of operating a drug cartel and leading a narco-terrorism and international cocaine trafficking operation, an unprecedented international action. Venezuela, despite having the world's largest oil reserves, continues to suffer from economic hardship, political instability, and widespread social unrest. The country is experiencing dire shortages of food and medicine, and is facing increasing hyperinflation as millions flee to other countries.

Despite immense international and domestic opposition to his leadership, Maduro has held on to power. He has done so mainly by retaining the support of Venezuela's security forces, backing from China, Russia and Cuba, and accusing the U.S. of sowing internal dissent and imposing crushing sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector. While the countless crises and opposition have failed to oust Maduro, the coronavirus could be the greatest test of his leadership and endurance.

The pandemic is exacerbating an already dire situation in Venezuela, South America's poorest nation. According to data provided by Médicos Unidos por Venezuela, a non-governmental organization, over 80 percent of hospitals in Venezuela don't have basic supplies or qualified medical personnel, and more than 30 percent lack power and water. The coronavirus will soon overwhelm the country's broken health-care system and deepen social inequalities that exist in Venezuela.

The first confirmed case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in South America appeared in Brazil

on Feb. 26, 2020. As of April 20, South America has suffered more than 4,000 virus-related deaths. However, the rates of coronavirus infection have been relatively low compared with the rest of the world. Many countries in South America benefited from quick action taken by local governments and lower levels of international travel from virus hot spots.

Venezuela, with one of the lowest reported numbers of coronavirus cases, confirmed its

March that Twitter deleted his tweets promoting a false claim that there was a plant-based cure for the virus.

While Maduro is downplaying the risk coronavirus poses to Venezuela, he is taking measures that suggest the opposite. Venezuela implemented a social quarantine on March 15, requiring schools and businesses to close and urging people to stay in their homes. Maduro, in an unusual move, sought a \$5 billion emergency loan from the International Monetary

Chavistas (supporters of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who now back Maduro) facing drug-trafficking or corruption charges, effectively banning Maduro.

The leadership rift was further exacerbated by a Washington proposal to create a Democratic Transition Framework for Venezuela on March 31. In a Wall Street Journal op-ed, U.S. special envoy Elliott Abrams said the proposal was designed "to help Venezuelans escape the national crisis that falling oil prices and the coronavirus have now deepened." The plan also calls for a restoration of the National Assembly's powers and for new members on the Supreme Court and National Electoral Council to be instituted, creating an environment for a new and fair presidential election. Maduro has rejected these plans. However, several sources within the Venezuelan government say there are some "proposals coming and going" between the Maduro regime and members of the four main opposition parties. But previous talks concerning the 2018 elections and Maduro's regime, brokered by Norway, fell apart when Maduro's team walked away in protest of U.S. sanctions.

With Venezuela unable to seek adequate help from the international community due to a lack of clear leadership, Maduro's legitimacy is further undermined. Global oil prices are falling, threatening to plunge the country into an even deeper economic crisis. Therefore, the lifting of U.S. sanctions is desperately needed, though they are likely to remain intact as long as Maduro is in power. Guaidó's proposal, along with the United States' plan, could ease this pain and would set Venezuela on a new path.

The coronavirus is likely to hit a health-care crippled Venezuela particularly hard, and disproportionately hurt the most vulnerable people who might not have access to soap and running water. The situation the pandemic is creating might revitalize support for Guaidó and could eventually lead to much needed fair elections. The cost of ripping power from Maduro's hands, however, would be high for the citizens of Venezuela, who have already suffered greatly under his regime.



first two cases on March 13, but it is likely that the disease arrived in the country earlier. While the relatively low rates may seem promising, these statistics likely are due to a lack of testing and suppression of accurate information.

Maduro claims to be conducting 3,000 coronavirus tests daily, but the United Nations reported that the country only administered a total of 1,779 tests between March 13 and March 31. To make matters worse, journalists and health researchers have been jailed in Venezuela for reporting on the coronavirus. According to Amnesty International, Venezuelan journalist Darvinson Rojas was detained for 12 days and charged with "instigating hatred" and "public instigation" for his coverage of the pandemic. The Maduro regime is infamous for its media suppression, and even Maduro himself complained in late

Fund to combat the virus, which was denied because of the lack of clarity as to the leadership of the country. Venezuela has also received aid from other nations, including \$9 million from the U.S. through multilateral organizations. While Washington has imposed sanctions, there are exceptions for humanitarian aid.

The pandemic is also a point of contention between Guaidó and Maduro, because Guaidó believes the number of cases in Venezuela is three times higher than those being reported by the government. Guaidó, with the backing of the U.S., is using this pandemic to his advantage by highlighting the way the Maduro regime has failed the Venezuelan people.

On March 30, Guaidó announced a plan to construct a multi-partisan Council of State to function as a transitional government, but it bars the participation of

How Mexico may be the Unexpected Winner of the U.S.-China Trade War

Tuhin Chakraborty



After more than two years, and despite multiple promises from both countries to find a solution, the U.S.-China trade war does not seem to have an end in sight. Chinese, American, and other foreign investors are gradually becoming fed up with the endless barrage of tariffs and restrictions from both sides. With free trade deals ensuring access from Mexico to more than 50 countries and an emerging manufacturing economy closely tied to the United States, Mexico is quickly becoming an unlikely victor in the trade war. This is primarily due to two economic reasons. First, Mexico's willingness to create infrastructure to attract foreign investment and close financial and commercial ties to the American economy allows it to be a prime destination for physical capital and assets intended for the American market. Second, the relatively low labor costs in Mexico are attractive to investors seeking to maximize profit margins.

Despite the recent change in trade agreements, the United States and Mexico are still strongly linked when it comes to transnational commerce, and Mexico is continuously working to strengthen that bond. In 2018, around \$671 billion worth of trade occurred between the two countries, and their new trade deal, the United States-Canada-Mexico Agreement (USMCA), promises to maintain this lucrative relationship. In addition to commerce, the United States is responsible for around \$100 billion in foreign direct investment to help fund projects including a trade corridor through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, designed to facilitate trade between Mexico, Asia, and the east coast of the United States. In November 2019, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) fulfilled his campaign promises and released an infrastructure plan worth around \$43 billion to be executed continually from 2020 to 2024 to construct oil refineries, roads,

telecom facilities, and other buildings. These constructions are designed to continue to spur foreign investment and jumpstart the Mexican economy after a subpar GDP growth report of just 0.1 percent for the first half of 2019.

This desire to attract investment has not gone unnoticed by multinational companies, especially as the trade war continues. From the start of the trade war in April 2018 to August 2019, six companies opened new factories in Mexico in the automobile parts, electrical equipment, and electronic sectors. Oliver Zipse, the global production chief of German car company BMW, which opened a new production plant in Mexico in June 2019, has publicly stated that opening a new plant in Mexico will help the company and "hedge" its interests during "trade flareups" so that it can continue to export vehicles to the United States. Due to these new opportunities opening up as companies seek to avoid costly tariffs, the renowned Japanese international financial services firm Nomura recently released a report declaring Mexico a winner during this trade war. As long as China and the United States continue to maintain and add commercial restrictions against each other, large companies reliant on global exports will continue to seek locations that will allow them to operate with minimal cost. Mexico is emerging as a prime choice for such a location.

A longtime point of contention between the United States and Mexico is leveling the playing field in terms of labor costs. The entry-level wage for manufacturing workers in Mexico can be as low as \$2.60 an hour, which is a third of the US federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Although the opposite was the case as recently as three decades ago, Mexico's average wages are now cheaper than China's average manufacturing wage of about \$5.51 per hour. Furthermore, during this time of commercial conflict between the United States and China, the economic advantages of having such low labor costs are becoming more and more prominent. According to the Mexican manufacturing consulting firm IVEMSA, particularly during the uncertainty associated

with the U.S.-China trade war, companies such as Hasbro and Universal Electronics are "shift[ing] operations" to Mexico to strategically decrease production costs. These firms wish to ensure as much financial immunity from trade war ramifications as possible. IVEMSA has also stated that production shifts to Mexico could happen within months after such a shift is announced, which no doubt further incentivizes companies looking for a quick solution to avoid tangling with tariffs while exporting from China to the United States or vice-versa.

It is also worth noting that Mexico is geographically closer to the United States, so companies spend significantly less on shipping than they would if they were based in China. These savings are only highlighted by the tariffs inflicted on Chinese exports to the United States. Similar to their positive reaction to Mexico's expenditures to attract positive investment, corporations are beginning to flock to Mexico to strategically ensure that their profit margins remain stable by taking advantage of low labor costs.

The U.S.-China trade war, which has affected hundreds of billions of dollars in global trade, threatens to continue undermining the economic prosperity of farmers, manufacturing workers, and other employees in both countries working in sectors dependent on international trade. Despite this, Mexico stands to gain much from the current state of affairs. However, if U.S.-China relations do improve in the near future, will these companies remain in Mexico or move back to China or other countries? Particularly because a Phase One deal has been signed between the U.S. and China defusing some trade war tensions, whether or not all of this new capital inflow into Mexico is sustainable remains to be seen. If it is sustainable, Mexico's economy, particularly in its manufacturing and consumer electronics sectors, stands to gain billions of dollars in foreign investment as well as thousands of new jobs in future years, a boon for any developing economy.

Digital Surveillance in Xinjiang and Beyond

Nick Hollman

Over the past few years, Xinjiang, a region in far northwest China, has become home to some of the most advanced surveillance technology in the world. Facial recognition technology and checkpoints collecting biometric data tile the streets in the region. Surveillance becomes stricter yet in Xinjiang's detainment camps with technology monitoring detainees' every behavior. Reports from The New York Times, Council on Foreign Relations, and Foreign Policy help paint a picture of the oppression Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims are currently facing from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). From a report by the Freedom House, the CCP has detained over a million Uighurs in these camps, and the oppression reaches far more throughout the rest of the region. As the CCP continues to exercise its control with the help of powerful technology, it has also entered the market of exporting this technology to other authoritarian regimes around the world. Democratic countries must respond promptly by limiting China's exports, providing competitive ethical and democratic versions of digital governance, and investing more into understanding the moral and political challenges that arise in technology-based governance.

There has been long-standing tension for Uighur independence in Xinjiang from the CCP. The cause of the surveillance state that has become Xinjiang is reportedly traced back to the CCP's response to several acts of violent terrorism, but these events are best viewed as the tipping point in enacting stricter regulations amid an antagonistic history. Starting in 2009, a riot by Uighur militants in Urumqi killed over 150 people, followed by a knife attack in 2013 and vehicle attack in 2014, according to a report by

the Council on Foreign Relations. Such events gave rise to China's negative and unforgiving view of the militants that was generalized to the entire Uighur population in Xinjiang. China's police ministry then enacted the "Strike Hard against Violent Terrorism" campaign which surged the number of arrests and detentions in camps and prisons in the region, compared to past efforts. The moral wrongs here are obvious. The CCP is violating a number of human rights including expression of religion, privacy rights, and freedom of movement, as pointed out by Human Rights Watch. The CCP is playing a game of guilty until proven innocent with the Uighur population.

The ability for the CCP to enforce such control and commit such atrocities lies, in large part, in its use of state of the art surveillance technology. In Xinjiang, its technological arsenal includes limited and heavily surveyed internet and text-messaging, closed-circuit television cameras (CCTVs), biometric sensors, DNA collection, navigation tracking in cars, and surveillance drones, according to policy briefs by the Brookings Institute and The Jamestown Foundation. Further, the CCP has employed a "grid-management system" that splits Xinjiang into smaller sub-regions to better enforce police check-ins and collect data. Decisions to detain Uighurs in camps depend on the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), the main surveillance system used by the police officials in China. According to Human Rights Watch, certain individuals are "flagged" as suspicious from their personal data on religious expression, internet history, communication, among other variables.

However, as suggested by a Brookings policy brief on digital

authoritarianism, the worst may be yet to come. The CCP has exported this surveillance technology all around the world to advance economic development and foreign influence chiefly through countries in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For example, according to Brookings, Singapore and Ethiopia now use Chinese-based surveillance technology in their street cameras and to monitor activists and journalists, respectively. In particular, these efforts fall under China's Digital Silk Road initiative, described as a part of the BRI to increase connectivity abroad, as mentioned by the Council on Foreign Relations. An acknowledgement of the spread of digital authoritarianism is an important step in prioritizing efforts of deterrence and response. Treating the malicious use of technology and ongoing human rights violations in Xinjiang as an isolated case would be a mistake. This incidence is simply one among many others of growing tech-based authoritarianism and political illiberalism. Consider, by analogy, an appropriate response to a pandemic. Governments enact travel restrictions, design vaccines, and take other measures to limit future cases. However, if the pandemic analogy is taken seriously, the global response to the spread of digital authoritarianism has fallen short. Specifically, the consideration of deterring future Xinjiang-style surveillance states outside of China has been neglected. In response, democratic governments should be limiting the exports of Chinese surveillance technology that continue to be integral to their oppression. Brookings has pointed out current efforts from the U.S. and Europe to help limit imports of technology, namely surveillance hardware, to China, but action must be taken to limit China's exports too. An additional way to limit the spread would be for democratic versions of surveillance to be engineered to

act as competitive alternatives to the existing authoritarian ones. The urgency for these measures to be implemented grows as China is now producing, designing, and exporting its own surveillance technology. Another feature of the pandemic analogy is that it sheds light on the policy of developing a generic plan for facing future risks in emerging technology. This allows preventative measures to extend beyond the current concern over surveillance technology to include other risks like autonomous weapons and cyber attacks. Developing a response plan for influenza, for example, remains short-sighted to other, future pathogens. Just like pathogens and synthetic biology, technology will become more powerful and thus create novel problems for governments to solve.

Xinjiang offers a glimpse into how advanced digital surveillance can lead to illiberal and deeply unethical outcomes. Although advancements in technology and technology-based governance are inevitable, their malicious use is not. An appropriate response requires enforcing export controls, providing democratic alternatives, and encouraging further research and development in this area. Ultimately, this makes it imperative that democratic nations lead by example through the inherent uncertainties and risks posed by tech-based governance.

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The CCP is playing a game of guilty until proven innocent with the Uighur population.

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Gross National Happiness as an Indicator of Development: Applications Beyond Bhutan

Kayleigh Crabb



The small Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, sandwiched between major economic superpowers India and China, is not often noticed internationally. However, the nation stood out on the world stage when it announced its alternative development indicator, Gross National Happiness (GNH), at the United Nations in 1998. It starkly contrasts with the widely used Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an indicator, with a focus on wellbeing that far outweighs economic growth. GNH, as a concept and framework, should be more widely considered when determining the development status of any nation.

Although GDP is a clear indicator of pure economic growth, it does not necessarily measure development. Health, education, and income per capita tend to increase with GDP, but it fails to paint an accurate picture of life for all citizens. Countries with poor human rights records, stark inequality, or hazardous environmental conditions can still have, and often do, a high GDP. Economic growth is an important piece of the development puzzle, but the ultimate goal of development should be to improve the wellbeing of all the citizens of a nation, and this is not necessarily inherent in economic growth alone.

Implemented with sustainability and equity in mind, GNH largely rejects the notions of traditional economic development. It is founded upon the 'four pillars of GNH': Sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, the preservation and promotion of culture, and good governance. While GNH was formally announced by Bhutan in 1998, formalizing it as an index of development and action plan based

upon these pillars really began in the mid-2000s with the first GNH survey in 2007. This first survey included more than 640 different variables, with a variety of question formats ranging from more objective to more open-ended and subjective questions. These surveys took around three to four hours for surveyors to complete with each of the 950 respondents. Then, in 2010, a new survey was conducted that included more than 750 indicators selected to be better representative of the population and included 7,142 respondents. This represented a broad, concerted attempt to capture the status of nationwide happiness. Subsequent analysis showed that 59.1 percent of those surveyed were unhappy or narrowly happy, in a manner that would allow the government of Bhutan to better understand the needs of its citizens. The screening process for variables and questions as well as the cut-off for 'happiness' is fairly comprehensive and carefully considers many aspects of wellbeing. This makes GNH far more comprehensive than any other index of development, providing data that can allow focused policies and initiatives aimed at improving overall wellbeing.

There are many other alternative development indices that exist and are conducted on a larger scale. For example, the Human Development Index (HDI) was formulated by the United Nations Development Program to be a more encompassing index than GDP, and is fairly widely used. However, the HDI only analyzes three factors of a nation: life expectancy at birth, education (mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and gross national income per capita.

While this index is more commonly used and the data to calculate it is more accessible, it does not provide as much information as GNH and does not have a supporting framework that aims to produce sustainable, equitable development. Another alternative development index, Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), attempts to account for the economic impact of the negative externalities created. However, quantifying the economic loss resulting from pollution or poverty is difficult to gauge accurately. Furthermore, the wellbeing of people affected by the negative externalities are not directly considered, only indirectly through economic loss. GNH differs from the HDI and GPI with its intense focus on the wellbeing of citizens and its framework supporting continued equitable and sustainable development.

Although GNH is relatively new, its results have begun to impact policy in Bhutan. The 2010 survey led officials to believe that policies improving living standards, health, and services, while increasing participation in tshechu, or festivals, would lead to a greater level of happiness. Overall, GNH increased by a modest 1.8 percent by the next survey in 2015, with the amount of 'deeply happy' people increasing by 2.5 percent. As the 2010 survey was the first fully-fledged survey, the results of how GNH has changed from 2015-2020 will likely reveal more closely how policy changes have impacted happiness. However, there are also factors that affect wellbeing and happiness outside of policy changes, and the current pandemic could certainly influence the GNH findings this year. Only time will tell how successfully GNH reflects wellbeing in relation to policies, but it is

one of the most comprehensive efforts to gauge this aspect of society.

It is difficult to say how GNH could be implemented on a large scale or if it is applicable, in its current form, to most other nations. Bhutan has certain uncommon attributes, such as a proportionally small population for its land area and an environment that was never seriously degraded. Furthermore, GNH was inspired by Buddhist philosophies regarding interconnectivity and the importance of immaterial, spiritual development. Implementing this idealistic plan is difficult, as it is a new index that is very time consuming and has limited resources devoted to it. However, it is a bold new framework to reassess development that focuses on an entire population's well being. If implemented on a larger scale beyond Bhutan, it could be an index that helps highlight social and environmental problems within a nation while providing data to proactively limit inequality and improve wellbeing.

The definition of development is subjective and often contentious. Through GNH, Bhutan has created a more encompassing index to measure the wellbeing of its citizens, and a plan to continue down a sustainable and equitable development path. Although it is still far from perfect, with happiness being inherently difficult to quantify and highly individualized, the country is making an important step away from the focus on pure economic growth and considers more variables than other alternative development indicators. The international community could benefit from applying GNH as a concept or framework to create a more accurate picture of development worldwide.

Laos: How It Survives Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Sam Rosenblum

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Laos has bucked the notion that a country must only ally itself with the U.S. or China to grow.

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The small Southeast-Asian nation of Laos is in a difficult position. Just like many other countries in the region, the Lao People's Democratic Republic finds itself in the middle of a geopolitical and economic power struggle playing out presently between the United States and China. However, rather than aligning itself with one country or the other, Laos has chosen a different path. As a result of its location and its economic situation, Laos has found itself in a unique position where it can forge ties with all sides and hold its own in a political environment that has only grown harsher in recent years. By developing its economy while also remaining in control of its own destiny, Laos has bucked the notion that a country must only ally itself with the U.S. or China to grow.

China has a unique relationship with its small, landlocked neighbor. Nestled just to the south of the rural Yunnan province, and wedged between Thailand, Cambodia,

and Vietnam to its west, south, and east, respectively, Laos is a natural gateway for China to the rest of Southeast Asia. This has brought Laos into focus for the leadership in Beijing, and they have made great strides to repair what was once an extremely hostile relationship. Forty years ago, Laos was extremely worried, alongside Vietnam, about overbearing Chinese influence, and even though Laos and China shared (and continue to share) Communist-run governments, relations between the two were sour. Tensions got so bad that the Chinese even trained Hmong rebels to overthrow the Laotian government in the early 1980s. However, those previous hostilities have passed, and Beijing-Vientiane relations have grown tremendously.

As a result of Laos' geographic position in the middle of Southeast Asia, China has invested heavily in Laos and its economy. In particular, Laos is a key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and China has contributed to major

infrastructure improvements, including a landmark bridge over the Mekong River intended for a railway to run from Yunnan Province in China to Singapore. While concerns exist about the ability of the Laotian government to pay back loans they've taken out from the Chinese to help pay for some of these projects, there is no doubt that such infrastructure investment will help the country's economy. The country's GDP has been continuously climbing since the mid-2000s, and in just the last decade, its GDP has more than doubled. While Laos is considered a poor country on the whole, it is impossible to deny that development projects, such as those funded by China, have helped the country grow a lot economically. The relationship between Laos and China, while not always easy-going, has ended up working in the favor of the Laotians. Because of its strategic position at the crossroads of Southeast Asia, Laos can leverage the economic strength of its northern neighbor to its advantage. Instead of being a threat, China's growth is now a blessing to Laos.

Despite Laos taking significant economic aid from China, Laos nonetheless leverages its ties with China's biggest rival, the United States, to strengthen its position and support its long-term development. Just as with China, the Laotian American relationship has a troubled past. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. heavily bombed the countryside of Laos, as the area near its eastern border with Vietnam was home to a primary artery in the North Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh Trail. Laos, as a Communist country, was on the opposite side of the Cold War from the U.S., and in addition to heavy bombing during the Vietnam War, the United States and Laos were not on good terms during the war. However, since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and Laos have grown closer than ever. In 2016, President Obama made an unprecedented move in taking the time out of a long

trip to Southeast Asia for the ASEAN conference to visit the small nation to strengthen ties. The U.S. contributes heavily to programs towards improving maternal and child mortality in Laos, and partially as a result, life expectancy in the country has grown by more than ten years. The two countries exchanged \$158 million in trade in 2018, which, despite being seemingly insignificant, has helped boost the Laotian economy through strong demand in the U.S. for Laotian goods. The relationship with the United States has not only served to improve Laos' mortality rate and economy but has allowed Laos to develop a strong connection to the U.S. government. The Obama visit in 2016, along with these strong ties, has boosted Laos' position in the region as a key player in Southeast Asia, and Laos has built ties to all of its neighbors. The Laotian relationship with the United States is key to the stability and growth of Laos, and despite the rocky history and present geopolitical tensions, Laos has nonetheless managed to benefit from Chinese outreach while also gaining from embracing the United States.

The tug of both the United States and China has not made life difficult for the leadership in Laos, but rather, it has emboldened them to think outside the box and leverage both sides towards their benefit. While China is more fit to provide infrastructure improvements to the isolated nation, the U.S. is better suited to serve the humanitarian needs of the country's poor population. The case of Laos shows that even with a seemingly divided geopolitical and economic world, smaller countries like Laos don't need to feel pressured to choose one side or the other. Going forward, the leverage that Laos has created for itself in building their international relationships offers a model for other small nations finding themselves caught in the middle of the U.S.-China tug of war.

Modi Uses Hindu-Nationalism to Justify Authoritarianism

Zayna Syed

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, has garnered widespread criticism for his treatment of Muslims in India. He and his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), rose to prominence on a coded, anti-Muslim platform. And yet, several times throughout his campaign for prime minister in 2014 and 2019, Modi tried to reach out to Indian Muslims for votes. While these half-hearted attempts at courting Muslim voters may not have convinced many of his sympathies, they underscore Modi's commitment to his goal of a "Congress-free India," or the eradication of India's main opposition party. By winning Muslim votes, Modi could all but quash his opposition. Indeed, while Hindu-nationalism has been on the rise in India, so has a parallel trend: authoritarianism.

Leaders often use nationalist ideology, rooted in traditional religious or cultural norms, to advance authoritarianism. For Modi, this means answering India's founding question, one that has haunted the state since partition: Is India a secular state, or a Hindu one? Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru firmly advocated for India to be a secular state, which is enshrined in India's constitution. However, many believed that India should be, and always has been, a Hindu nation. However, the land constituting India has always been formidably diverse, with Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews and Christians all claiming India as a homeland.

But Modi's vision for India has gained popularity in recent years, with the rise of the BJP and RSS, a Hindu-nationalist paramilitary group. Modi's economic vision was also

popular, and the opposition party, the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress), was riddled with complaints of nepotism and inadequacy. Many Indians nevertheless oppose Modi and his vision, especially Dalits, who have been on the receiving end of Brahmanical oppression for thousands of years, other minorities, and academics and intellectuals, who want to see India as a secular liberal democracy. Still, the BJP won resounding majorities in both the lower and upper houses of Parliament for a consecutive six years, with a clear vision for India as a Hindu-state.

Modi's second victory in 2019 gave him a mandate to further this vision. And the methods he has used to implement such measures reek of authoritarianism. In August of 2019, Modi eliminated Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, thus stripping India's only Muslim-majority state of the basic autonomy granted to every other state, through revoking Article 370 of India's constitution. The move was followed by a complete lockdown of the region to prevent dissent and a media blackout to prevent the world from seeing it. Later that August, India concluded the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for the state of Assam, which began in 2013. The NRC asked all residents of Assam to provide proof of citizenship, or be deemed stateless, which proved problematic since many do not possess paperwork, despite living in the region for generations, or their paperwork contained clerical errors. Overall, around two million people were classified as illegal residents. Assam was targeted for the NRC because of its

large Muslim population, and, according to New York Times reporting, when judges did not name enough Muslims as illegal residents, they were fired from their positions. The state also built large-scale detention centers which sought to hold these illegal residents, which Modi has denied despite proof that they exist.

Then, in December of 2019, the BJP-led parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which offers a fast-track for citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian illegal migrants in India, who fled from Muslim-majority Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan. The bill threatens secularism in India through establishing a religious test, and it also violates the Indian Constitution, where Article 14 clearly states that India shall not "deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws ... of discrimination on grounds of religion ..." The CAA was coupled with a threat for a nationwide National Register of Citizenship, which had already been tested in Assam. It is no wonder, then, that following these authoritarian measures, Hindu-nationalist mobs were incited to action in the February 2020 Delhi Riots, some of the worst religious violence since partition.

What's more, Modi has turned to the classic authoritarian playbook in order to prevent the world from seeing such violence. Journalists in India have been personally attacked for criticizing Modi, as well, with criminal complaints filed against them. The unlucky

ones have been murdered. In the absence of verified news sources, WhatsApp, India's most popular messaging service, has been used to spread propaganda and misinformation.

Modi and his BJP government have already taken authoritarian steps to enforce their will, and now, the disruption of COVID-19 allots a new challenge to India's once secular, liberal democracy. Officials believe the virus spread through the annual conference of Tablighi Jamaat, a Muslim missionary group, held in Delhi in early March. While no social distancing measures had been implemented at the time, in India or most of the world, many blamed Muslims for the spread of the coronavirus in India, with #CoronaJihad trending on social media. India, like governments all across the world, has expanded state power to the largest extent since World War II to deal with the crisis. With a convenient scapegoat, and new capabilities as a state, the future of a secular, liberal India under the current administration looks grim indeed. As history has proven, authoritarians rarely cede power voluntarily.

Change will be difficult. Indians must address the root of the problem, which will require a real reckoning on India's identity, one that clearly did not happen during partition. Indians must ask, do we truly want India to be a Hindu state, and permanently lose our secular liberal democracy?

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Hong Kong localism and Chinese nationalism are currently locked in a bitter stalemate. The former seeks the preservation of local identity and autonomy, while the latter will not yield an ounce of its political primacy. These tensions are nothing new; Hong Kong's political uncertainty has been a source of anxiety for decades. The 1997 issue concerning the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty has simply become the 2047 issue (when the terms of the Sino-British Joint Declaration will expire). But an air of inevitability hangs over the city. What will happen if the two systems become one? Have all the protests been for naught? Conventional measures of political success (e.g. amount of legislation passed, seats won, etc.) are lacking in explanatory power: they fail to explain the resilience of Hong Kong's most recent protests. Arguably, localism is not dependent on legal or constitutional victories; it thrives because it offers an accessible alternative to the current political framework.

The future may be impossible to divine, but the past and present are within our grasp. Localism's accomplishments up to this point in time should be noted. In 2003, a proposed anti-sedition bill (potentially granting the government wide latitude in targeting subversive behavior) was defeated thanks to mass mobilization. In 2014, ordinary citizens came together to occupy the heart of Hong Kong for nearly 2 months. And in 2019, pro-democracy parties, with localist support, won a landslide victory in Hong Kong's District Council elections. Clearly, the localist message has appeal; its methods have been quite successful. Even the ongoing stalemate stemming from disputes over a controversial extradition bill cannot detract from these achievements. The movement has displayed a surprising strength in the face of condemnation, disruption, and arrest.

Yet, the political deadlock has devolved into a battle of attrition. The Hong Kong government will not

compromise its authority; the protestors will not compromise their ideals. It is a test of wills with no foreseeable end in sight. But there is growing fatigue amongst the protesters, and valuable momentum could be lost. Continued disruption could also lead to an evaporation of critical public support. If past trends are any indication, then the Hong Kong government can afford to bide its time and wait for another opportune moment. Indeed, authorities have never granted a major political concession in the history of localist activism. If this is the case, then why do protesters continue to fight? Why rally around the localist

Walls — colorful spaces filled with messages of camaraderie and encouragement — have become popular mediums for dissent. A minor act of subversion (writing and pasting a sticky note) can collectively stir popular sentiment and discourse. Localism has effectively changed the dynamics within the city on a tangible, physical level. Whether it is at the top of Lion Rock or at the heart of Central, all spaces have become a viable forum for public protest. There is constant engagement with messages advocating for local independence and autonomy. Anyone can engage in this discourse: political position

political institutions, then those alternative forms of expression will remain popular. In 2016, the artist Sampson Wong projected a countdown to the 2047 deadline on Hong Kong's tallest skyscraper. His remarks capture the sentiments behind the recent protests: "The ending could be the worst ending. But...we'll have a footnote in history that we did something." If anything, 2047 should not be seen as the end of activism. Instead, it has served as a valuable reminder for the localist groups of Hong Kong. There is no endgame to the Hong Kong protests because, quite frankly, they will not end anytime soon. The



The Localist Legacy: Charting a Trajectory for the Hong Kong Protests Beyond 2047

Warren Yu

banner? After all, political movements are sustained on political victories, yet localism has never had access to the halls of power.

To answer these questions, we need to understand the unique character of the demonstrations. Importantly, they stand in stark contrast to the opaque nature of the government. While official business goes on behind the closed doors of the Chief Executive's office, activists have embraced public speeches, workshops, and meetings. They have turned the entire city into a venue for the localist message. The street is a canvas for expression, and activists have cleverly made use of all available spaces. Even the blindest of walls can serve a political purpose. The Lennon

is not a prerequisite for the localist vision of expression.

Localist longevity is built on this social solidarity. Nothing is more demonstrative of the people power behind this movement than in the formation of the Hong Kong Way: a human chain of around 200,000 participants. Support for the movement literally stretched from the mountains to the sea. Clearly, being shut from the halls of power has not dampened the localist drive. In fact, protesters are motivated to take to the streets because traditional political structures are not open to them in the first place. Alternative frameworks like those organized by the localists are an opportunity to confront and criticize the government. As long as Beijing refuses to relinquish its grasp over Hong Kong's

posters might be torn down, the makeshift barricades removed, and the recalcitrant jailed, but localism and its ideas will persist. It is an intangible alternative that cannot be shut out, no matter how much the government would like to ignore it. Localism may never achieve the major political change it so desperately wants, but as long as the root causes for discontent continue then so too will the movement and its adherents. The localist legacy has inspired a living, breathing alternative to a political system increasingly marked by Beijing's presence.

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No single story has enraptured the international press this century quite like COVID-19. How can climate change, which will likely prove far deadlier than the pandemic, claim a seat at the table?

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It All Comes Back to Climate Change

Archana Prabhakar

In just a short while, a novel microscopic virus has transformed the world: countries have issued emergency lockdowns, shut down all non-essential businesses, and life as we know it has come to a standstill. The coronavirus is one topic that has pervaded conversations on every news network, but the most dire public health concern in Asia is climate change. Heavy debates are growing from the COVID-19 outbreak as the needs of a catastrophic health crisis compete with an equally devastating climate crisis. For policymakers throughout the world, the COVID pandemic has provided a reality check, a painful reminder of what a real existential crisis looks and feels like — its rampancy is a hypothetical model for what a future “climate emergency” could look like. The sacrifice in order to recover from this disaster is exorbitant; while

many countries will prioritize health and economic restoration at the expense of environmental remediation, the world needs to prioritize climate change intervention just as seriously as it is handling the pandemic. The most impactful consequences of the trade-off between these two objectives will likely be in Asia, the world’s most populous continent. If Singapore and South Korea are indicators of larger Asian trends, it is likely that medical and electronic privacy will become increasingly disregarded and the globe will see the most dramatic extension of state power since World War II. Its dramatic expansion comes with the opportunity for states to be more decisive on climate change goals and policy implementation. Amid the pandemic, Japan became the first of the world’s richest countries to submit its new national climate plan by 2020 as required in the 2015 Paris agreement. However, this new plan included no major changes from the 2013 national

climate plan, which aimed to reduce emissions by 26 percent from 2013 levels. Under normal circumstances, this strategy would demonstrate Japan’s weak ambition; it aims to reach net-zero emissions “as early as possible during the second half of the 21st century,” which is not nearly ambitious enough to reach the Paris Agreement’s long-term temperature goal. However, in light of the current pandemic, many people might see Japan’s refusal to submit tighter emissions reduction targets in view of the COVID-19 pandemic as pragmatic and necessary.

China, the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, plans a fiscal stimulus worth hundreds of billions of dollars to recover from its massive hit and restore economic growth. Forbes claims that this growth plan implies resuscitating carbon-intensive activities involving coal, oil, natural gas, petrochemicals, plastics, and refineries, as well as reviving jobs for the multitudes who work in automobiles, aviation, shipping, utilities, construction, agriculture, manufacturing and utilities. Consequently, it is no surprise that China plans to put automobile emission standards on hold in efforts to revive the industry post-COVID-19.

India hosts 21 of the world’s 30 most polluted cities, but air pollution levels have started plummeting after the prime minister instituted a 21-day lockdown. All modes of public transport such as metro trains, buses, inter-state trains, and domestic and international flights for civilian movement have also been stopped. While the complete shutdown of India’s economy was designed to stop the spread of COVID-19, it is perpetuating an auxiliary health benefit of clearing the air that millions of people were being congested by. In addition, Ecowatch notes that recent heavy rains in the north and west of the country have helped the country’s pollution level by serving as an effective aerosol removal process and particulate matter reduction tool for the atmosphere. In a country that just 4 months ago hit record high levels of air pollution that forced schools to close and flights to be diverted, COVID-19 has provided a bittersweet remedy.

No single story has enraptured the international press this

century quite like COVID-19. How can climate change, which will likely prove far deadlier than the pandemic, claim a seat at the table? It will start by acknowledging the severity and plausibility of climate change effects in the very near future. The Spanish influenza, a pandemic that killed 50 million people in the early 1900s, is unlikely to have anywhere near the impact of climate change: EcoBusiness claims that extreme weather, ecosystem collapse, crop failure, climate-related wars, and even increasing incidences of infectious diseases could claim billions of lives. According to the UN’s environmental chief Inger Anderson, nature is sending us a message with the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis. She explains that humanity is placing too many pressures on the natural world with damaging consequences, and warns that failing to take care of the planet means not taking care of ourselves. To prevent further outbreaks, both global heating and the destruction of the natural world for farming, mining and housing have to end. Live animal markets should also be shut down — they are ideal mixing pots for diseases along with the illegal animal market. These many harmful practices have created abundant opportunities for pathogens to pass from wild and domestic animals to people. While the immediate priority should obviously be stopping the spread of COVID-19, the long-term response by the press should be to treat climate change with the same seriousness as the pandemic. Reporting more frequently and gravely about issues such as habitat and biodiversity loss will bring climate change to the forefront of news conversations and instill a sense of urgency in those who believe that the environmental crisis is still intangible. Framing COVID-19 as a symptom of climate change will challenge people to actively prevent this deadly overarching problem. These media goals in addition to policy implementations that achieve new international emission standards will help smoothen public health as well as environmental progress as the pandemic resolves.

A Case for Japanese Military Rearmament Policy

Will Kielm

Following “successful” dialogues between President Trump and Kim Jong Un, North Korea has resumed its missile tests and, most recently, launched two short-range missiles on March 2nd, 2020. Meanwhile, China has carried out a series of invalid territorial claims in the South China Sea while pushing for a highly ambitious Belt and Road Initiative in order to foster further economic dependence on China and negate American influence in East Asia. From the Japanese perspective, the security apparatus of Northeast Asia is in jeopardy, and the countries on which Japan relies for military and economic assistance are fading. President Trump has consistently pushed for an increasingly isolationist and pacifist policy with regards to East Asia, while President Moon Jae-in of South Korea has called for the resumption of the Sunshine policy with North Korea, which involves shipping foreign aid to North Korea despite its militaristic aggression. With the rise of nationalist isolationism in the United States and the recent dominance of anti-Americanism and left-wing nationalism in South Korea, Japan is in the process of being left alone to preserve the pro-Western status quo in the region.

After the end of WWII, the American armed forces led by General MacArthur began to unilaterally craft a new Japanese constitution that would redefine Japanese politics to this day. This new constitution sought an end to the monarchical system while paving the way for democratization and economic liberalization. However, in the newly built Constitution lies Article 9 that prevents Japan from developing a standing army of its own. Under Article 9, Japan only had the U.S. military and municipal Japanese police force to guarantee national security, as Japan was forced to “renounce war as a sovereign right” and pledge to never maintain a standing land, sea, and air force. However, at the outset of the Korean War, Japan was left both domestically and externally vulnerable to domestic

violence and foreign adversaries, as U.S. troops stationed in Japan were deployed to the Korean Peninsula to aid the war efforts. Such vulnerability rendered many Japanese authorities concerned, leading them to sign the Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan in 1951 that would split the armed responsibility: the U.S. army would be responsible for dealing with external aggression while the Japanese forces, upon being allowed to form, would be responsible for maintaining internal security. Such an agreement facilitated the formation of various Japanese



armed branches, such as the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, and would ultimately lead to the passage of the 1954 Self-Defense Forces Act.

Since the formation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Japan has engaged in a multitude of peacekeeping missions both internally and externally, such as increasing SDF preparedness to defend the Senkaku and Diaoyu Islands from Chinese claims, dispatching UN peacekeepers to Cambodia, deploying SDF troops in the Strait of Hormuz, and, more recently, establishing and expanding a permanent naval base in Djibouti to combat Somali pirates. However, a handful of Japanese political elites have recently called for an expansion of the SDF to the point of full militarization. In 2015, Japanese Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe passed a piece of legislation that would allow the Japanese military to defend its allies overseas. Such legislation has been heavily criticized by the Japanese public as a breach of the Japanese constitution, while the Japanese right-wing groups have called for its expansion, claiming that the constitution must be amended to reflect Japanese samurai history and war hawk tradition.

While some would oppose Japanese remilitarization by citing its hostile history from a hundred years ago, current geopolitical issues, especially those pertaining

North Korea's missile tests, Japan should begin to utilize its rearmament policy as a way to signal to the two adversarial countries to cease escalating conflicts.

Furthermore, the government of South Korea has grown much more unreliable in providing the United States the necessary security measures against North Korean and Chinese aggression. Upon the impeachment of conservative President Park Geun-Hye, the Minjoo Party (the left-wing party) has dominated both the executive and the legislative branch of South Korea, dismantling the pro-American, capitalist establishment while advancing heavily anti-American platforms and increasing détente policy towards North Korea and China. Such a turn constitutes a genuine security concern for America, as both moderate and far left South Korean politicians have slowly been leaning closer towards China and North Korea. Thus, such a shift in the South Korean political atmosphere calls for more dependence and active cooperation with the Japanese government in counteracting the DPRK's aggression.

The pre-existing SDF has provided far more benefits than harm on the global stage. And détente policy with North Korea has proven to fail time and time again, as shown by the failures of the Agreed Framework of 1994. As Andrei Lankov, an expert on North Korean politics outlined in his book, *The Real North Korea*, North Korea's survival strategy entirely depends on its nuclear weapons. Its cyclical campaign of nuclear blackmail, opening up to “negotiations,” maximizing foreign aid, and raising legitimacy and concession has fueled the regime's sustainability for decades. And in order to effectively relieve key geopolitical issues of East Asia, ranging from China's island disputes to North Korean ballistic missile tests, Japanese rearmament is imperative. Its potential to defend American and Japanese security interests in the region without resorting to more concessions and fruitless foreign aid cannot be ignored.

Modi's Image of India Crops out Muslim Minority

Maheem Syed

"Secular Democratic Republic." Within the first line of its Constitution, India defined itself as a country willing to provide every citizen access to equal opportunity, no matter their religious background. As India's current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi made a promise to uphold these principles for all of his 1.3 billion citizens. That promise was broken.

Since his rise to power in 2014, Modi and his political party, the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have increasingly targeted Muslims, a religious minority within India. Over 200 million Indian-Muslims have been subjected to an active hate campaign fashioned directly from the policies implemented by Modi since his election. These policies have provoked animosity between the various ethnic and religious groups within India, and labeled Muslims as the "other."

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed by Parliament in December 2019, has become the linchpin in Modi's Hindu-nationalist policies. The bill establishes a process through which Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian migrants fleeing persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan specifically, may apply for Indian citizenship. Muslims were excluded from the act, meaning Muslim migrants would not be subject to the same privileges as those from any of the other aforementioned religions.

Modi claims this is because Muslims would not need to flee the Muslim-majority countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. He depicts this act as an example of India's humanitarian graciousness, while ignoring the overarching tone of exclusion this policy presents. Minority sects of Islam, including the Ahmadis and Shia, are heavily persecuted by Sunni fundamentalists within Pakistan and Bangladesh; by ignoring Muslims in general, the CAA turns away entire communities seeking refuge with their closest neighbor. Furthermore, the CAA only recognizes specific Muslim-majority

countries, using this as an excuse to prevent more Muslims from coming in. This ignores persecution that Muslim minorities are facing in other surrounding countries, including Rohingya Muslims facing genocide in Myanmar, Uyghur Muslims imprisoned in "re-education camps" within China, and Sri Lankan Muslims in danger of assault and bombings.

Modi attempts to contextualize the CAA by painting Muslim-majority countries as the perpetrators of abuse; yet, the CAA underscores Modi's history of discrimination against Muslims within India. In August 2019, Modi moved to strip the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir of all autonomy, implementing curfews through the presence of India's military, and largely placing the region in lockdown. Soon after, in November 2019, the Supreme Court of India granted Hindus sole access to the Ayodhya holy site that had been widely contested between Hindus and Muslims for centuries.

Continuing into this year, Modi and the BJP have moved to expand the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for the first time since its creation in 1951. The NRC denotes Indian citizenship; if a family cannot show documentation proving their residence since 1971, they are kept off the registry and considered illegal foreigners. According to the BBC, this program is estimated to declare over 1.9 million Muslims as non-citizens, potentially leaving them stateless.

Furthermore, the government intends to put these sudden non-citizens in large-scale detention centers— which are already in the process of being built— within the state of Assam. Assam remains one of the most religiously diverse parts of India, displaying how Modi intends to target the two largest Muslim population-centers, first with Kashmir and then through Assam, in an effort to implement his policies more rapidly. Thousands of Muslims have already been lynched, beaten, and had their villages decimated by militant Hindu-nationalists, adding fear that even if they are permitted to stay, they will be targeted due to their

characterization as "intruders" and "illegals" by these extremist groups. Within his own government, Modi and his associates maintain derogatory language against Muslims, calling them "termites" and agents of Pakistan, further spurring anti-Muslim rhetoric and crimes.

Modi's image as the "new savior of India" is especially ironic considering he was once banned from the United States for his extremist stances, and for his inaction as the governor of Gujarat during its 2002 riots— the same riots that targeted and left 790 Muslims dead. His very political party, the BJP, is linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing, Hindu-nationalist paramilitary organization that was motivated by Mussolini and Hitler's hateful rhetoric and views on religious purity. This history and pattern of behavior by Modi and his government not only exacerbates prejudice against Muslims living in India, but also inspires Hindu nationalism. Over time, his legislative policies against Muslims have created a study of contrasts: by restricting their rights, Modi increased the weight of his supporters' words and votes.

Despite these groups of extremists, many Indians did not share Modi's sentiments. Thousands of protestors— both Muslim and non-Muslim— took to the streets of India's largest cities and border states to stand against the CAA. Despite the peaceful nature of their protests, there were over 30 deaths due to police throwing tear gas and beating protestors, portraying the heightened tension between the people and government institutions. This reaction was purposeful; it was not only in violation of international law, but also a clear attempt to stifle any disagreement with Modi's image of India.

Discontent was prevalent within the Indian government as well; of course it took a majority within

India's lower and upper house to pass the CAA in the first place, but since then, over nine ministers of disparate Indian states have refused to enact both the CAA and NRC, and six other Indian political parties have voiced their concerns regarding their implementation. In neighboring Pakistan, Hindus and Sikhs showed their support for Indian-Muslims by holding peaceful marches. The international community, including the United Nations, have declared the CAA itself "fundamentally discriminatory" and illegal.

This mixed reaction exhibits how there is no consensus on defining India as a Hindu state, rather than a secular one. Instead, these discriminatory policies are pushed directly by Modi and the BJP, and are not summative of India in general. His attempts at creating a more solid foundation of support by focusing on one community has only created more dysfunction within his government, between the people of India, and between India and the international community. He ignores the very foundation of India as a secular nation, and aims to weaken the domestic influence of Muslims in India, all while taking credit for their many economic, historical, and cultural contributions.

Despite the continued controversy surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act, it has become the most direct example of Modi's various discriminatory, anti-Muslim policies. Not only does the act itself explicitly target one minority group, but it also represents a pattern of inflammatory legislative and judicial decisions that institute a tone of Hindu nationalism at the expense of the Muslim minority. To establish himself as a stronger leader, and build up a more steadfast following, Modi has appealed to small pockets of people that want to be defined as Indian and thus Hindu, instead of simply Indian and Hindu.

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Modi attempts to contextualize the CAA by painting Muslim-majority countries as the perpetrators of abuse; yet, the CAA underscores Modi's history of discrimination against Muslims within India.

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The Effect of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and International Trade on Sino-American Great Power Rivalry

Jeh Mory

The Obama presidency's core foreign policy legacy may lie in its "Pivot to East Asia," reflecting the perception that regional powers' economic dynamism would precede their military build-up. The American public's desire for retrenchment after the overextension of two costly Middle Eastern wars induced the Obama administration to detach from that region and engage with the rising powers of the Indo-Pacific region. Following in the footsteps of Bush administration initiatives (from bilateral free-trade agreements to the civilian nuclear agreement with India), President Obama reaffirmed America's commitment to the region that has been the most dynamic engine of global economic growth for several decades. It is thus instructive to view the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a cornerstone of U.S. national security policy, not just economic policy, and to consider the impact of America's withdrawal from the trade bloc on the global balance of power.

The centerpiece of Obama's strategic redirection, the TPP constituted a free-trade agreement between twelve Pacific Rim economies, including Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. According to the most recent World Bank data, this bloc had a combined GDP of USD 31 trillion in 2018, slightly more than a third of the global total. This would have been by far the world's largest free trade area, dwarfing competitors like the EU and affording America a unique opportunity to shape the rules of international trade in the medium term and protect American interests in labor, environmental, and anti-corruption standards. A special element of their enforcement lay in America's side agreements with Vietnam, Malaysia, and

Brunei. While TPP itself included provisions designed to protect core international labor standards (such as collective bargaining, minimum wages, occupational safety, and the elimination of child and forced labor), these side agreements mandated the implementation of specific labor standards before implementing TPP and accessing U.S. markets. The deal also allows for the levying of tariffs as enforcement mechanisms. While some contend that these labor and environmental standards were insufficient to protect U.S. jobs, it is worth pointing out that they indubitably improved on the standards included in, say, NAFTA. Thus, the TPP sought to address key concerns of interest groups that in the past have opposed international trade deals.

However, America's abandonment of TPP has allowed China to step into the void with its own trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). If TPP reflects America's concerns and interests on international trade, RCEP correspondingly mirrors China's, particularly with its utter lack of labor or environmental protections and coverage of services. Concerns over Chinese dominance of the bloc, combined with the absence of a "data localization" provision, led to India leaving RCEP in November 2019. In turn, this has concerned RCEP signatories such as Japan, which considered Delhi an important counterweight to Beijing. Nevertheless, RCEP is expected to be ratified this year, in large part because of the allure of preferential access to Chinese markets. While the bloc's ~30% share of global GDP is less than that of TPP, it dwarfs both the EU27 countries (who account for under a fifth of global GDP) and,

more crucially, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) bloc, which succeeded TPP after the U.S. backed out and accounts for just about one eighth of global GDP.

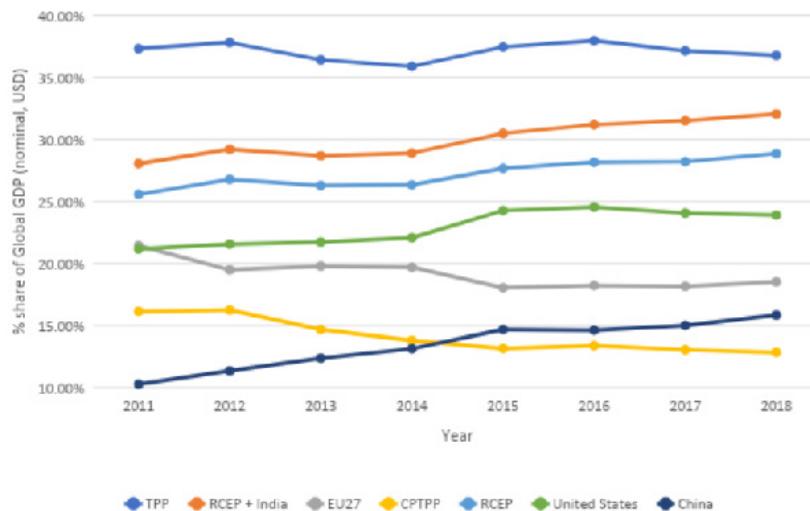
Clearly, the United States has missed a massive opportunity to rewrite the global rules of trade. Besides weak labor and environmental regulations, RCEP fails to prevent member-states from restricting cross-border data flows or from levying customs duties on digitally delivered products, while providing a leg-up in preferential access and a removal of trade barriers in diverse markets for Chinese products and firms that their American counterparts would not enjoy in varied markets. Both RCEP and CPTPP will allow firms from member-states opportunities to develop supply chains and expand their operations within their respective blocs, putting American firms at a competitive disadvantage.

However, these twin blows may well inflict greater geostrategic damage to US interests. Despite belated bipartisan recognition of China's rise, the Trump Administration has broadcast America's disinterest in the Indo-Pacific region. While the remaining TPP member-states renegotiated the CPTPP after America's withdrawal, its relatively small size (with a combined GDP less than that of China alone) mitigates its potential impact on future trade deals. Longstanding allies, smarting under their dismissal by the current Administration as free-riders, may well make their own conclusions about the reliability of U.S. security guarantees. In the last decade alone, shifts in defense spending suggest a rapid rearmament in the Indo-Pacific even as traditional American allies

on the European Continent spend pinnances on their own security, despite long-standing American demands that they reverse course. This may further destabilize the region as China's aggressive pursuit of its territorial claims forces its neighbors to either balance against or accommodate these demands. A muddled or disinterested American response can only strengthen pro-accommodation forces, weakening America's hand should it belatedly push to prevent the rise of a single hegemon on the Eurasian landmass. While China hardly maintains friendly relations with several major regional actors (especially Japan and India), they may well prove unable or unwilling to act in the face of tepid U.S. policy.

While the argument that free trade induces a loss of manufacturing jobs in high-wage economies is not without merit, the majority of economic analysis indicates that free trade in general and TPP in particular would have benefitted a broad spectrum of the economy, from capital to skilled labor to less-skilled workers. Thus, the primary beneficiary of America's unilateral withdrawal from TPP is the Chinese Communist Party, who may well stumble upon a free hand in remaking the rules of international trade. This is symptomatic of the larger dangers of an inward-looking haphazard foreign policy that unnerves America's allies and encourages those who fancy themselves its competitors. While the Trump Administration has overseen a bipartisan shift in American attitudes to China, its failure to reassure allies of the endurance of the U.S. security umbrella may well induce its gradual diplomatic isolation, a trend that may already be underway in Europe.

Share of global GDP by Trade Bloc, 2011-18



Money Over Morals: Turkey's Cooperation with China Despite Historic Tension Over Xinjiang Uighurs



Paul Bascobert

Since 2013, China has been aggressively trying to secure the cooperation of Middle Eastern countries to take part in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vast infrastructure network that would allow China to streamline its trade through Asia and Africa. Among these nations, Turkey is key to China's strategy as Turkey's geographic location makes it the gateway to Europe. Turkey, however, has historically criticized the Chinese government on its mistreatment of the Xinjiang Uighur population. This has caused Turkey, a majority Muslim state, to harbor a negative perception of China, which has, until recently, led to the rejection of any Chinese offers of cooperation on the BRI. Turkey remains wary of growing Chinese influence, and does not wish to become a Chinese puppet should it join the BRI. However, China's tremendous economic power, a changing global landscape, and the promise that Turkish participation in the BRI would bring incredible prosperity have caused the Turkish government to begin cooperating with Beijing.

China and Turkey both see cooperation as a way to vastly increase their economic prosperity. The ultimate goal of the BRI is to further connect and streamline trade between Europe and China, and Turkey's geographic location places it at the crossroads between the Middle East and Europe. As a result, the estimated growth in the influx of trade would greatly increase the economic prosperity of China and Turkey. According to the Chartered Institute of Building, Turkey's economy is projected to grow by \$91.4 billion by 2040 if it joins the BRI.

However, Turkey and

China's interests differ regarding the inevitable Chinese influence that would come along with joining the BRI. Though the Chinese government has denied it, the BRI would create a massive economic sphere of influence dependent on China along with granting China additional influence over member nations. The BRI is consistent with China's aggressive long-term expansionist strategy to wield enormous power and influence on the world stage. Turkey does not know the exact consequences of becoming part of the BRI but can look to other nations that have joined, notably Pakistan, that have been so irreversibly incorporated into the Chinese economic sphere that they cannot escape Chinese influence. This is because China issues high-interest loans to recipient nations to build infrastructure for the BRI which often traps the recipient nation in debt in what the U.S. has labeled "debt-trap diplomacy." China continues to downplay that likely scenario, instead promising lucrative economic benefits. Turkey's greatest fear is that the economic benefits they would reap would be outweighed by becoming a piece of an increasingly powerful Chinese neo-colonial economic network.

In recent years Turkey has also been one of the most vocal critics of China's mistreatment of the Xinjiang Uighur population due to the historic relationship between Turkey and the Uighurs. Following Mao's victory in the Chinese Civil War, China occupied Xinjiang and began a crackdown on nationalist Uighurs, forcing many to flee in search of political asylum. Turkey gladly welcomed them as their ethnic kin and the country has acted as a safe haven for these Uighurs.

Recently, the Chinese government has attempted to forcefully bring the Xinjiang Uighurs into the fold of the rest of China, which has resulted in over a million Uighurs being sent to prison camps for "re-education," as well as suffering other human rights violations. In 2009, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was previously the mayor of Istanbul, declared that China's actions against the Uighurs were "a kind of genocide." As president of Turkey, he has retained this negative perception of China, until recently. This perception is so deeply rooted that as a result, Turkey has been historically opposed to joining the BRI.

However, the sheer power imbalance between Turkey and China and a changing international landscape have recently coerced Turkey to consider cooperating on the BRI despite their long-standing negative perceptions of China and fears of Chinese influence. Turkey, a long-time U.S. ally, has seen the U.S. retreat from the world stage and has recognized that China, with its massive population and economic base, will soon replace America as the world's largest economy. During Turkey's 2018 financial crisis, Turkey accepted a much needed \$3.6-billion bailout from China's central bank to build infrastructure projects for the BRI. President Erdoğan has further announced that his country is preparing to trade through national currencies with China, bypassing the U.S. dollar. Meanwhile, Turkey-U.S. relations are deteriorating due to President Trump's anger over the NATO member buying Russian weapons and Turkey's actions against Syria after the withdrawal of American troops. Turkey has slowly been taking steps to align itself with China and the BRI. Among

various negotiations regarding the BRI, Erdoğan visited China in 2019 and publicly praised the project and proclaimed Turkey's cooperation. The Turkish government has even started to collaborate with the Chinese and deported Uighurs living in Turkey. The Turkish people have largely sided with the Uighurs, whose large population has become part of Turkish society since their initial arrival in the 1950s. This shift in Turkish actions underscores the fact that the Turkish government has placed more importance on the pragmatic cooperation with China rather than moral qualms regarding China's mistreatment of the Uighurs.

China and Turkey share a common goal of increasing their economic power by linking their economies through the BRI. China wishes to use the BRI as a vehicle to drive its expansionist policies to create an economic sphere of influence. Turkey, on the other hand, is wary of Chinese influence but has so far set it aside in order to reap the rewards of cooperating with China. Turkey has also historically harbored a negative perception of China as a result of its persecution of the Xinjiang Uighur population. However, similar to Turkey's fears of Chinese influence, this long-standing perception at the government level has also been placed by the wayside in favor of securing a lucrative and strategic partnership with China by joining its BRI. Turkey's decision to cooperate with China despite its reservations demonstrates the incredible power China now wields and foreshadows the new world order China hopes to create as the U.S. declines in economic strength and global influence.

A Tough Call:

Germany's 5G Network Approach

Justin Ballard

Germany's rollout of a 5G network is beset with tradeoffs. On the one hand, Germany is tempted to allow Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant, to build the necessary infrastructure for it. Given that Huawei can rapidly install state-of-the-art technology at bargain prices, and that Germany fears jeopardizing economic ties with China if it does not allow Huawei in, granting them 5G contracts makes sense from a business perspective. On the other hand, Germany has been under pressure from its intelligence community and the U.S. to outrightly ban Huawei out of national security fears. American officials contend that the firm is just a front through which the Chinese government obtains sensitive information from its clients, and the U.S. has even threatened to stop sharing intelligence with allies that do business with it. Nevertheless, the German government's ruling conservatives have refrained from banning Huawei on principle so far. In reaching a final decision on its 5G network rollout, Germany must favor security concerns over business interests due to the unacceptable risk posed by Huawei contracts. Moreover, it can afford to do so since the European telecom companies Ericsson and Nokia provide a promising alternative.

From an economic standpoint, it is not in Germany's best interest to vehemently rally against Huawei given the German auto industry's prominence in and reliance on the Chinese market. According to the Chinese ambassador to Germany Wu Ken, 7 out of the 28 million cars sold in China in 2018 were German. Moreover, an article by the New York Times observed that companies like Audi are engaged in "strategic cooperation" with Huawei to develop autonomous vehicle technology and quoted Volkswagen CEO Herbert Diess' explanation that "10,000 of [Volkswagen's] 20,000 development engineers in

Germany" would be out of work if the company was forced out of China. Not only would barring Huawei make German car companies less competitive technologically, but it may also ultimately cause China to respond with tariffs on German car exports that would result in job losses. Last December, for instance, Ambassador Wu Ken asserted that any attempt to exclude Huawei from the German market would result in "consequences." Given that China is Germany's largest trading partner and did almost €200 billion worth of business with Germany in 2018, Ambassador Ken's threat is not to be taken lightly, as China has the potential to cripple multiple sectors of Germany's economy.

Of course, this does not mean Germany should bow to Chinese pressure. More specifically, it cannot afford to because of the risk involved in allowing Huawei to build even portions of Germany's 5G network. German business organizations like The Family Entrepreneur (FE), a group representing 180,000 German businesses, argue that the economic benefits from Huawei contracts are not worth the national security risks. Since Germany's 5G network will be used in everything from healthcare to finance, FE contends that Germany's 5G network will be too critical to the economy to open up to foreign meddling. For example, some fear that the Chinese government will use the network access provided by Huawei to steal corporate secrets from German companies — a nefarious activity China has been attempting on its own for years according to German intelligence reports. While keeping Huawei out may come with economic ramifications in the present, giving the Chinese Communist Party access to the vital workings of the German economy in the future incurs the greatest cost.

Moreover, the national security risk posed by Huawei extends beyond just the

economy. Under China's National Intelligence Law from 2017, all organizations must "support, assist and cooperate" with the Chinese intelligence services. Huawei is thus obligated by law to provide any network data that the Chinese government asks for, giving rise to the fear of backdoor access to critical components of the 5G infrastructure. Thomas Haldenwang, the president of Germany's domestic intelligence agency, testified back in October that China is now especially "interested" in German foreign and defense policy. Not only then would Huawei be legally mandated to bolster China's interference in Germany's private sector, but the firm would also be obligated to help the government obtain sensitive material from the public sector.

Rather than rely on technology tied to an unfriendly foreign power, Germany ought to support the European telecom companies Ericsson and Nokia. In addition to assuaging national security concerns, granting these firms contracts makes sense from a geopolitical standpoint. For one, Ericsson and Nokia are Swedish and Finnish companies, respectively — countries aligned with Germany through a myriad of intergovernmental organizations and who are not bound by legislation like China's National Intelligence Law. This, in turn, mitigates espionage and cybersecurity concerns. Moreover, analysts point out that both firms have the same technological competence as Huawei. Besides placating those concerned about the 5G network's quality, this fact, more importantly, prevents dependency on the Chinese firm, should Germany choose to partially adopt Huawei's technology. So long as Nokia and Ericsson are financially supported through contracts, they would have the capacity to replicate any facet of the 5G network if Huawei is later determined to be a security threat.

Finally, Germany's

decision to favor these European companies would help balance its relationships with the U.S. and China. While the Chinese government will not be happy with this decision given its desire to enter the European market, China would be a hypocrite to criticize Germany. As Chairman of the Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee Norbert Röttgen noted, China reserves the right "for its own critical infrastructure to be developed exclusively by Chinese companies." Thus, rather than make it about succumbing to American pressure or not trusting Chinese companies, the German government could advertise its support for Nokia and Ericsson as the "home-grown" approach China follows. In not explicitly siding with the U.S. or China with this rhetoric, Germany's neutral stance would help shield it from Chinese economic retribution. Meanwhile, the U.S. would be placated by this decision, as U.S. officials have voiced their trust in Nokia and Ericsson, thereby safeguarding Germany's future intelligence sharing with the U.S.

Currently, Germany is still deliberating over whether to prioritize business or national security interests in its 5G network rollout. Ultimately, Germany must favor the latter, as security issues stand to create the most lasting damage. While Germany's auto industry can always recover from Chinese tariffs, having to repair a compromised communication network on the scale Huawei hopes to build is nearly unimaginable. In the end, turning to Nokia and Ericsson is the best alternative, as the decision ensures Germany's national security interests while also granting it rhetoric against any Chinese misgivings. When it comes to Germany's 5G network rollout, policymakers must make the tough call and resist Huawei's advances.

The Art of Torture: Russia's New Export

Sumaya Tabbah



"They punched me on my feet, in my face, choked me with a towel, they poured water into my mouth so that I suffocated. I died four times because of that and they brought me back to life four times." An anonymous survivor of torture recounts his experience in a Russian prison, one example of increasingly frequent prison practice. In 1999, political freedom in the Russian Federation peaked following President Yeltsin proclaiming 1998 "the year of human rights." Since then, human rights violations, particularly the state's use of torture, have continued to rise while political freedoms sharply declined. As the state continues to restrict civil liberties and domestically employ torture as a tool of repression, it has joined other world powers in the 'New Scramble for Africa.' Looking towards the continent as a new market, access to raw material and natural resources, the Kremlin sees a unique opportunity to project power on the global stage. The Russian regime's continual shift towards an autocratic system poses unique concerns to human rights organizations given its endeavor to provide weapons, political advisors, and military instruction to states with unstable regimes and existing widespread human rights violations. If attitudes towards torture are not amended within the Federation, torture domestically and with Russia's African allies has the potential to flourish beyond current rates.

Torture complaints in Russia have doubled since 2018, with reports indicating the systemization of torture within law enforcement. A survey conducted by the Moscow Times, an independent news outlet based in Russia, polled 3,400 people and found authorities had tortured 1 in 10 people. "Three-quarters of respondents who claimed they had been tortured said law enforcement officers used violence to humiliate

and intimidate them. Half said the authorities tortured them to extract confessions, and one-third said the violence was inflicted as punishment." Simultaneously, the state eroded the roles and rights of independent monitoring organizations. Funding for the Public Oversight Commissions was cut, and rules governing the nomination of members have been changed, resulting in a reduction in membership. Other monitoring organizations, including the Presidential Human Rights Council, are arbitrarily denied access to prisons and detention centers. This and other violations including enforced disappearances, unlawful detention, ill-treatment of detainees, and extrajudicial killings were reported in Russia proper and the North Caucasus. The state maintains an anti-torture stance with its Criminal Procedure Code reading, "No one of the participants in criminal court proceedings shall be subjected to violence or torture or to other kinds of cruel or humiliating treatment, degrading his human dignity." State officials claim recent occurrences of torture are isolated instances resulting from individual abuse of power.

Torture has played a significant role throughout Russian history, most notoriously during the Stalinist era. Yet it is not a feature unique to Russia but rather a characteristic of repressive regimes more broadly. Repression often utilizes torture along with disappearances, imprisonment, and outlawing political opposition to maintain control and deter resistance against the state. Torture strives to achieve three potential aims: intelligence gathering, state security, and regime stability. The intelligence-gathering model suggests states use torture primarily to extract confessions to crimes or provide information to prevent future threats. Substantial literature

is devoted to determining the effectiveness of torture in producing accurate and reliable intelligence. The security model suggests torture is a function to determine potential and actual political opposition and security threats within the population. The regime stability model suggests torture is a tool of state terror to discipline the population and suppress potential opposition. While there exists no consensus by political scientists on the effectiveness of torture as a tool of repression, it is still a primary tool employed by autocratic states.

Transitioning and unstable regimes lean heavily on these forms of repression in an attempt to maintain control. Libya, Central African Republic, and Mozambique, among others, all to varying degrees using torture during regime transitions or in the face of internal threats, have appealed to Moscow for military and security service support. With the United States' influence waning in the region, Russia has steadily expanded its military influence across Africa by increasing arms sales, security agreements, and training programs. It has been more quietly deploying mercenaries, political advisors, and private military contractors to several countries.

President Putin addressed these relations, saying Russia's role on the continent was to provide political support, security, economic assistance, and humanitarian relief. Yet this aggressive push for deals and security relationships, correlating strongly with declining U.S. influence and military presence on the continent, has raised doubts about Moscow's true intentions. Cultivating these new relationships does not come without calculated benefits to the Russian state. In supporting these countries, Russia is cultivating allies to support the challenge against the U.S. and trans-Atlantic security order, and

effectively projecting power on the global stage. This is also paired with economic benefits. By opening the doors to a new market, Russia has recently become the largest arms supplier to Africa, accounting for 35 percent of arms exports to the region. It has also allowed Russian companies to increase activity in mining resources like cobalt, gold, and diamonds.

Many analyses liken these events to Cold War-era policies. Africa, initially ignored, gained significantly more prominence in Soviet foreign policy as it joined the competition for global dominance. Beginning in 1954 with Egypt and reaching peak influence in the 1970s, the Soviet Union provided economic, security, and political support to its African allies. The Cold War world order is often characterized as a bipolar system centered around the struggle for control of the international system. While this is correct, it often neglects to emphasize competing superpowers' vested interest in maintaining regime stability for dependent states within their international network.

This interest in regime stability, mirrored today, has unexplored consequences on human rights situations within these countries. While there is a gap in current literature in framing torture as an export through international networks, it can be assumed that the military and political advice provided to African allies reflects the shift towards autocracy within Russia and the unaddressed phenomenon of torture. While Russia undoubtedly needs to address its own relationship with torture, and respond to international organizations' calls for an end to the practice, it especially needs to recognize the harms that its allies can carry out on a civilian population through the systemic use of torture.

The Netherlands' Dangerous Herd Immunity Gamble

Megan Rossiter

As the coronavirus rages across Europe, a new epicenter of the pandemic, countries are taking a variety of measures to slow its growth. While some have reacted quickly with strict regulations on travel and social distancing, others have been slow to react or have initiated lax policies. Denmark, for example, was one of the first countries to cancel school and introduce strict border control measures, doing so before recording its first death. The United Kingdom, meanwhile, was incredibly slow in its response and did not enter a lockdown until March 24, weeks after its neighbors had already done so. By the time that a lockdown was imposed, the U.K. had already recorded over 8,000 cases and 400 deaths. However, out of all of the European countries, the Netherlands has probably taken the most unconventional of measures. In a national address on March 16, Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced that the Netherlands would aim to develop herd immunity to the virus by having large numbers of the population become infected with the virus. While the idea may sound simple, it's incredibly risky, as it would actually take several months and potentially thousands of deaths for herd immunity to happen. While the Netherlands is known as a pragmatic country, its decision to take the herd immunity approach was irresponsible and has potentially extended the country's process of recovering from the pandemic.

Under herd immunity, a large portion of a population becomes immune to an infectious disease. As the proportion of the immune population increases, the chances of the non-immune proportion getting the diseases decrease since non-immune individuals are less likely to come into contact with someone that

has the disease. If enough of the population has gained immunity to an infectious disease to the point where it is eliminated from the population, the disease is considered to be eradicated. One example of a disease eradicated by herd immunity is smallpox, a deadly disease which had a mortality rate of 30 percent. Through years of infections (those who recovered from smallpox had immunity to the disease) and large-scale vaccinations, herd immunity was achieved, ultimately contributing to the eradication of smallpox by 1980.

It is important to note that in current populations, herd immunity is mainly achieved through mass vaccinations rather than large numbers of people becoming infected. In order for the Netherlands to achieve herd immunity to the novel coronavirus, a vast proportion of the Dutch population would need to become infected, as a vaccine for the coronavirus does not yet exist. In fact, an estimated 50-70 percent of the population would need to be infected...that's between 8.64 million and 12 million people. Considering that the virus has mortality rates between 2 percent and 12 percent, depending on the country, aiming to achieve herd immunity without a vaccine would be a dangerous gamble. Furthermore, the Netherlands has one of the oldest populations in the European Union, posing an even greater risk.

To understand how some of the Dutch population thought of the herd immunity plan, I reached out to Famke Berendsen, a medical student at the Hague (and also a University of Michigan alumna). According to Famke, she and her expat friends expected Prime Minister Rutte to "go all-out precautionary" since they had been watching how other countries were responding. When it was

announced that the Netherlands would take the herd immunity approach, they were surprised. However, Famke stated that her Dutch friends "felt the country was doing enough" and that the Netherlands was responding "as drastically as other countries". However, as the situation in Italy worsened and Spain and France initiated stricter measures to contain the spread of the virus, Famke noted that her Dutch friends began to acknowledge that the Netherlands' response was weak in comparison.

Although Prime Minister Rutte later clarified that herd immunity was not supposed to be the focus of its approach, but rather a side effect, the Dutch response had already received criticism. The World Health Organization stated that there was limited evidence that achieving herd immunity against the coronavirus would be safe since "we don't know enough about the science of this virus, it hasn't been in our population for long enough for us to know what it does in immunological terms". The Netherlands has since rolled back on its approach and has implemented policies similar to those of its neighbors. Restaurants, bars, schools, and universities have been closed since March 15, and the Netherlands has implemented travel restrictions for those living outside of Europe. Although the Netherlands has not issued any stay at home orders, many are practicing social-distancing and are staying home.

Currently, the Netherlands has 24,571 cases of COVID-19 and 2,653 deaths and now has one of the highest mortality rates at 10.79 percent. In the days following Prime Minister Rutte's announcement that the

Netherlands would aim to achieve herd immunity, the country had a sharp increase in daily new cases, going from 295 cases on March 16 to 816 cases on March 23. Even more startling was that 50 percent of its ICU patients were under 40, illustrating that the virus is even deadly for those who are young. Although the country is still experiencing an increase in cases, the increase is slowing. The country is also experiencing a plateau in the numbers of hospitalizations. However, had the country issued stricter policies earlier instead, such as stay-at-home orders, it is likely that there would have been fewer cases as well as an earlier slowing of new cases. The same could be said for many countries, but for a country as pragmatic as the Netherlands, a more conventional approach was expected.

The Netherlands' decision to take a herd immunity approach to the coronavirus pandemic was not only idealistic and unusual, it was also irresponsible. Without a vaccine, the only way that the Netherlands could have achieved herd immunity was by having a large portion of its population become infected, putting those who are elderly and immunocompromised at risk. Furthermore, the virus is relatively new, meaning there is a lot we don't understand about the virus. Fortunately, the Netherlands did not totally stand by its herd immunity approach and implemented policies which contained the spread. However, had the Netherlands taken a different course of action earlier, it would have been easier to contain the spread, and thus the country would have needed to take action for a shorter period of time.



While the Netherlands is known as a pragmatic country, its decision to take the herd immunity approach was irresponsible and likely extended the country's process of recovering from the pandemic.



In December 2016, thousands of Warsaw residents gathered outside the Polish parliamentary building. The government had just proposed a set of rules that would curtail press freedoms by limiting reporters' access to legislators and hand-selecting five TV broadcasters who would henceforth be allowed to record parliamentary proceedings. Protesters blocked legislators' access to the building and encircled their cars, waving national flags and chanting "Free media!" before being dispersed with police tear gas. Months later, Telewizja Polska (TVP), the main public television channel in Poland, offered its own interpretation of the events. In a 30-minute documentary titled *Pucz* (Coup), the station portrayed ruling party politicians at the time as

the chairman and directors of public broadcasting services, as opposed to holding independent competitive application processes. To oversee TVP, PiS' deputy minister of culture installed Jacek Kurski, a former PiS member of the European Parliament. Several directors of channels under the TVP umbrella quit in protest, and 225 journalists subsequently either resigned or were dismissed, according to Poland's Association of Journalists. Not surprisingly, TVP's coverage now skews towards a heavily pro-PiS government stance. The station shies away from covering government scandals, lambasts political opponents, trumpets the virtues of PiS, and is compelled to air PiS politicians' speeches upon request and without criticism. One TVP foreign desk journalist even revealed to

negligible fringe.

It is therefore easy to sympathize with critics from Civic Platform, the opposition party, who say that PiS' use of public media as a pro-government megaphone gives them an unfair advantage during elections. In the two weeks before the May 2019 European Parliament elections, TVP broadcast 105 news stories about the topic. 69 of those covered PiS, 68 of which did so in a positive light with the one other story being neutral, while 33 news stories targeted the opposition in a negative light, according to Poland's Association of Journalists. Naturally, the public media propaganda machine ran at full speed ahead of Poland's parliamentary elections last October, in which PiS won reelection in the powerful lower house.

The disheartening state

Morawiecki, Poland's Prime Minister, argued in an interview that Polish media have traditionally comprised "a single canon of authorities, permissible views," occupying the "main internet portals, biggest radio stations, two biggest television companies, and most of the newspapers." His comments are representative of an underdog mentality that undergirds the PiS' approach to managing public media. They view it as a correction of an imbalance, not a take-over. Their concerns have some merit, considering the dominance of liberal media in the 1990s and 2000s, in which conservative voices were often derided and pushed aside.

However, a need for more balance alone does not justify extensive governmental involvement in bringing about that change. After all, public media is a public good, one

How Poland's Public Media Became the Ruling Party's Propaganda Instrument

Daniel Evans



reasonable, pragmatic statesmen facing an "anarchist" uprising. By stringing together cherry-picked and carefully curated footage, *Pucz* insinuated that what the protesters really wanted to do was overthrow the entire government with Kremlin support.

Instances like these demonstrate why Poland's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has slipped each year, from 18th place in 2015 down to the 59th in the latest report from 2019. By now, it is undeniable that the governing Law and Justice Party's (PiS) agenda of dialing up the pro-government bias in public media news programming erodes public media's credibility as an important public institution and poisons the country's political discourse.

Shortly after PiS came to power in 2015, it moved to reshape the country's media landscape. By passing the "small media law," PiS ended the terms of the existing television and radio management and allowed politicians to directly appoint

Foreign Policy magazine that reporters cannot use the terms "far-right" or "populism," and may not criticize U.S. President Donald Trump or Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, both of whom are also conservative populists. Coverage can be downright absurd at times. In October 2019, for example, the channel aired *Inwazja* (Invasion), a feature story which sought to expose "the inside story, aims, methods, and money behind the LGBT invasion" of Poland. Every step of the way, TVP's coverage seeks to reinforce PiS' socially conservative worldview.

While such coverage may seem too blatantly propagandistic to believe, public media nevertheless exerts a considerable amount of influence among the nation's population. TVP's daily evening news show, *Wiadomości*, is one of the top two most-watched news programs in the country, with an average audience of roughly three million viewers. Moreover, in the countryside, 50 percent of people rely on TVP as their only source of information. Their audience is certainly not just some

of public media in Poland should not obscure the fact that private media is alive and well, with no shortage of outlets willing to criticize the government. Notable players include the Polish edition of *Newsweek*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the leading daily newspaper, and TVN 24, the most-watched private news channel, all of which represent socially liberal voices. Still, there is cause for concern, as PiS' desire to control the narrative of their leadership has subtly crept into the private media sphere. The government has targeted the advertising revenue streams of major independent publications by reducing advertising from state controlled businesses. As a result, data across various media groups since 2015 show a clear trend of declining advertising revenue for liberal media stations and publications but increasing figures for their conservative counterparts.

The engineers behind Poland's media overhaul defend their actions by pointing out that the nation's media has long had an aggressive liberal slant. Mateusz

that can offer great value to citizens across the political spectrum in its universal accessibility and insulation from corporate interests or the need to generate sensationalism. In seeking to transform outlets like TVP into propaganda instruments, PiS gradually erodes the credibility of the institution of public media itself. Already, the signs of wear are beginning to show. In 2016, after PiS' implementation of the small media law, TVP viewership slightly declined, and TVN's *Fakty* usurped TVP's *Wiadomości* spot as the most-watched evening news show. A poll taken in May 2019 further revealed that 38 percent of respondents thought TVP was unreliable, the highest figure among television stations, strengthening the link between the dip in viewership and increased public skepticism. This trend suggests that PiS' actions are unsustainable. Their control over public media may buy them support in the short term, as it did in these past elections, but it could very well backfire as the population grows weary of incessantly one-sided coverage.

Germany's Political Conundrum

Aidan Woutas

Early in February, a political earthquake struck in the German state of Thuringia. In what was expected to be a pro-forma re-election for incumbent Minister President Bodo Ramelow, whose democratic socialist party Die Linke (The Left) won the most seats in last October's election, the third round of voting resulted in his being unseated. The Free Democratic Party's Thomas Kemmerich, whose party only won five seats, somehow managed to win a majority in a secret ballot. He had been expected to receive the support of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, but that alone was insufficient. It soon became clear that the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) had provided Kemmerich with the margin he needed. This unprecedented event and the subsequent weeks of nationwide outrage and inter-party wrangling over how to resolve the crisis it created demonstrated the AfD's ability to weaponize the vulnerabilities of other parties. Germany's parties must reckon with the fact the AfD is here to stay and recognize the importance of united and coherent opposition against them.

Ramelow's ouster drew instant uproar across the political spectrum over the abandonment of a long-held taboo against cooperation with the far right: the federal CDU accused its state-level affiliate of 'going rogue' and thousands of protestors gathered outside the FDP's headquarters lambasting their enabling of fascists. The Social Democrats' secretary called it a new low point in Germany's postwar history. That Thuringia's AfD is particularly pernicious in its politics and led by the race-baiting and Holocaust-diminishing Björn Höcke from the party's extreme right wing only made this Tabubruch (taboo breach) more offensive. Yet it took weeks of protracted negotiations and

contradictory statements from the parties before the crisis was resolved. In early March, Kemmerich left and Ramelow finally returned to office under a tenuous agreement in which CDU and FDP abstained from a new round of voting with elections possibly to be held next year. The inability of Germany's parties to effectively counter the AfD was on full display.

The near-universal outrage over this incident should be welcomed, but the AfD, with 25 percent of the vote in Thuringia, has proven itself to be a political force to be reckoned if the last few months are any indication. Germany's other parties, while all generally condemning the AfD, have been feckless in mustering a united response. It may be easy to dismiss the AfD's repulsive politics, but parliaments cannot operate pretending only three-quarters of their seats are occupied. Germans of all political persuasions will be unable to ignore them much longer, and their presence speaks to a wider problem of party dealignment and political fracturing in Germany.

As the AfD gains support amid fractured opposition, it has become increasingly difficult to form workable centrist coalitions on the state level. Germany's multiparty system relies upon coalitions for effective governance. Into the 1980s, the two Volksparteien, the CDU and the SPD, controlled the vast majority of seats in the Bundestag, with the classical liberal FDP normally making up the difference and acting as kingmaker. With the emergence of the Greens in 1980 and the entry of the former East German communists after 1990, this arrangement began to fracture. Die Linke, partly comprised of these former East German communists, is decidedly less repellent than the reactionary radicalism of the AfD, but its presence has nonetheless complicated

matters — any cooperation with the left-wing populist party remains anathema to the CDU and FDP. These complicated inter-party dynamics are part of what is preventing a united front against the AfD's far-right perniciousness.

Emerging out of the European debt crisis as a mostly technocratic grouping of Eurosceptics, the AfD evolved alongside the 2015 refugee crisis into a far more extreme party that now harbors a coalition of German nationalists and xenophobes. Its Islamophobic campaign posters are infamous across Germany, and the secretary-general of the CDU even referred to Mr. Höcke as a Nazi. Höcke has called Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe a "monument of shame in the heart of their capital" and lambasted how "crippled" Germany has become due to its "stupid politics of coming to grips with the past." There shouldn't be any debate about the AfD's repugnance, and it's understandable and correct for parties to avoid cooperation with them. But it's also naive to just presume their support and rising influence in German legislatures will simply go away. Other parties will need to muster a coherent response that simultaneously boxes the AfD out of power without permanently alienating its significant and growing share of voters.

This goes hand-in-hand with avoiding incidents like what took place in Thuringia in February. While no party should have to abandon its ideology, the CDU and FDP's equivocation between the Die Linke and the AfD is inappropriate — particularly in Mr. Ramelow's case, as his leadership has been broadly popular. The distaste among some for cooperating with former East German socialists is understandable, but this is by no means the majority of the party, and sweeping judgments are counterproductive while Nazi

sympathizers knock at power's door. The CDU, FDP, SPD, Greens and Die Linke disagree on many things, but they must be able to align against the AfD and support whatever coalition is most viable against them.

AfD politicians peddle in offensive and destructive politics that threaten Germany's postwar constitutional order, but to assume all of their supporters fall into the same basket is unwise and untenable if their rise is to be thwarted. This notion is particularly important given its implications on Germany's continuing process of reunification, as the highest concentration of AfD supporters by a substantial margin is in former East Germany, which still lags behind the West in metrics of economic and social development — this dynamic has indeed driven much of the resentment that fuels the AfD's success. Indeed, the AfD has placed in second in each of the five East German states' elections over the past few years. That the remaining parties have been so scatterbrained in their response only reinforces the AfD's newfound influence and makes supporting them a more viable option. As the 2015 refugee crisis — undoubtedly used as a racist cudgel by the AfD in winning votes — begins to fade in the rear-view mirror, a compelling economic message with resonance in the East may yet find success if employed with a listening ear to win back support.

Germany's political system has undoubtedly been put under pressure due to the AfD's success. But the party thrives on chaos and disorder, and the Thuringia case offers a prime example of what must be avoided at most or all costs, even if that means parties holding their noses at times to allow for what they find to be unsavory coalitions. Otherwise, Thuringia may prove to have only foreshadowed far more difficult scenarios ahead.



The Labour Party is Ready for a New Leader in Keir Starmer

Ben Miller

For many years, the United Kingdom has effectively had one party in power guiding the national conversation and seeing their policies to fruition: the Conservative Party. Since the revolutionary triumph of a young Tony Blair, leading the way for a more centrist New Labour, the Labour Party has been extremely weak in UK politics, especially in recent years in Opposition under Jeremy Corbyn. Now, Labour has a new leader in Keir Starmer.

First, it is crucial to understand why Labour is in this precarious position. The pinnacle of Labour's recent weakness manifested itself in the 2019 General Election. In December 2019, Boris Johnson's Conservatives walloped Jeremy Corbyn's Labour by over ten percentage points, losing 80 seats. Additionally, Johnson was able to break the red wall in the northern industrial constituencies and broaden the Conservative coalition. In this election, the British people chose decisiveness in Boris Johnson — a man who ran on a simple, easy to understand three-word mantra: "Get Brexit Done." The Labour Party, on the other hand, lacked a clear message for Brexit and left a weary British electorate yearning for a post-Brexit Britain in which other pressing issues could be addressed.

The utter failure of the 2019 election by the Labour Party led to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn announcing

his decision to step down as Opposition Leader. He plainly said, "I want to also make it clear that I will not lead the party in any future general election campaign." This immediately led to a search for a new leader who could bring about electoral success for a party confronting newspaper headlines such as "Is This The End of Labour?"

Emerging from the pack of potential Corbyn successors as the next leader is Keir Starmer, who has been the Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union since 2016. In the previous election, voters rejected Corbynite far-left politics that they deemed to be too divisive. Starmer represents a shift back toward the center, and this will allow Labour to broaden their appeal, serve as an effective Opposition, and start winning elections. While his platform may not differ significantly from Corbyn's, he has expressed openness to working with the government and getting things done for the British people. In short, he is the right man for the job.

It is essential to understand the failings of Jeremy Corbyn in order to understand why Starmer is the best person to lead the Labour Party forward. Jeremy Corbyn came into power promising dramatic change for the nation. A socialist, Corbyn became the leader in 2015 on a manifesto of nationalization and of a great expansion of social programs, such as the NHS. However, Corbyn quickly became a polarizing force

in British politics, despite enjoying significant initial support from the Labour base. His foreign policy views, mainly framed around his headline non-interventionist viewpoint, were outside the British mainstream and led to him becoming somewhat of a pariah figure. He was framed as a radical, which may not have affected his core Labour support, but did lead to many in the middle to question whether they could support him. More recently, Corbyn has been rightly criticized for his inability to control anti-Semitism within the party and for not properly addressing anti-Semitism within his own ranks. Despite overt Islamophobia within the Conservative Party, the scale of the anti-Semitism and Corbyn's refusal to handle it properly hurt Labour at the polls.

Starmer represents more of a leadership departure from Corbyn than a policy one. Starmer and Corbyn share many of the same beliefs and policy positions. A self-described socialist, Starmer believes rail, water, energy, and mail should be nationalized. These are views he shares with his predecessor. However, they differ on how unwavering those views are in practice. Starmer views them as a baseline for negotiations and is willing to compromise and seek incremental change where large-scale change is not possible. This is a complete reversal from the politics of Corbynism, which ultimately prevented much

progress from being made in government.

Keir Starmer is the answer to many of the problems afflicting the Labour Party, which has been embroiled in a civil war between Corbynists and those who veer toward the center. While not the perfect leader, he is most able out of the contenders to lick the party's wounds and broaden its coalition to win back the industrial north. He has propelled himself forward as one of the few who can take up the mantle of Jeremy Corbyn. Starmer has used unifying messaging to appeal to Labour voters in his bid to become Leader. He said, "We have to change the structures, drop the factionalism and focus on winning. I don't think he has an easy task on his hands. Uniting the party will be difficult, making Labour relevant again will be difficult." In order to have any chance at gaining a majority in Parliament and a Prime Minister at Number 10 once again, Labour needs a strong leader who has a better pulse on the British electorate. As the new leader for Labour, Keir Starmer will represent a departure from the skepticism and disunity brought by Jeremy Corbyn and instead serve as a leader the British people could envision as their Prime Minister. Starmer has just been voted to become Labour leader. It is now up to him to set the course for Britain's second largest party.



Defending French Pensions -- and Society

Maeve Skelly

French President Emanuel Macron prides himself on being a reformist president. Since taking office, though, his presidency and the French government have been tested through a slew of protests, primarily within the last year by the Yellow Vest (Gilets Jaunes) movement. Now, as Macron tackles his latest "reform" of French pensions, hoping to overhaul the current system of public and privately managed pensions into one state-managed system, he faces about a million new protesters. President Macron has promised to standardize 42 public and private pension schemes into one state-managed, point-based plan. Due to fear of losing money, losing a social safety net, and having to work longer before retiring, labor union workers across the country began to strike. Almost all forms of transportation shut down, causing chaos. Instead of reform, Macron's presidency is filled with unrest. These strikes not only display frustration with the potential reforms to France's pension system, but distaste for Macron's leadership and for his widely viewed failed reputation as a "reformer who keeps his promises."

"Les grèves" are some of the largest strikes France has seen in a long time. Labor union members across the country hope that the disruptive strikes that paralyze and disconnect France will leave the government with no choice but to reconsider its proposed reform. The reform itself would alter French society altogether. Since WWII, French pension plans have been jointly managed with each generation collectively contributing to the pensions of the next. This existing plan has 42 different pension options that are sector-specific, each with different levels of benefits. Many French workers worry that a more privatized future lies ahead — one with more uncertainty.

The government argues that the new pension system where each day worked earns points for workers' future benefits will treat everyone equally. This is not entirely accurate, because members of the police and other law enforcement sectors would not be subject to the new system. While equality is one of the three words in France's national motto, this specific equality argument is based on a dangerous assumption that actually leads to an increase in inequality. Not everyone is in the same sector, with the same pay and security to begin with, so treating everyone as if they are the

same has the potential to lead to more inequality.

The fears that workers express about the chronic shortfall between contributions and payouts in different sectors are already becoming realized as categories of workers begin to see their wages drop. The public sector workers, such as health professionals and teachers, are some of the receivers of a current "special" pension plans (one of the forty-two currently in place). French teachers and doctors receive some of the lowest salaries in the country, even relative to the EU, and Macron's point-system plan would decrease the amount of money for the entire collection of plans without offsetting decreased benefits with higher pay.

One of the five major national trade union confederations, The Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), is rooted in a deep history of "la lutte des classes" (class struggle). Rejecting Macron's new proposed system outright, they accuse Macron of destroying the pension system altogether. The CGT, along with other labor unions, see Macron as a president of the ultra-rich. Using the reduction of the national debt as a primary argument for his new scheme does not ease workers' feeling of neglect and further establishes that Macron refuses to protect their livelihoods. On strike from day one, the CGT has refused to go back to work until the government abandons its reform plans.

Macron has survived the protests that cloud his presidency, and while he is evidently not popular in France, he has proven to outlast many strikes without sacrificing too much politically. Macron hopes to ride out this next wave of strikes, but that comes with a lack of clarity and communication from the government to French society. This uncertainty has left many French citizens even more fearful that their pensions will be diminished.

Naturally, comparisons between the Yellow Vest movement and this current labor strike will be made, but a key difference is that the Yellow Vest movement was born of a visceral rejection of politics not necessarily based on any kind of political issue; it was simply anti-government. However, the Yellow

Vest movement and the pension reform movement spearheaded by the unions are moving closer together. Both movements rely on an awareness of the balance of power within society and of a deeply rooted class struggle. The potential alliance between the groups provides greater leverage to the movement headed by the trade unions.

In order to effectively express the true grievances underlying the pension strikes, striking workers must assemble a smart and organized program. In the past, union strikers have only passively called for action, which only invites wider layers of the working class to join the fight, instead of having an organized leadership structure. This proposed union leadership must politically explain that their grievances ultimately stem from Macron's government. They should advocate for measures based on preserving intergenerational solidarity and fight to keep the redistributionist aspects of pension systems, which Macron's reform would erode.

The challenge here will be an ability to focus a large amount of specific but varying fights in society, such as the pension reform strikes, into a collective fight against the entirety of Macron's government. This could force the organization of a proper opposition through political discourse, which could further put Macron on the defensive. It is difficult for governments to negotiate properly with labor unions, and the unions' inability to form a credible alternative to Macron's proposal further leaves them with little leverage in combating the French government.

This battle against the pension reform therefore ultimately necessitates an evaluation of Macron's presidency. The strikes represent overall frustration, and Macron's credibility and success stand to be seriously weakened if the strikes can be translated into tangible political energy. Increased strikes, social and political convergences, and growing awareness are all positively strong forces that could have lasting results for the future of French society.

LE MACHISME

TUE TOUTES

How Much is Too Much? France's Domestic Violence Problem

Kerri Kenney

When thinking about the world's reaction to the #MeToo movement, some Americans may picture a Saturday Night Live sketch from 2018. Two comedians — wearing all black, smoking cigarettes, and clearly made up with fake wrinkles — portray French actresses Brigitte Bardot and Catherine Deneuve. They are two of hundreds of French women who signed an open letter denouncing the #MeToo movement for what they saw as its unwarranted treatment of men and demonization of male flirtation. "I stand by everything I have said, and I will not double down. Free Harvey Weinstein!" shouts Kate McKinnon (as Bardot) in between drags of her cigarette. The live studio audience laughed at the actresses' extremely eccentric, sexual, and over-exaggerated conversation, but it wasn't far from the truth about the French outlook — or lack of an outlook — on sexism.

In early July 2019, hundreds of protesters assembled in Paris to condemn the government's inaction in preventing the shocking amount of violence against French women in the country. The protesters primarily expressed their rage at the increasing rate of femicide, or domestic murder of women, and the French government's characteristic silence on the subject.

Though rates of homicide by intimate partners in France are not the highest in the European Union, they are the second highest in Western Europe after Northern Ireland, according to the BBC. Despite these gruesome statistics, French citizens continue to

wait for the government to put a concrete end to femicide through effective policy, instead of simply condemning it.

Prior to 2019, the French government had done little to address domestic violence. Shallow laws were made in 2006 and 2015 that addressed violence against women and sexual harassment in general; but, they did not benefit victims and were instead simply attempting to legitimize the French commitment to the cause, which clearly remained weak. Additionally, the government had not supported or created any shelters for domestic violence victims until very recently, and the few that did exist before were run by third-party activist organizations.

At its core, domestic violence is rooted in sexism, and the French government's inaction on the topic of domestic violence points to a culture of sexism within itself. Legal action towards the issue will not progress until attitudes regarding sexism do as well.

Historically, the French woman's role in society has been in accordance with traditional conservative gender roles. Since before the French Revolution, French women had been almost entirely domestic and family-oriented, and this barely changed until the second half of the 20th century when French writer Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*, a treatise that explored women's oppression and inspired global feminist movements. Even then, women's rights have not come easily nor all at once; women could not vote until 1944, married women could not

work without their husbands' permission until 1965, there was a controversy regarding supermarkets imposing a 'woman tax' on feminine products in 2014, and women are still clearly awaiting laws that ensure their safety.

It's not surprising that sexism still exists in French culture, or that it can be seen in many aspects of French society today. Along with the lack of legislation to benefit women, even France's education system lacks proper instruction to combat sexism. Though sex education is required in all French schools, Pascale Boistard, a previous French State Secretary for Women's Rights admitted herself that it was woefully inadequate, focusing more on the basics of intercourse, and less on any other aspects of gender or reproductive rights. "Sex-education sessions in schools are not equally taught," she said at a UN Commission on the Status of Women panel in 2014. Instead of teaching about sexism and its prevention, the lessons French sex education teaches fuel sexist ideas against women that in turn fuel male chauvinism and domestic violence to the point that sexism is tolerated and even encouraged in society.

The barriers that French and francophone women face also lie in one of the foundations of their identity: the French language. In 2017, French academics brought attention to the inherent sexist nature of the French language. They noted the French speaker's tendency to adapt most occupations from the masculine to the feminine form

(for example, the masculine version of actor is un acteur, and the feminine version is une actrice; clearly not too different), but their hesitance to refer to a female president as the feminine une présidente instead of the masculine un président. Similar trends accompany any word signifying a possession of power.

French officials held a press conference to address the increased rates of femicide following the July 2019 protests. They proposed legislation related to court-ordered GPS-trackers on men with restraining orders, as well as suspended visitation rights to fathers threatening their ex-partners. This announcement was undoubtedly a step in the right direction; but, like many French feminist groups attempted to convey at the time, the government's efforts were not to be taken seriously. By the end of 2019, the femicide count in France had reached approximately 150 women, an increase of 30 from the year before, and those are only the officially-reported cases.

Due to the highest number of femicides in recent history, as well as an inherently sexist culture, sexism, and French domestic violence have become increasingly common and more pressing. There is clearly much left to be done in France regarding its domestic violence problem. Though a minority of its citizens have understood its severity for some time, the government continues to be steps behind, and the violent climate will not change until they take solid, resource-backed steps to put an end to it.



Money Over Morals: Saudi Arabia and the Uighur People

Ethan Concannon

Since 2014, the Chinese government has been expanding its persecution of the Uighurs, a minority ethnic group living in Xinjiang. The Uighurs are a majority Muslim and Turkic ethnic group with their own unique culture. On the basis of "combating extremism," the Chinese government has begun placing Uighurs in reeducation camps and cracking down on religious and cultural expressions. The reeducation camps are used to teach Mandarin and transform the Uighurs into obedient Communist Party supporters. This means

leaving behind the Uighur language and customs. For those not in the camps, if they are caught following Islam or their own cultural identity, they are not likely to enjoy such freedoms for long such. China has, for instance, forced students who were fasting during Ramadan to eat. All of this is done in the name of combating religious "extremism," a virtually nonexistent phenomenon in China.

Given the nature of what is happening, it is not difficult to decipher that the actions of the Chinese Communist Party can be classified as religious persecution. As a result, the United States House of Representatives passed a bill late last year condemning

Chinese actions in Xinjiang. Other countries across the globe took similar stances and signed onto letters criticizing Chinese policies. Thus, one would assume that Saudi Arabia would be involved in standing up for persecution against Muslims. Unfortunately, this is far from true.

CCTV, a state controlled Chinese media outlet, quoted Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman as saying that China has the right to protect its national security and take measures for the prevention of terrorism. As Crown Prince, and arguably the most powerful official in the state, MBS's words act as official policy: Saudi Arabia supports the persecution of Uighurs in China. The Saudis would not intentionally act against their own interests, but it is difficult to see how the policy's benefits outweigh its potential harms. The Saudis are arguably turning against their biggest allies, the Americans, and they are directly contradicting the role they aspire to play: the leaders of the Muslim world. The Saudis' biggest competitors in this race to lead the Muslim world are Iran and Turkey, two countries taking different positions. Iran has tried to keep silent on the issue. It recognizes its economic dependence on China, and thus it does not want to potentially endanger that relationship, but the Iranians know they cannot come out and accept Chinese policies for fear of damaging their image in the Muslim world. Turkey, on the other hand, made an attempt to condemn Chinese actions, but after a visit to China last summer, Erdoğan tacitly accepted Chinese policies, citing that Sino-Turkish relations must be strengthened and that the threat of extremism must be fought. However, the Turkish people have not followed their government's position, and in December 2019 took to the streets in protest against Chinese actions. The Turkish people view the Uighurs as similar to themselves given their Turkic origins, shared religion, and similar languages. For this reason,

many Uighurs seek asylum in Turkey and look to the Turkish government and people for help.

For the Saudis, it is clear that their policies are motivated by their economic future. In 2016, MBS announced Vision 2030, a Saudi plan to diversify the economy to become less dependent on the sale of oil. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative is directly involved in Vision 2030, and consequently, the Saudis cannot afford to fracture their relationship with China. Although this goes against the American position, the Americans are unlikely to take any action against them. The Saudis are an important military and diplomatic ally for the US in the region, and under the Trump administration, an unfavorable policy on a strategically unimportant issue will not alter that relationship. In fact, the Saudis are in a position of great power. They can attempt to play the Americans and Chinese to their advantage. The Chinese can help the Saudis move towards accomplishing Vision 2030, and the Americans can help increase Saudi military and diplomatic power in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the Uighurs are merely a pawn in the Saudis' arsenal of political maneuvers.

However, the Uighurs are a people with a rich culture and history that will continue to exist during these times. Saudi influence, on the other hand, is likely to shrink in the coming years among the populace in Muslim majority nations. The governments of these countries will surely remain reticent, but without the backing of their people, it will prove to be more challenging for the Saudis to assert their influence in these regions. For the past few decades, the Saudis have chosen to fund mosques, donate to orphanages, and train imams in their Wahhabi ideologies, and with less influence among the general Muslim population, they may find themselves drifting into a closer relationship with the Chinese that may come at the expense of Saudi power.

Meet Me In Baghdad

Mary Ann Emra

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Current tensions between the U.S. and Iran within Iraq only advance its corrupt government, high unemployment rates, and inadequate access to basic necessities.

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It seems as though the underdeveloped and dangerous state of Iraq has always been an inherent characteristic of the country. The domestic unrest of the October revolution, which continues as of April 2020, prompted by the Iraqi government's inability to provide basic necessities to its citizens, as well as the fact that the government is riddled with corruption, is viewed by most of the world as a natural part of the country's way of life. That's how it always has functioned and that's how it always will function. However, the relationships between other feuding countries, namely the United States and Iran, play a significant role in Iraq's current devastation. Both countries are fighting for influence in Iraq due to the country's strategic location and its vast supply of resources.

What began as citizens mobilizing to demand their rights turned into opportunities on which both Iran and the United States

capitalized to gain greater influence in the region and inflict harm on their opponent. The entire nature of this feud is fueled by the fact that both sides have more to gain than to lose. While both Iran and the U.S. are risking their soldiers and bases, the violence between the two takes place on Iraqi soil. Tensions peaked at the beginning of 2020 as each side carried out numerous attacks on the other's respective militias, ultimately leading to the U.S. assassination of Qassem Suleimani. Not only did these violent efforts amount to a concerning number of civilian casualties, but they resulted in what was condemned by many as a violation of international law and an act of war.

This action sparked fears among United States citizens that America had instigated a third World War. Citizens expressed concerns of being drafted on social media, and "World War 3" and #worldwarIII began trending on Twitter and Facebook.

However, their concerns were almost certainly futile. The attitudes following the shoot-down of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 made it clear that both leaders were hesitant to further inflame the crisis. Furthermore, should the unfortunate case happen where such an event did occur, the United States would not feel the repercussions; Iran would feel some of it, and Iraq would feel all of it.

These tensions play out in an area in which neither of the acting parties feel any of the real impacts of their actions. This proxy war in Iraq allows each party to carry out their military agenda without compromising their own country's structure or well-being. This would not be the first time these world powers have capitalized on Iraqi victimhood. The United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003 destabilized a country that was already recovering from U.S. military efforts of the First Gulf War and various bombings throughout the rest of the 1990s, including Operation Desert Fox, the four-day bombing of Baghdad in 1998. Before Iraq could even finish rebuilding itself from these aggressions, the United States instituted one of the most violent and egregious foreign policy efforts in modern history. The Second Gulf War toppled the entire Iraqi government, completely destroyed its sound infrastructure, and took millions of innocent lives. A weaker Iraq gave the United States ease in entering the premises and in establishing control over the country's operations and resources. To this day, the U.S.' presence in the country perpetuates the cycle of an Iraq too weak to recover on its own being controlled by a world power that claims to offer aid when, in reality, it upholds the conditions that prevent Iraq from truly becoming autonomous.

These conditions led to citizens' distrust in the Iraqi government's ability or intent to take care

of its people, consequently serving as direct catalysts for the formation of extremist ideologies and groups, most notably the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While the U.S. was already exerting its power over Iraq, Iran gained the most influence during ISIS's peak in 2014 and 2015, in which it deployed its militias into Iraq with the intention of combatting the terrorist group while acquiring as much power and influence as possible.

While U.S. efforts have weakened ISIS in the past, the current tensions between the U.S. and Iran within Iraq only advance its corrupt government, high unemployment rates, and inadequate access to basic necessities. As a result, Iraq's citizens are more susceptible to once again developing these extremist ideologies, and there is already concern about these factors leading to ISIS' resurgence.

The United States and Iran continue to engage in this violent and coercive behavior because they know that they do not have to pay the real consequences for their actions. So long as the violence remains overseas, within U.S. and Iranian bases and within the borders of a country that is not theirs, the U.S. and Iran will continue to pursue their imperialistic agenda to maintain influence in the region. This is a self-sustaining, positive feedback loop, because neither of the external parties have a direct incentive to stop. While Iraq remains a battleground stuck in the middle of these actors, it will never have a chance to rebuild itself and return to a state of stability. The lack of peace and security in this country harms not only the civilians who reside there, but citizens of the entire Middle East, as Iraq is a central component to the entire region's upheaval.

The dragon's blood trees found on the Yemeni island of Socotra are otherworldly, and the island's location is even more convenient. In extreme isolation in the Arabian Sea, the biodiversity on the island is so unique that most of its plant life isn't found anywhere else around the world. But aside from the National Geographic-like appeal of the wondrous island, the UAE had other reasons for their interest in the island.

Amidst the ongoing civil war in Yemen, Socotra has been fairly "untouched" compared to other areas within the country, specifically cities centered in the mainland. However, Socotra had other problems after parts of the island were destroyed by hurricanes, prompting the UAE to establish itself as the "helping hand." Clearly "well-intentioned," the UAE helped rebuild areas within Socotra that were destroyed, but even this came with a cost. With the focus on the war in the mainland, the people within Socotra were ignored, allowing the UAE to get its hands in. In the cities around the island, UAE flags can be seen raised high, or even painted on rocks or walls. Socotra natives have a legitimate fear of a complete UAE takeover— and it's slowly happening.

Facilitated by the Saudi government, the Hadi-led Yemeni government must uphold a 95-year lease of Socotra to the UAE. From its strategic location between a major oil shipping channel and the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, the UAE seized the opportunity to further their occupation in the territory by building military bases. Without prior communication with the Hadi-led Yemeni government, the UAE has been training its army within Socotra to fulfill its geopolitical agenda, and recently, American marines have been seen occupying the area as well. The idea of Socotra completely becoming the UAE's military base in Yemen is even more terrifying for the people of Yemen, because this could potentially lead to more violence perpetrated by the UAE. Since 2015, Yemeni activist Huda Al-Sarari has revealed troubling details of the UAE's secret prisons in Southern Yemen— from forced disappearances to torture without due process —and the



The UAE's Secret Treasure: Stolen through Yemeni Struggle

Tahani Almujaheed

lack of accountability from world powers and the UN. Through a Socotra take-over, violence against Yemenis will prevail at higher risks given the location, and activists like Al Sarari will be the only people willing to stand against these human rights violations. Most recently, residents of Socotra have been actively protesting against the UAE's deployment of forces within the region.

As an occupying force, the UAE's presence in the area is detrimental to the everyday life of Yemenis and furthers their 'othering' by exploiting their land. The land itself is sacred to the people— the dragon's blood trees have a rich cultural history connected to Sumerian tales of creation. The land is currently safe from tourism —but activists within the region have fears of the UAE potentially profiting off future tourism. Many activists are worried that the apparent glitz-and-glam of "rebuilding" the island will allow for a UAE takeover since they have "fixed" the region by working with Saudi Arabia and the U.S. as the other

main contributors. The U.S. has allegedly begun identifying places within the island to install defense systems and has been meeting with UAE forces in the area. In addition, there has been talk of the U.S. also building military bases, which has not been confirmed— though this is not unlikely, even in times where advocacy for Yemen is at its peak.

While the UAE dominates the region, the question remains: what reasons does the U.S. have to be back in Socotra? As political arguments persist about the U.S. presence in Yemen, Congress has yet to completely withdraw troops from the country, even though U.S. forces were never authorized to be there.

The UAE, however, has more to gain from Socotra: from economics to military success, Socotra was an easy target due to the Yemeni government's focus on the mainland during the conflict. However, that doesn't justify the UAE's use of Yemen for political gain, nor does it justify the exploitation of the land and its people. The dragon's blood

trees hold more value to the people, and only they know how to care for their land. Stealing the trees' seeds— which the UAE has been accused of —is unlikely to advance the UAE's agenda, given the local outrage such acts trigger. And yet, in more recent news, UAE forces have allegedly been stealing artifacts and Islamic manuscripts within the island from the oldest mosque within Hadibu, Socotra's capital. Banners and antiques important in religious rituals in Socotra have also been stolen, allowing the UAE to facilitate heritage thievery.

While the focus is usually on Saudi involvement, the UAE's presence in Yemen should not go unnoticed and is vital in understanding the conflict in Yemen. Turning a blind eye to the UAE and its partnership with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia is equivalent to denying its crimes. More importantly, advocacy for withdrawing the presence within Yemen is needed to preserve the rich land and cultural history and save the lives of Yemenis.

The People Demand the Fall of the Banks: Lebanon's Post-Revolution Challenges

Maya Zreik

On October 17, 2019, thousands of Lebanese across the country took to the streets to demand change. Although the protests were first triggered by a proposed tax on the messaging app WhatsApp, this was only the tip of the iceberg; tensions have been rising for years due to widespread corruption, increasing unemployment, decreased standards of living, and a national debt crisis that rendered the country bankrupt. Over 1 million people— or over a quarter of the population — engaged in civil disobedience to demand change. And upon initial inspection, it would appear that they succeeded— partially.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri stepped down less than three weeks after the start of the revolution. After 2 months of negotiations between the country's political class, relative newcomer Hassan Diab, a professor and former Minister of Education, was voted into parliament with a narrow majority. This majority comprised Hezbollah, the National Patriotic Movement (the political party of President Aoun) and their allies. While claiming that his cabinet is one of independent candidates, as demanded by the public, the reality is that they were all selected by the different political parties who elected PM Diab. They are continuing with business as usual.

For the thousands who took to the streets, the revolution continues until the entire system of government is overhauled and adequate measures are put into place to repair the economy. The continued corruption and elitism which plagues the Lebanese government and the gradual worsening of the economy demonstrates that the issues that protesters revolted against have not been dealt with adequately.

Most of the continued unrest happening today is due to Lebanon's economic decline— one of the main conditions that spurred protests in October. The crisis has only worsened since then, with sovereign credit

steadily declining and being hit with a double downgrade in February. It is the nation's worst debt crisis since the civil war and has resulted in Lebanon defaulting on its debt for the first time. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese are having their money held hostage; credit cards have been frozen and there are now strict conditions on withdrawal that prevent many from accessing their savings. Additionally, banks have imposed restrictions that force Lebanese to withdraw at the official exchange rate of 1500LL to the dollar, whereas the

continually humiliate and exploit the people. The quick collapse of the Lebanese economy and the current situation of the national banks are stark signs that the government has ultimately failed to meet the demands of the revolution.

The poor governmental response to the banking crisis is just one in a long string of bad decisions that led to the start of the October Revolution. The crisis has only confirmed the revolutionaries' conviction that nothing less than a complete overhaul is good enough for

percent for youths before the revolution —is rising. It is the impoverished who have been hit the hardest by the recession, and who will continue to suffer if the government maintains their non-response to the economic crisis.

Just as the situation appeared to be at its most dire, the first COVID-19 cases emerged in late February. Like other nations around the world, Lebanese businesses closed and daily life came to a halt in order to slow the spread of the virus. Although completely necessary, these measures have hastened the collapse of the economy and the rise of unemployment. It is estimated that 1.6 million Lebanese— or almost 38 percent of the population —now live under the poverty rate of \$8 USD per day, along with 760,000 in extreme poverty and unable to meet their necessary daily caloric needs. To make matters worse, the economic collapse before the pandemic weakened public services, leading to medicine shortages at hospitals.

The Lebanese political elite's insistence on clinging to power has accelerated Lebanon's bankruptcy. They must truly address the demands of the October Revolution before the country falls even further into its economic crisis. So far, each party's response has been to attempt to co-opt the protests for their own personal gain. Politicians have paid lip service to protesters and insisted that their demands would be met. However, operations behind the scenes continued as normal, with Hassan Diab's new government being constructed along the same confessional lines as those before it. Lebanon's economy and government will run themselves into the ground unless change happens immediately. Although the October Revolution was lauded for its widespread reach, non-sectarian and peaceful nature, it has, up until this point, not had the time to be successful as it coincided with the economic decline.

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The foolish decisions of the banking sector are a representation of all the problems that protesters were revolting against in the first place; namely, the greed of the elite who continually humiliate and exploit the people.

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dollar is trading at 2800LL to the dollar in the grey market. Forcing the Lebanese to withdraw at the official exchange rate cuts the value of their money to less than half of what they would have been worth in dollars.

Furious protesters started regularly gathering in front of banks and smashing the glass forefronts in a continuation of the popular protests. With trust in banks at an all-time low, foreign and domestic investors are no longer depositing their money in Lebanon at a time when the nation needs such investment more than ever. The abhorrently foolish decisions of the banking sector are a representation of all the problems that protesters were revolting against in the first place: namely, the greed of the elite who

Lebanon. The confessional system of government, imposed by the French colonial powers during the mandate period, divides up political parties and positions by religious sect, and has led to corrupt practices including nepotism and clientelist behavior whilst contributing to increased corruption. With each party only looking out for the interests of their own members, economic and political inequality has widened considerably, with the richest 1 percent of the nation hoarding 25 percent of the wealth. As a result of the economic crisis, Lebanon's economy is collapsing rapidly, the country is in recession and the currency devaluation is causing an increase in the prices of basic goods. Unemployment— already at approximately 30

Eulogy for an Actress and a Domestic Worker: Traces of Revolutionary Syria in Exile

Abu Antar

These final words adorned the Facebook page of May Skaf, one of the most vocal activists of the Syrian Revolution, as she passed away on July 28th in exile from Syria. Back in 2011, Skaf broke away from the majority of the Actors Guild in Syria by vocally criticizing the Ba'ath Regime and joining with popular protests. As she joined the protests, her status as a Syrian-Christian actress and celebrity in Syria turned into a symbol for non-sectarian peaceful resistance. Skaf directly challenged Ba'ath Regime propagandists, who tainted the protestors as a homogenous group of extremist Sunni outsiders. Her death in 2018 opened a new phase of Syrian melancholia—it had been seven years since the beginning of the Revolution, and many of its brightest icons are no longer with us.

What began as a grassroots cry for justice has devolved into a mass-scale war and a global refugee crisis. Today in 2020, the Ba'ath Regime now turns its attention towards re-consolidating its hold over Syria after nine years of war. "Re-consolidation" has meant an onslaught of aerial missiles on civilian populations in rebel-held Idlib in northwestern Syria, and negotiating with Kurdish forces in the northeast. Adding to the despair, the majority of the Syrian population today remains displaced, whether internally within the borders

of Syria or externally across Europe, Asia, and North America. Yet, as the memory of hopeful revolution begins to fade into gloom, traces of revolutionary memory break the fog beyond the borders of Syria.

The refugee population in Lebanon, whether Syrian or Palestinian, make up over a third of the total Lebanese population. These refugees occupy overstuffed camps, where they not only face dire living conditions, but an increasingly xenophobic public. Since the arrival of the new Syrian population, they have received the same deportation threats and employment issues as their preceding Palestinian peers. In fact, deportations for Syrians without papers proving their date of arrival have officially commenced, as Lebanon maintains Syria as "safe for return." Recently, the increasing xenophobia towards refugees has culminated in an explosive national incident—the killing of Syrian domestic worker Mohammad Mousa in the household of none other than singer, celebrity, and pop culture icon, Nancy Ajram.

Mousa's murder in the distinguished, ornate Ajram household has created an intense public outcry. Initially, video camera surveillance footage revealed a shadowy, masked figure entering the house, pursued by Ajram's husband, Fady Hachem. Yet, in what appears more akin to an inversion of Academy

Award winning film Parasite, the rich Ajram estate began revealing a concealed reality: that of a refugee domestic worker demanding his pay, and receiving 16 bullets in his chest in response. Other Lebanese celebrities, such as Haifa Wehbe, rose in Nancy Ajram's defense on social media, going as far as asking all Syrians to leave in a tweet. Meanwhile, the family of the murdered appear on television pointing to inconsistencies in the surveillance footage, proclaiming Fady Hachem as a cold-blooded murderer. As Lebanese courts begin to re-investigate Hachem's role in the incident, Syrians within and beyond Lebanese borders maintain an unquestionable allegiance to Mousa. Surely, beneath the gloss of Nancy Ajram's latest music videos, there must exist a dark reality—what other explanation could there be to 16 shots fired?

Though the circumstances behind Mohammad Mousa's death differ dramatically from May Skaf's, they hold in common a shared story: that of resistance against an oppressive elite. Skaf, a Syrian actress and celebrity, became a besieged public figure in her Damascene house after denouncing the Ba'ath regime. She finally left Syria in 2013 after continual threats to her life, but she never stopped publicly opposing the regime even as she departed.

Mohammad Mousa did not enjoy the same celebrity status as May Skaf's—he worked as an exploited gardener in another celebrity's household. Yet, while inverting the class dynamics of resistance, Mousa's act of survival as a refugee in a nation-state that denies his worth must also be held as equally daring. Both of their recent deaths trigger reflections on Syria, from its 2011 revolutionary fervor to its current-day dispersal across borders.

As the Ba'ath Regime continues to go through with its plans for "re-consolidation," it hopes for a national amnesia. Tourism videos on Damascus begin reappearing, proving that people have returned to a now-romantic notion of everyday life. President Bashar Al-Assad re-emerges as a public figure issuing statements to news outlets, maintaining the stability of the process of "rebuilding" Syria. As the regime continues to bomb Idlib however, the ruling class will remain haunted by an ever-present reality: forgetting is an impossibility, so long as Syrians live and breathe, resist and endure, survive and pass away. Though it may be easier to succumb to the overwhelming despair, hope lives on in the bodies and memories of Syrians, wherever they might be.

“

I will never lose hope, I will never lose hope. It's a Majestic Syria. Not Assad's Syria.

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