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An illustration of a large, diverse crowd of people at a protest. In the center, a woman in an orange hoodie holds a white sign with the text "BREAKING THE SILENCE" in bold red letters. The crowd is composed of people of various ethnicities and ages, some holding their own signs. The background features stylized buildings in shades of orange and blue, and a large, abstract orange shape at the top. The overall style is graphic and expressive, with a color palette dominated by blues, oranges, and greys.

**BREAKING
THE
SILENCE**

LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Silence is not innocent. Silence serves to maintain systems of oppression which inhibit underrepresented voices from being heard and suppress change or challenges to leadership and existing systems. But 2019 has been a year for breaking the silence and calling out injustice globally as thousands of people organize and mobilize to challenge the status quo in their home countries and call for change. Pushing through media blackouts, deconstructing narratives that a small tax or new law could be the simple reason for protest and instead focusing on the years of fracture and abuses that forced the silence to break.

Major protests are getting media coverage around the world, but Kieran Byrne sheds light on Algeria where “young people, sick of high youth unemployment and government corruption” have taken to the streets, in a lesser known protest, to call for free and fair elections, he discusses the tensions in this transitional period between electing a new president after having removed a 19 year authoritarian leader.

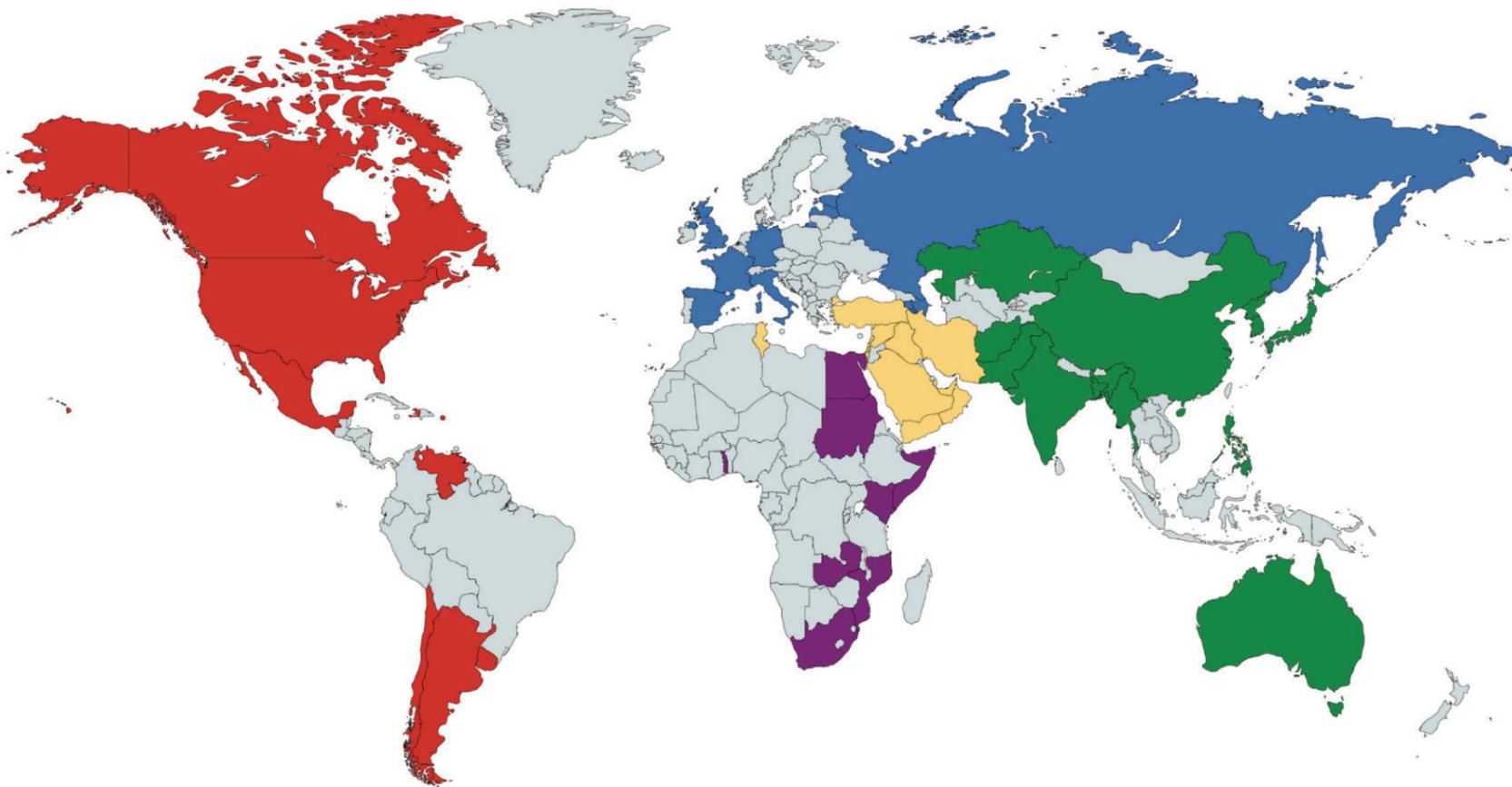
As far as events gaining greater international attention, Kayleigh Crabb's article had to have a note added preceding the piece because contest to election results in Bolivia hit a fever pitch during the editing of this edition, as Evo Morales was pushed to resign and into exile. And, while made out to seem like protests were solely over a 30 peso fare increase, as Martina Villalobos explains, the motivation behind protests in her home country of Chile is more complicated than that.

In her piece on why the title of 'happiest country' might not fit as well as it seems for Finland, European Regional Editor Megan Rossiter too reclaims the narrative from diminutive international portrayals of how a country or a topic is viewed and explains how things are a bit more nuanced than they are presented to be.

And there are real benefits to listening to these voices that are speaking out, President Joko Widodo won 27 out of the 29 districts in Papua and West Papua on a promise to “listen to the people's voices” as discussed in Samuel Rosenblum's article on the struggle for Western New Guinea.

In the Middle-East section's collaborative article, a number of writers explain the complicated decision of whether or not a country's people can or should speak out and when, since it takes an understanding of the diversity of political leadership in the Middle East to provide insight into why certain nations are in the midst of revolution and others are still silent.

Throughout this edition, our writers share their positions on an unsettled world, recognizing global injustice, and the means through which people are trying to change it. Calls for resignations, policy changes, acknowledgement of territorial integrity, and more. The silence has been broken, and now, with strengthened voices -- the people will not stop until they are heard. In a small way, writing about such movements, we hope elevates these voices and contributes to the global cacophony that is calling for positive change.



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Low-cost Solar Power Presents a Transformative Opportunity For Africa

Aaron Orelowitz

Eight years after Algeria's government clung to power during the Arab Spring, the country is being rocked by protests against its longstanding autocratic state. The spark was cast in February 2019, when the elderly and infirm president Bouteflika announced he would stand for a fifth election, having already ruled Algeria for 19 years, along with the help of his corrupt clique of relatives and party elites. The movement, known in Algeria as "Hirak", led to Bouteflika stepping down as president and the resignation of the prime minister. Yet the interim president, Abdelkader Bensalah, is himself an elite of the FLN party like Bouteflika, and the protests have intensified to bring about a real change in the government, as has the government's repression. The interim regime faces many of the same criticisms as the former. Many of the former members of the ruling clique are currently being tried in a secret military tribunal, along with at least one opposition leader. The army's influence seems to be growing as it pressures the protesters to simmer down in the months leading up to the election. And France, although it is invested in the outcome, is both unable and unwilling to intervene in a country with which it has such a tortured history. The way forward for Algeria centers around the success of the upcoming election, and there is room for France and the EU to help their neighbor in accomplishing this.

Bensalah announced a new presidential election for December 12th, despite having already served longer than the ninety days constitutionally allowed for

an interim president. The new elections have proved controversial, however, with many Algerians doubting the legitimacy of elections managed by a Minister of Justice holdover from the old regime. The army, too, has begun putting pressure on protesters, which it had largely avoided doing, by blocking buses bringing protesters to Alger, although avoiding violence for now. The regime has also detained a number of activists and journalists, particularly those flying the Berber or Amazigh flag. Pressure from the regime has nevertheless been inconsistent in part due to resistance from the judiciary, in late October many judges and magistrates began to strike rather than prosecute detained protesters. The protesters are primarily young people, sick of high youth unemployment and government corruption, which have not improved under the interim government. To them, Bensalah is just as bad as Bouteflika, and protests are unlikely to end until after the December election.

France, Algeria's former colonial ruler, finds itself in a tricky position. Protests against the Algerian regime have spilled over into French cities with large Algerian minorities. In Algeria, however, France's hesitant involvement is scorned. When president Macron praised Bouteflika for stepping down and establishing an interim government, protesters in Alger held signs with slogans telling him to deal with his own protests (the gilets jaunes movement), or reminding him that it was 2019, not 1830. Although opponents of Bouteflika, the protesters viewed Macron's praise of the interim

regime as still overstepping the French president's rightful boundaries. Le Monde reported that France is perceived as having a role in supporting the former Algerian regime, and indeed France has a major stake in stability in Algeria, where many French people have family ties. France particularly fears that instability in Algeria will lead to large scale migration to France, creating a headache for the government and possibly adding fuel to the right wing parties in that country.

France can help in one way, however, which is to help ensure the legitimacy of the Algerian elections. The interim government must do everything it can to avoid any impropriety, and allow them to occur freely. One of the primary demands of the protesters is transparency from their corrupt government, and so the elections must appear free and fair to all. France must avoid the appearance of overt meddling; if it is perceived as rigging the elections, it could damage their legitimacy catastrophically. Rather, the European Union as a whole must endorse the elections and offer monitors to report on any corruption of their integrity. The EU already sends monitors to numerous elections every year, notably Tunisia in October of 2019.

The EU election monitoring process is explicit in its goals: to observe only, and not to participate in the organization of the elections. This helps it to maintain impartiality, which is vital to be seen as legitimate. Its only mandate is to observe the campaign and electoral process, and to publish findings after. The presence of

impartial observers like these can have the effect of pressuring the regime organizing the election to do so more fairly and transparently, particularly in a situation like Algeria's with such a powerfully mobilized public. It is through this mechanism that France can help assure Algeria's stability. A free election, legitimized by foreign observers, could end the ongoing crisis in Algerian politics. This also has the upside that France would not be directly involved, but rather acting through the EU, which does not have the same difficult post-colonial relationship with Algeria that France does.

As for the remains of the old guard, a public corruption inquiry should be carried out, rather than the haphazard military tribunals currently occurring. A power grab by the military is harmful to the protesters' goal of a free and democratic society, even if it is against the corrupt former leaders. It would be best if no one ran for president under the old revolutionary party banner, the FLN, as that party is now seen as the one most tied to the corrupt practices of the old regime. The ultimate goal of the interim government should be an orderly investigation into the old regime's corruption, followed by a fair election.

If the December elections produce a leader seen as legitimate, and the corruption of the old regime is swept away, 2020 could see an Algeria that is finally free and fair, after centuries of brutal autocratic rulers. The stakes are high, but the prospect of a more peaceful, safe, and democratic Maghreb could lie just beyond the new year.

"Made in Africa" - Rwanda's Techno-Revolution

Abrar Quazi

Kigali, Rwanda's capital, is an interconnected, growing city bustling with innovation and investor money challenging stereotypes of African cities as impoverished. As a country tainted by civil war and a genocide that left more than 2 million displaced, Rwanda is now going through a radical transformation that makes it the land of opportunity and a symbol of hope for all of Africa. The key behind this success? Rwanda has invested heavily in building up its IT infrastructure, creating a foundation for technology hubs, and more importantly, enabling access to high quality education through its science, art, and technology programs. The Rwandan model of transforming into a knowledge-based sharing economy provides a standard that all other African nations should follow in the ever-growing digital landscape.

For most of its history, Rwanda has primarily been an agrarian-based economy, with over 70 percent of its population engaged in that sector. However, coupled with the fact that the country has very little natural resources and a growing population, sustaining an economy purely through agriculture is futile. Only through diversification into the tech industry can Rwanda have a strong presence in global markets. The first step in doing that is transforming Rwanda's economy into a collaborative one where knowledge and information is easily shared. Throughout the past decade, President Paul Kagame has sought advice from leaders in the Asian market, such as

China, South Korea, Singapore, and Thailand, where there is a history of rapid urbanization and growth. These key ties have not brought in foreign investment, as well as the ability to fully revamp the countries' IT infrastructure, with 95 percent of Rwanda now covered by 4G/LTE networks through support of Korean Telecom. Having a digitally-connected Rwanda is crucial for Kagame's Vision 2020 plan of being a knowledge-based middle-income country, especially on a continent where 60 percent of the population is not yet connected to the internet.

A connected Rwanda brings in opportunities for new businesses and innovative ideas to help solve systemic problems. Understanding the potential for growth, the government of Rwanda has made it easier to launch startups through pro-business laws, lenient visa policies, free workspaces for entrepreneurs, and quick business registration processes, policies which have catapulted Rwanda to rank 29th in the World Bank's 2019 Ease of Doing Business Report. This resulted in the creation of startups such as SafeMotos, Kigali's ride hailing app that also hopes to help curb the number of traffic collisions, or drone startups like Zipline responsible for quickly and efficiently delivering medical equipment to hospitals, saving lives. These new business opportunities also have a hand in economic performance, as the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has averaged around 7.5 percent annually during the past decade while according to

The World Bank, poverty has declined from 59 percent to 39 percent since 2001.

Along with the economic growth, there has been an increase in incentive for purchasing African-made products. In 2017, Rwanda became home to Latin American company Positivo BGH in order to mass produce locally assembled laptops. These efforts of creating Africa's first laptops were incentivized directly by the governments "One Laptop Per Child" policy of connecting the Rwandan education system to the internet. Following the theme of connecting the unconnected, Rwanda's Mara Group also produced Africa's first "home-grown" smartphones, the Mara X and Mara Z, during October of this year. The entirety of the phone's manufacturing process -- from building out the motherboards to sourcing the thousands of pieces required in a smartphone -- has been entirely done in Rwanda. Priced competitively at around \$130 USD, Mara Group plans on taking advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement that is due to begin next year to boost sales across Africa and increase Rwanda's smartphone usage, which is currently at 15 percent.

Making sure that Rwanda has the necessary IT infrastructure and business opportunities is only one piece of the puzzle in order to become a regional technology hub and have a knowledge-based shared economy. Enabling access to education is perhaps the most important ingredient in order to bring Rwanda to middle-income status. With a new \$2 billion USD campus for Carnegie Mellon University in Kigali, Kagame hopes to ensure that Rwanda attracts and creates the top talents for robotics and Internet-of-Things infrastructure. The government has also developed a new national strategy to incorporate Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) within the education system. The Rwanda Education Commons aims to boost the literacy rate and provide access to high quality education throughout the country. Government agreements with companies like Andela have also made significant impact in producing a technology-literate workforce. Through hosting boot camps, these companies have agreed to recruit and train hundreds of Rwandans in software development.

Although Rwanda has made strides towards its Vision 2020 goals, there are still significant hurdles that the country has to overcome. The resulting fragmentation of such a society undergoing accelerated development is a key issue to remember, especially in a country where fragmentation haunts its past. As a predominantly rural country, most of Rwanda's population lives off of subsistence farming and only half the total households have access to electricity. Honing in on solely improving the quality of life in Rwanda's cities like Kigali in the hopes to project a "New Rwanda" to investors will only lead to major systemic issues if the rural population is left unaccounted for. Therefore, more government investments, such as the Rural Electrification Strategy program, need to be put in place to improve rural Rwanda. Making sustainable efforts in building out the necessary IT infrastructure and ensuring that there is an educated workforce will help bring business opportunities and reduce reliance on other countries, just as it has done in Rwanda. These key developments have not only spurred Rwanda's own techno-revolution, but have also created an optimistic future where the "Made in Africa" tag is much more prevalent.

Tense Transition in Algeria

Kieran Byrne

Energy consumption in Africa's lower income markets is predicted to rise tremendously throughout the coming decades. Birthrates are projected to pull Africa's population from 1.2 billion up to over 2 billion by 2050. The majority of this growth will occur in communities which have historically been disconnected or have had inconsistent servicing from national grids. If electricity access for these populations is to ever rise above 35 percent, policy makers and businesses must address questions of future energy systems. Past energy infrastructure has proven unreliable, expensive, and difficult to maintain. South Africa, for example, has had to cancel construction on future power plants due to high costs, and countries such as Rwanda and Zambia will be faced with similar costs, as they create unsustainable energy deals with Russia. Fortunately, there is an alternative. Harnessing solar energy seems to provide an economically feasible, grass-roots method for electrifying Africa.

Most immediately, there are clear geographic benefits for photovoltaic systems in this region. Africa receives many more hours of sunlight than any other continent. In parts of Egypt, Sudan, Chad, and Libya, the sun shines for 4,300 hours per year, 97 percent of the possible total. Much of the continent is also in the intertropical zone where the intensity of sunlight is always high. Additionally, two fifths of the continent is desert, the most continuously sunny biome. The combination of these factors account for the projection that Africa's sun exposure could provide 40 percent of the global total. Choosing to ignore Africa's massive solar reserves is not only environmentally harmful, it is also allocatively inefficient.

The other clear benefit of solar technology is that it does not require a centralized grid. Financially precarious governments have fallen short when providing energy infrastructure in countries such as Burundi, Chad, and Malawi (where energy access has not breached 15 percent of the total population). Dependent upon location and income, people may experience blackouts of 50 to 4,600 hours annually. Some governments have also been slow to implement new

for a mobile payment system and creates a cleaner, cheaper alternative to fossil fuel powered generators. Analysts predict that M-KOPA may be the first "unicorn" (a privately held startup company valued at over \$1 billion USD) to be serving exclusively African markets. Their success led to a range of competitors such as Fenix, Zola Electric, and Power OffGrid, all of which bring electricity to isolated communities through a similar business model. The benefits have been clear: 58 percent of households connected

profits are reinvested for further expansion. Additionally, bigger firms and departments have been picking up momentum in the eyes of international investors and governments. China and the European Union have led the charge with a variety of loan packages, while the U.S. has followed closely behind with their \$7 billion USD "Power Africa" initiative. Global businesses have also seen an opportunity to close this solar financing gap, with companies such as General Electric, ABB, Alstom, Siemens, and Schneider Electric investing tens of billions of dollars.

Solar power also has the same shortcomings in Africa as it has everywhere else. Researchers must build new ways to store and transport electricity, if the continent wants to commit a larger share of the energy sector to photovoltaics. They also need to be continuously developing new ways to improve the efficiency of panels; the most efficient panel design stands at 33 percent of max efficiency, and the most common design is only at 18 percent. Finally, both the price of producing photovoltaic systems needs to continue to fall, and manufacturing must be streamlined within the continent to avoid market barriers.

The potential for solar energy in Africa is large and relatively untapped. For individual communities, solar technology may have a similar effect as mobile phones, effectively avoiding government-built infrastructure to cater to certain needs. For larger industries, schools, and hospitals, solar energy could cut costs and avoid further losses brought on by blackouts. If policy makers and investors continue to support initiatives in this sector, the social and economic gains will be significant.

to off-grid technology undertake more economic activity because of their home solar systems. Children are able to do homework past sundown, cellphones can be charged at home, and adults can use appliances which would otherwise be inconvenient to power.

Financing poses the biggest obstacle to building Africa's clean energy sector. Estimates of required investments, between 2015 and 2040, stand between \$33 billion and \$63 billion USD, while current government spending is only about \$12 billion USD. Fortunately, business models similar to M-KOPA's appear to be self-sustaining, and

“ **Past energy infrastructure has proven unreliable, expensive, and difficult to maintain.** ”

projects due to high levels of bureaucracy and corruption such as those in Kenya and Nigeria. Luckily, solar panels can be constructed at a single unit level and can circumvent the need for government involvement.

The largest case of private energy expansion into less-wealthy communities is through a start-up called M-KOPA. M-KOPA is the Kenyan-based pioneer of small-scale off-grid solar power. They provide access to solar energy for as little as \$1 USD a month via a system of payments. After 24 payments, the user has paid the full cost of the kit, and they receive full ownership of the product. M-KOPA allows

How Linguistic Inequality Explains Botswana's Surge in Identity Politics and Xenophobia

Olivia Howard

In post-colonial Africa, Botswana is often times regarded as a model transition, upholding traditional values in their quest for modernization. In fact, Botswana has mobilized drought relief campaigns, pension and orphan benefits, increased health infrastructure and mass school reform. Many attribute this success to a homogenous ethnic and linguistic population. This narrative of a rose-colored African Renaissance has stunted the human rights progression of minority groups and foreigners. The Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), a political alliance to improve government accountability, has set concrete policy measures to combat xenophobic responses that have seen little results. Xenophobia and minority oppression within Botswana are perpetuated by linguistic inequalities and must be addressed through a sociocultural framework rather than progressively open immigration policy.

Instances of exclusionary behavior have cropped up in the public and private sector in recent years in Botswana. In 2012 in Serowe North, the urban village's MP, Tshekedi Khama, was reprimanded by the National Assembly after referring to African foreigners within Botswana as "Makwerekwere" in parliament. The use of this derogatory word, which translates as "strange unintelligible sounds," exemplifies the prevalence of historical marginalization and dehumanization of outsiders among Botswanans. High-profile independents, such as Freedom Fighter Julius Malema and lawyer Gordon Bennett, have been targeted for exclusion from entering the nation-state. After housemaids finished their work as immigrant laborers, their recently expired working visas were immediately reported to the police.

Many may suggest this is an issue of contractionary immigration policy. But, Botswana has been known as the "country of immigration" for decades. In fact, in 2018 President Mokgweetsi Masisi reformed the Ease of Doing Business in Botswana policy so that "employers and investors who have been struggling with visas or residence or employment permits will be facilitated as expeditiously as possible." So then, if not rooted in border controversies, the spread of xenophobia must be rooted in a greater social movement.

The rise of ethnocentrism particularly surged after a change in Zimbabwe migration patterns. Many call for the electrification of borders, non-citizens to carry identification and generally stricter migration laws. This rhetoric may parallel the progression of violence in South Africa, such as the xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg, which killed five. With a neighboring cautionary tale, Botswana will need to shift public opinion in order to keep their peaceful reputation. Wider immigration won't combat dangerous rhetoric calling for restrictions on immigration itself; it's not the origin of the problem. Foreigners aren't facing walls or cages; but a homogeneous cultural enterprise that's fearful of their authority being questioned.

The 'One Nation project' forced homogeneity through Tswanafication. Following independence in 1966, English became the official language, and Setswana (Tswana) became the national one. Minority languages such as Ikalanga and Afrikaans are gradually disappearing, along with oral and textual diversity in policy and media. Specifically, the demand for a national identity led to the suppression of tribal language within the education system, creating a positive feedback loop. Thus, assimilating to Tswana simply became more advantageous for career progression. Subservient

to the state-wide narrative, foreigners' labor rights only grew in the 1970s. Therefore, Botswana's 'successful' post-colonial transition wasn't caused by natural homogeneity, but systematic oppression of factions.

These linguistic changes created an inequitable power structure. The House of Chiefs' membership, constitutionally, are ex-officio lifelong and hereditary members from eight Tswana *merafes*, or tribes. Yet, legislations such as the Tribal Territories Act excludes non-Tswana people's protection of residing land. Eventually, minority groups began to create coalitions against the majority bias, such as the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language, but these efforts were generally seen as unpatriotic rather than revolutionary. Therefore, the structure of government is more discriminatory than the content of the laws, creating continual elitism and ethnic collectivism.

“ **Botswana's 'successful' post-colonial transition wasn't caused by natural homogeneity, but systematic oppression of factions.** ”

The lack of articulate legislation fails to support the already silenced minorities and aliens. In section 15(3) of the Constitution, discrimination is defined by the 'difference of treatment.' But the implementation proves how "different" isn't intuitively equal. In *Attorney-General v Dow* (1991), the court ruled that Section 3 implies all-encompassing fundamental rights, and therefore the equal treatment of individuals. However, many believe this law doesn't practically protect against discrimination. Recently, foreigners have been blamed for crime, social ills and unsustainable economic opportunities. This ineffective application enhances the primary need for greater cultural intervention.

Rhetoric has infiltrated the daily lives

of Botswana's population. 'Local' men and women assert their dominance and sexualize Ghanaians, a prominent minority. Through marriage, Ghanaian men attempt to gain citizenship rights. This opportunistic relationship manifests xenophobia through repulsion, rather than the more common tactic of rejection. These abusive power structures are formed from intolerance and disrespect, conveyed through linguistic relativity. In Tswana languages, roots meaning "human beings" are "mo-ba," such as the "Basotho" people. However, non-Tswana speakers, such as Lekgowa-Makgowa imply vultures or thieves. These literal savage implications highlight the schism within Botswanan culture.

Many citizens refuse to publicly address these widespread offenses. Because the press is controlled by the dominant language, journals and articles about xenophobia are rare. Methaetsile Leepile, former editor

of Mmegi, provides a rare criticism of the Kalanga elite by claiming they attempt to "dictate the tempo and direction of change to make strategic interventions when it serves their peculiar interests." Thus, it is the responsibility of the masses and media to shed light on their own missteps, perhaps through youth education campaigns or increased minority language representation in films. Common thought would point towards more accepting immigration policies, yet the true conflict is intrinsic. The multifaceted issue of language must be culturally assessed, for the greatest injustices are most evident in civil society.

This case of language suppression is not singular and as globalization expands, Botswana's minorities will

Botswana Fights Against the Current of LGBTQA+ Discrimination In Africa

Rachel Milner



In June of 2019, Letsweletse Motshidiemang, a 21-year-old student at the University of Botswana, brought a case against the 1965 penal code criminalizing same-sex relations in Botswana. In a surprising shift, the High Court of Botswana deemed the law unconstitutional, overturning bans against same-sex relations. While the move may have had foundations from movements and public support in Botswana, it is firmly against the current trend of LGBTQA+ rights in Africa. Denoted as the most oppressive region for LGBTQA+ rights, Africa has seen recent negative trends in terms of the recognition of those rights and is home to some of the harshest punishments for the homosexual population. A select number of countries have been able to make progress. Botswana, in particular, owes its relatively successful advances in LGBTQA+ rights to more stable democratic practices, lower levels of corruption, and a stronger presence of political and human rights advocacy groups compared to other countries in Africa. South Africa became the fifth country in the world to legalize gay marriage in 2006. It remains the sole country in Africa to have made this step, and an outlier at that. Due to the wide range of territories in Africa, LGBTQA+ rights drastically differ. Religious, ethnic, and cultural values vary, causing a spectrum of rights across the continent. Out of the 54 states in Africa, 34 still have laws criminalizing same-sex relationships

and conduct, and four of those punish homosexuality by death. Other nations have laws against gender expression as well. In June 2019, Botswana joined the ranks of countries in Africa that decriminalized same-sex conduct.

In many regions of Africa, it is extremely dangerous and even fatal to express an identification within the LGBTQA+ community. Countries such as Uganda, South Sudan, Burundi, Liberia, and Nigeria have recently attempted to strengthen the criminalization of LGBTQA+ relations and identifications. In Kenya, for instance, a court recently overruled a case against the criminalization of sodomy, causing massive international backlash.

While it is difficult to look at the trajectory of LGBTQA+ rights in Africa as anything besides slow and frustrating, it is also important to note that there have been significant gains in countries including Mozambique, Seychelles, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola, and that there are some countries in which homosexual activity has not been criminalized to begin with. Another complicated aspect is that, despite these victories, implementation is still problematic in many regions to ensure protections and rights of the community.

In Botswana, the penal code banning same-sex relations, alongside other similar regulations in other countries, initially originated from

European colonialism. Britain has a long history of criminalizing homosexuality, which influenced the laws created and implemented in former colonies including Botswana. While the independent Republic of Botswana was established in 1966, and Britain began its movement for LGBTQA+ rights around the same time, it took longer for public opinion and development of Botswana's government (which is celebrated as one of the least corrupt in Africa) to reach the point of being able to challenge this law. Even now, the attorney general in Botswana, Abraham Keetshabe, is challenging the high court's decision in the court of appeals.

Botswana's court decision has been a landmark victory for the African LGBTQA+ community. As the longest continuous democracy in Africa, Botswana is considered one of the most stable and corruption free nations on the continent. Leading to the current court case decision was the recognition of the non-profit Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO) by the High Court in 2014 as a legitimate entry in the Registrar of Societies. A majority of other nations, meanwhile, have not sponsored legitimization of LGBTQA+ organizations and movements. Propping up such actors raises the likelihood of increased LGBTQA+ rights exponentially, because it allows for donors to support a cause that raises awareness and exposure for more tolerance. Comments from

Botswana's President Mokgweetsi Masisi calling for recognition of the LGBTQA+ community have further added to the groundwork for the success in Botswana. This public sponsorship from the president has aided the non-profits and community in the sense that it provides a voice from a significant elected leader in society advocating for change.

It will be essential to ensure both that the appeals challenge is not successful and that implementation of these laws are carried out. A vital aspect is monitoring backlash from the opposing groups or the public to prevent lax enforcement of protections. Countries across the world have seemingly tolerant policies that are not actually carried out in reality, allowing for abuse to continue under the guise of acceptance. International support of Botswana's decision has been heard, and diplomatic pressure from other nations to maintain legitimate acceptance of LGBTQA+ rights can ensure the sustainability of this victory. However, this would only be possible in countries like Botswana that are close to reaching increased tolerance, and where governments have enough legitimacy to effectively enforce its rulings. As Botswana's case becomes more widely known throughout the continent, it will ideally spark hope and activism in other countries, gradually increasing exposure, acceptance, and change.

Eight years after the Arab Spring, Tunisia still has work to do

Zack Blumberg



Although the current discourse touts Tunisia's success in the Arab Spring, the nation's recent election results have proved this narrative to be an oversimplification. While the 2011 movement did lead to the ousting of longtime President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and the implementation of democratic reforms, Tunisia's democratically elected leaders have failed to fix many of the systemic issues which plagued Tunisia under Ben Ali, including corruption and economic weaknesses. Political outsider Kais Saïed's landslide victory in the 2019 presidential election highlights the animosity many Tunisians have for the nation's current ruling class, and indicates that many citizens remain deeply disgruntled with their reformed government. In a broader sense, the 2019 election calls into question whether the Arab Spring really reformed Tunisia's underlying socio-political structures thoroughly enough to ensure the long-term change which Tunisian citizens demanded.

While the Arab Spring was unsuccessful throughout most of North Africa, Tunisia initially appeared to be the lone exception. Propelled by massive protests, the

movement pressured Ben Ali, who had been in office since 1987, into giving up power. Initially, he promised free elections after the end of his term, although he soon abdicated power and fled the country weeks later. Having successfully enacted the mechanisms for creating a democratic government, the nation held its first elections of the post-Ben Ali era later in 2011.

However, a great portion of political discourse in Tunisia's democratic era has focused not on addressing economic or social concerns, but rather on continuously debating the role of Islam in the nation's governance. The debate began immediately after the initial 2011 elections, when the Ennahda Movement, an Islamist party modeled after the Egyptian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, won a plurality of seats. Initially, the Ennahda Party stood as a beacon of hope for Tunisians. The party was largely free from any of the elites who had worked with the Ben Ali regime, a phenomenon which helped propel them to victory. However, after forming their government, Ennahda attempted to implement a host of Islamist policies, much to the dismay of rival secularist parties, some

of whom were even in Ennahda's governing coalition. In the years since the 2011 election, both Ennahda and their primary secular rivals, the Nidaa Tounes Party, have failed to address the major, underlying problems which still plague Tunisia, and the political establishments of both wings are now seen as self-serving and inept.

This anger was reflected in the 2019 Presidential vote, which saw unheralded anti-establishment candidates perform exceptionally well. Kais Saïed, a law professor and center-right candidate, came in first with 19 percent of the vote while running a distinctly anti-establishment campaign; Saïed is not affiliated with any political party. Nabil Karoui, a media tycoon and fellow outsider, came in second with 15.5 percent of the vote, despite currently being held in jail on corruption charges. Meanwhile, Ennahda's candidate, Abdelfattah Mourou, finished third. In the runoff election between Saïed and Karoui, Saïed won the presidency with a commanding 72.7 percent of the vote.

Saïed's successes highlight the Tunisian democracy's general inability to grapple with major political issues, most pointedly corruption and economic stagnation. Corruption has been an issue in Tunisian politics for decades, and large-scale corruption was a central feature of the Ben Ali regime; he famously used government connections to further his personal wealth. Unfortunately for Tunisians, there are signs the nation has become more corrupt since the installation of a democratic government. Although the Tunisian parliament has successfully passed several anti-corruption measures which, in theory, equip the government to fight this issue, there are many auxiliary problems which have not been effectively ironed out, hindering these efforts. First, there is the growing scope of corruption: under Ben Ali, the entire government was highly centralized, so corrupt practices were largely carried out by and for his inner circle's personal benefit. However, democracy has decentralized the government, making corruption harder to track down and stymie efficiently. Additionally, while Ben Ali was successfully forced from office, many corrupt government officials who benefitted from his reign were left unpunished, allowing them to act with impunity. This low turnover has spawned another problem for the Tunisian government, which is divided over whether to focus on prosecuting

individuals who were major players under the Ben Ali regime, or on corrupt businessman who have risen to prominence since the creation of the democratic government in 2011. These problems are all compounded by the selling off of lucrative assets to members of the business elite by Ben Ali in 2011, who created an informal economic oligarchy to maintain power.

In tandem with corruption, Tunisia suffers from economic stagnation. Since the start of the 21st century, Tunisia's unemployment rate has never dropped below 10 percent, and today it stands at 15.5 percent. Additionally, annual economic growth is equivalent to population growth, leading to very few opportunities for wage increases. These problems are even more pronounced among young Tunisians, for whom the unemployment rate is currently 34.8 percent, never falling below 30 percent since the revolution in 2011. This is coupled with government bureaucracies which are often underfunded and cannot provide for their workers, which ties back to corruption; since a great deal of business occurs off the books, it remains largely untaxed, preventing the government from raising revenue.

Extensive corruption and economic stagnation suggest that Tunisia's democratic government is unable to effectively handle some of the problems which contributed to widespread discontent with Ben Ali to begin with. Although Tunisia's government is naturally better structured and more transparent today than it ever was under Ben Ali, the Tunisian revolution is still a work in progress. Thanks in large part to the failure of any major parties to address these problems in the democratic era, a sense of frustration is palpable among Tunisian citizens.

For many Tunisians, Saïed represents a potential manifestation of the 2011 revolution's goals. Citizens see him not as part of the political machine which has governed Tunisia since the revolution, but rather as an outsider who is willing to stand up for the people and fight corruption. This feeling was particularly prevalent among young Tunisians, 90 percent of whom voted for Saïed. Whether Saïed will be able to realize the goals of the 2011 revolution or not is unclear, but what is clear is that Tunisians feel there is still substantial work to be done.

The Promise and Pitfalls of Africa's Continental Free Trade Agreement

Zack Blumberg

Last year, every country in Africa came together to create the largest trading bloc since the World Trade Organization. With the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), the continent made history. The AfCFTA promises to create a customs union that allows for the free transfer of goods, capital, and labor across the continent. However, ratification is only a first step. Policymakers face an arduous implementation process to turn the deal's promise into reality. Since the agreement was made, economic teams in each country have been preparing for June 2020, when the deal will take effect. At this time, each country must remove tariffs on over 90 percent of their goods and must implement a variety of other policy changes. Thus, each country has significant discretion over how the deal is implemented. Accordingly, while the AfCFTA has the potential to accelerate African growth and economic development, African policymakers must ensure that the agreement benefits all Africans. The deal must be implemented such that socioeconomic inequalities between and within countries are minimized and African workers reap the gains from growth.

As many political and international leaders have insisted, the deal has clear potential. It would unite a market of over a billion people with over \$3 trillion in GDP. It could spur diversification of African economies and raise intra-continental trade from its current 17 percent rate to the 60 percent or 70 percent rates experienced in Asia and Europe. One prominent study on the issue predicted a 50 percent increase in such trade 12 years after the deal has been fully implemented. Certainly, an Africa where economic activity is easier to undertake, where African

countries support one another on the road to development is preferable to the current situation. However, whether this future becomes a reality is dependent on the implementation of the deal. Amidst the discussion surrounding the AfCFTA since its signing, one group of stakeholders has been seldom mentioned: the African people. Any implementation strategy which fails to focus on the majority of Africans' needs will fail to realize the deal's potential and invite numerous problems.

First, if improperly implemented, the AfCFTA will be an engine of inequality instead of development. It may hurt many of the individuals it is purported to help. The deal could exacerbate existing inequalities between African countries. Currently, there are large differences between African countries in terms of income and wealth. While a majority of countries have a GDP per capita below \$4,000, some countries, notably South Africa, Botswana, the Northern African countries, and Nigeria, enjoy significantly higher levels of development. This inequality, in the context of rapidly dissolving borders, can expose poorer countries to economic exploitation. As some African countries are at a further stage of development than others, businesses and producers in poor countries will not be able to compete economically with more developed industries in rich countries without the aid tariffs. Instead, poor countries would face an influx of cheap foreign goods which will drive nascent industries into extinction and prevent greater development. Indeed, even Nigeria, a relatively well-off country in Africa, delayed signing the AfCFTA out of fear that free trade would run counter to its development goals. Thus, there is a legitimate fear that

under rapid trade liberalization economic inequalities will beget greater economic inequalities amongst countries.

Free trade could also exacerbate existing inequalities within countries, leading to the accumulation of economic gains to a wealthy few. Africa already has high levels of economic inequality; half of the world's 20 most unequal countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The existent wealth disparities will make it easier for those with resources to take advantage of increasing trade opportunities while offering little to those mired in poverty. As has occurred in the western world, opening trade will allow the rich to move their capital to the opportunities offering the greatest returns on investment, while leaving little wealth in poor areas and making it more difficult for governments to use economic resources to benefit society. The owners of large companies will be able to expand to exploit newly accessible markets by leveraging economies of scale and superior technology while the small business owners, traders, and producers they put out of business will be left with fewer economic opportunities. In sum, an improperly implemented deal will increase the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the rich and large corporations.

Finally, those who work for these companies will lose their bargaining power with employers. Labor unions and workers' rights more generally would decline as employers hold the threat of outsourcing and unemployment over workers' heads. This is why the Nigerian Labour Congress called the AfCFTA a "radioactive neoliberal policy initiative." Workers in more developed countries may see their wages drop or their

jobs move as an abundance of cheaper foreign labor becomes available. These new jobs in poorer countries will pay less and, as with most outsourced work, will feature worse health and safety standards and a general disregard for the lives of employees. Those low-skill jobs which can be moved overseas will be, causing a decrease in wages, labor power, and standards of living. The lives of African low-skill workers, the majority of the continent's population, will become worse, not better.

This is the worst-case scenario. The AfCFTA is still early in its implementation. In that time, African policymakers can ensure that the agreement benefits the many through taking the following steps. First, the African Union must commit to fighting monopolies, "dumping" practices of flooding markets with cheap foreign goods, and other uncompetitive economic activities. Second, there must be a continent-wide commitment to labor rights including those of manufacturing workers, agricultural workers, and irregular or informal-sector workers, particularly women. Third, the deal must include special provisions for the poorest countries. Currently, all countries must remove tariffs on over 90 percent of their goods by next July. The agreement should provide special dispensation for poorer countries to allow for greater protection of their developing industries. Finally, individual countries, to the extent that they are able, should expand their social safety nets to cover those who will be most adversely affected by trade liberalization. With these policies, Africa can enjoy the obvious benefits of a common market while ensuring that these benefits are widely shared.

Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, was Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Now What?

Nesma Daoud

Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in reestablishing peace talks with Eritrea and restoring freedoms after years of economic and political repression. The Nobel committee attests to his attempts to resolve the border conflict with Eritrea and beginning reforms that provide many citizens with "hope for a better life and future." While he has made significant progress on many of the complex issues that plague the Horn of Africa, little has been done to institutionalize and sustain these initiatives. In turn, many critics claim that this recognition was premature, as Ahmed has only been prime minister for 18 months. However, this honor should be regarded as a means for guidance for continuing the reforms and initiatives that prompted it in the first place.

Indeed, Abiy has accomplished laudable achievements in his brief time in office. His administration began peace talks with Eritrea after nearly twenty years of stalemate, following a brutal war from 1998 to 2000. Ahmed has also released tens of thousands of political prisoners, invited back formerly banned political parties and armed groups, revoked repressive laws, started to open up the economy, apologized for previous human rights violations, and appointed women to leading roles in the government. But, ordinary Ethiopians have yet to reap the fruits of these initiatives.

Although federalism and multiparty elections were instituted in Ethiopia in 1995, genuine democracy seems feasible only now. The long-reigning Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (E.P.R.D.F.), the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist association, never completely implemented the liberal democratic principles set out in the 1995 Constitution. Instead, the E.P.R.D.F. governed the country as a semi-

authoritarian state. Simultaneously, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (T.P.L.F.), which claims to represent the well-being and interests of the people of Tigray, a state bordering Eritrea — about 6 percent of the population — dominated the leadership within the ruling coalition. In doing so, this minority rule estranged the Oromo people who amount to more than 34 percent of the population as well as the Amhara people, 27 percent of the total population.

In turn, opposition parties capitalized off the popular dissatisfaction with the E.P.R.D.F. in the 2005 elections. When the E.P.R.D.F. emerged victorious in spite of this, the opposition disputed this revelation and the government repressed the protests that erupted in response. Eventually, this discontent motivated countrywide protests from 2016 to 2018, during which the Oromo youth blamed the government for joblessness, land-grabbing, repression, and a lack of genuine representation.

These demonstrations where 1,000 people were killed and 20,000 people were imprisoned, compelled former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn to resign in February 2018. Abiy became the ultimate symbol of Ethiopian unity during this Abyssinian spring when he was appointed as prime minister in April. Not only was he supported by the Oromo and Amhara parties within the E.P.R.D.F. coalition, but he preached the political doctrine of "medemer", translating as "coming together" in Amharic. In doing so, he was able to advocate for a more inclusive political atmosphere. Essentially, Abiy's administration is attempting to surpass Ethiopia's federal system, one that was designed along ethnic lines, where the distinction between politics and sectarian turmoil has become increasingly blurred over the years.

However, Abiy's Abyssinian spring is fragile, and has entered an integral

chapter. The abrupt abatement of political controls and dissolution of some of Ethiopia's authoritarian elements under his administration, has brought to the surface repressed ethnic, political, and religious conflicts. Because of this, 2.9 million people are internally displaced. At the same time, the E.P.R.D.F. coalition continues to be divided among ethnic lines. In the southeastern Somali region for instance, the changes in the central government have inspired changes in the regional governments as well, with T.P.L.F. loyalists being replaced by Abiy supporters. Conversely, in other areas like the Oromia and Amhara regions, regional ethnic parties that are a part of the E.P.R.D.F. remain somewhat defiant. These occasions of resistance have ultimately weakened the central government and hindered its efforts to ease different conflicts and implement reforms.

Concurrently, instead of staying true to its democratic platform and reforms, the central government has shown signs of relapsing into its former authoritarian practices. As the Nobel Peace Prize was being announced, the police in Addis Ababa, arrested demonstrators at a rally denouncing the municipal government. Reports of journalists being intimidated as well as continued internet shutdowns serve to attest to Abiy's administration's authoritarian tactics to maintain power. Indeed, the best example of this behavior is the trigger of recent violence: a Facebook post by Jawar Mohammed, former supporter of Ahmed and an influential Oromo activist and media mogul, who claimed that security forces tried orchestrate an attack against him.

Abiy's administration may have reverted to the authoritarian habits it officially disavowed, yet it is important to note the progress he has made not only in Ethiopia, but the broader Horn of Africa region as well. One of Abiy's first acts upon becoming Prime

Minister was to fly to Eritrea and meet with President Isaias Afwerki. This token of rapprochement shattered the chronic stalemate between the two nations. This led to the opening of transportation and communication channels, and restored contact between families and communities. However, this relationship along with the implementation of the border agreement, and the establishment of mutually beneficial trade relations remains to be institutionalized.

In addition to taking the necessary steps to normalize relations with Eritrea, Abiy has also launched initiatives to broker peace in South Sudan, encourage the political transition in Sudan, and attempted to arrange an agreement between Somalia and Kenya over maritime disputes. Although many of these efforts are tentative and incomplete, Abiy has been at the center of various initiatives to encourage peace in the Horn of Africa, and his initiatives should be supported.

After 18 months in power, Abiy's feats deserve recognition, although his efforts overall remain a fragile work in progress in a tumultuous domestic context. It is crucial that an African country and an African leader have at least a brief period of recognition in international media. For a country and a continent that is often shrouded with stereotypes and generalizations of never ending violent conflicts, disease, poverty, and corruption, a single occasion that acknowledges the advancement and complex post-colonial reality, like Ahmed's Nobel peace prize, merits recognition and celebration. Sustaining peace, domestically and regionally, necessitates the creation of withstanding institutions. If the Nobel Peace Prize empowers Abiy's initiatives that engage a range of civil and political society actors as well as regional leaders, the prize will help advance peace and prosperity in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.



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

Alberto Della Torre

On the night of October 27th, 2019, Alberto Fernández became the new president of Argentina. Fernández, 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, former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (CFK) (no relation) celebrated with ardent supporters in Buenos Aires, the festivities quickly came to an end. The same night Fernández 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 Fernández now faces will lead him into a lose-lose situation: he either faces a collapse of the economy for a second time this millennium, or he risks losing his electoral mandate by issuing austerity measures in an attempt to fix the economy.

Fernández'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 reached a 37 percent approval rating. During the beginning of his tenure, Macri's government devalued the Argentine Peso. Consequently, inflation rose, and basic living costs became too expensive for many Argentines. During Macri's

first campaign, he emphasized his promise to alleviate poverty; "zero poverty" became a mantra of his campaign. In reality, the Argentine poverty rate rose from 29 percent to 33 percent under his governance. In an attempt to fix these 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 hated by a majority of Argentines, because the 'prescription' the fund gives comes with strings-attached austerity measures, and has previously led to economic implosions. After Argentina received the IMF loan, the economic situation in the country worsened. Inflation rates skyrocketed to 50 percent, and it is projected that Argentina's GDP will decrease by 1.2 percent by the end of 2019.

Macri inherited a problematic Argentine economy from former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. The current vice-president led a shambolic populist government prior to Macri's takeover. She assumed the presidency from her late husband, Nestor Kirchner, in 2007 and remained in office until she was term-limited in 2015, when Macri took power. 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.

These policies made her very popular among the poor. 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 Argentine airline Aerolíneas Argentinas and the Argentina oil company YPF, were regular occurrences in her administration. By the end of the second term, in response to worsening economic conditions, the government began to lie about official statistics, such as inflation. By the end of her 8 years as president, Argentina was teetering on the edge of economic collapse because of worsening inflation rates directly tied to her policies.

Alberto Fernández's proposed economic policies are vague, but have a real chance of threading the needle between providing necessary aid to the Argentine people and maintaining confidence with the International Monetary Fund. Coming from a populist perspective, Fernández 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, Fernández 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.

Alberto Fernández's 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 Fernández as a prop to regain political power. She did not run for the presidency directly, because many Argentines 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 as vice president 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 Argentine 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 routes to take his government. Alberto Fernández will have to choose to either follow through on his tough stance toward the IMF, which could lead to economic hardship or even a national default on debt, or he could cooperate with the IMF and risk losing his electoral mandate from the Argentine people.

The Hidden Radicalization of Trinidad and Tobago

Jeremy Waxman

In the Summer 2016 issue of Dabiq, ISIS's premier recruitment and radicalization magazine, Abu Sa'd At-Trinidad urged Muslim Trinidadians to wage Jihad within their home country and "make the streets run with blood." By singling out his homeland, At-Trinidad exposed its dangerous secret. Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) fosters the highest ISIS recruitment rate in the Western Hemisphere.

For the country with the highest GDP per capita in the Caribbean and Latin America, the soaring ISIS recruitment rate is shocking to many. But, aggravators of radicalization have been present in the country for decades. However, understanding the demographics of Trinidadian ISIS recruits is pivotal in fully understanding the radicalization process that transpires in the country.

The vast majority of literature surrounding the country's radicalization problem traces its origin to a coup attempt from 1990. Led by the Jamaat al-Muslimeen (JAM), a loosely strung together conglomerate of Islamists, the coup resulted in the assassination of the prime minister and incitement of week-long violence and chaos in the country's capital. However, the coup failed, causing JAM to unravel into several rival gangs. These still exist today and contribute to the devastating gang violence in T&T. The gangs often operate in urban, impoverished areas and are the subject of intense public scrutiny. In more than one case the T&T media has suggested that the gang activity is inspired by their Islamic faith, assigning them names like "unruly ISIS," although the gang lacks any form of radical Islamic affiliations.

Any terrorism scholar can affirm that the demographics of these Muslim gang members are ripe for ISIS recruitment. Numerous studies maintain that the majority of western foreign ISIS recruits are urban, unmarried, lower-class Muslim males in their early to mid-twenties with a criminal record. They are prone to recruitment because of "push" factors pushing them away from their home communities like poverty, marginalization, and lack of female relationship. At-Trinidad, ISIS's Trinidadian poster boy, fits this profile almost to the tee. During his radicalization, he was young, had gang affiliations, and struggled to hold a steady job; he was a disenfranchised member of Trinidadian society. Yet, At-Trinidad's "push" factors are only half of his radicalization story.

At-Trinidad was a convert to Islam. Most European countries have Muslim communities that are comprised of 1-2 percent converts. However, estimates predict that 28 percent of T&T's Muslim community are converts. The ruling Al-Saud family has pumped hundreds of millions of dollars to export their fundamental, rigid, littoral, and denigrating interpretation of Islam (Salafism and Wahhabism) to the world (and T&T) since the 1970s. Their mission is so pungent that the United States' special envoy to Muslim communities, Farah Pandith, exclaimed "In each place [Muslim communities in over 80 countries] I visited, the Wahhabi influence was an insidious presence."

The Saudi poisoning of Islamic communities within T&T was echoed by T&T politician Nafeesa Mohammad. She described the moderate and tight-knit Muslim community as having four main organizations, when she was growing up. Ms. Mohammad bemoans that

now there are over fifty organizations. The Saudi and Salafist presence has created a more fundamentalist and fragmented Muslim community. The dangers of Salafist indoctrination are self-evident in the story of Trinidadian Ashmead Choate. Choate obtained a Saudi scholarship to study and graduated from Mecca's Islamic University. He returned to T&T, became the principal of a Salafist school, funded by a Saudi-linked charity, and subsequently left to join ISIS.

While Choate was not a Muslim convert, his story demonstrates the danger of Saudi proselytization. At-Trinidad was a convert from Christianity to Salafism and referenced his reverence of Choate's teachings in his interview in Dabiq. Nearly 40 percent of Trinidadian ISIS recruits (TIR) are fundamentalist converts. These fundamentalists did not grow up in the Muslim faith and, consequently, have minimal ability

and their families have joined the caliphate. It is unclear what Nazim preaches to his followers, or if he really is an agent of ISIS recruitment, but one thing rings true: Nazim is the central node of the TIR network.

At-Trinidad is the perfect combination of drivers as to why a Trinidadian would join ISIS. But, he does not accurately depict the larger demographic. The median TIR is married, 35, part of the middle class, and from rural areas; they are not single, urban, poor disenfranchised males. Most do not suffer from any of the "push" causes of economic and social marginalization or inability to raise a family that At-Trinidad did. Instead, they share the same "pull" factors, pulling them towards the caliphate. Conversion or exposure to Salafism and interaction with the Boos mosque is a common thread amongst the majority of TIRs.

Presently, terrorism scholarship

“ **Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the Western Hemisphere that has experienced an Islamic coup.** ”

to contextualize their fundamental indoctrination within a broader Islamic context. Fundamentalist converts are often only exposed to fundamentalist ideologies of their religion. Adopting the most headline of doctrines is the path many converts, like At-Trinidad, welcome in response to their marginalization and in trying to prove their unwavering commitment to their new religious community.

At-Trinidad's profile does not end there. He also spent considerable time at Boos mosque and village as did 70 percent of TIRs. The village is headed by Salafist Imam Mohammad Nazim, a radical Islamist involved with the 1990 coup. He retreated to Rio Claro, T&T, and established a community of approximately 25 households who live under his iteration of Sharia. Nazim denies having any ties to ISIS, even though three of his children

and the media place a much larger emphasis on push factors than pull factors. Attributing At-Trinidad's radicalization solely to marginalization and a life of crime instead of the pull of his social networks and the mechanisms of his ideological indoctrination is case and point. "Pull" factors are not as deeply interrogated in the media and terrorism scholarship, because they involve a deep dive into local culture and social dynamics. They are often harder to define, measure, and are prickly to talk about. Interrogating "pull" factors involves investigating uneasy questions about religion, examining the impact of malice in social networks, and holding world hegemony accountable. If society is going to remedy the problem of global terrorism, it warrants a nuanced understanding of factors that both pull and push recruits into the grasp of ISIS.

How Vietnam Could Mitigate Cuba's Economic Crisis

Ryan Woock

In May 2019, after weeks of intense domestic pressure, the Cuban government began rationing staple foods and basic hygiene products to ease mounting stress on its centrally-planned economy. The drastic move, which resulted in hours-long queues and widespread public outrage, was an attempted response to ongoing regional instability and deteriorating U.S. bilateral relations that have placed Cuba's financial health at extreme risk. As Venezuela's economy – ravaged by hyperinflation, reduced exports, and food shortages – flounders amidst a domestic power struggle, Cuba has lost access to heavily subsidized oil and critical foreign aid. The United States' recent decisions to tighten its longstanding trade embargo and impose travel restrictions compounded this problem, catapulting Cuba into its worst energy and economic crises since the infamous "Special Period" that followed the Soviet collapse in the early 1990s. While the Cuban government has previously attempted to address this vulnerability by occasionally inching toward free-market policies, such efforts have not met expectations. Due to this failure, Cuba should draw from Vietnam's development success and install a state-driven model of economic reform, appeasing the Communist Party while facilitating long-term private sector growth.

Following Raúl Castro's presidential inauguration in 2008, the government rolled out a series of reforms aimed at spurring private investment and domestic entrepreneurship. Within several years, people could open businesses and hire non-family labor for the first time since 1968. Shortly afterward, the country passed the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines (known as the Lineamientos) in 2011 that, among other notable developments, legalized the buying and selling of homes and cars for the first time in nearly fifty years. Since then, Cubans have enjoyed greater technological freedom, additional

options to travel abroad, and more expansive property rights. Despite their underlying free-market principles, these initiatives have produced mixed results. The average annual GDP growth rate over the past nine years remains at an anemic 2.3 percent. In the past three years, it has tapered off to 1.5 percent. These sluggish numbers reflect the problems associated with actually implementing the reforms: while Castro and the Communist



Party claimed to support further market liberalization, they are still hesitant to cede state control. As such, the installation of and commitment to upholding these reforms have been hampered by bureaucratic red tape, restrictions, and taxes. It is evident that the central government wants to limit the growth of private markets to avoid undermining the prevailing one-party system.

However, president Miguel Díaz-Canel, elected in 2018, could present Vietnam's market socialist model as an alternative that builds on Castro's existing framework yet preserves the power of the Communist Party. Following the introduction of Vietnam's doi moi ("renovation") economic reforms in 1986, the country has championed a

successful development strategy. By gradually opening its domestic market and promoting strong export growth, Vietnam has carved out an influential role for state-owned enterprises despite adopting free-market tendencies. If implemented, this approach could solve several of Cuba's top structural issues and maintain communist control.

Under this model, Cuba could slash capital controls to promote

foreign direct investment (FDI). Allowing international financial inflows has been integral to Vietnamese growth; as the ratio of FDI to GDP increased from zero in the mid-1980s to over 75 percent by the 2000s, Vietnam's annual growth rate jumped from 2.79 percent to above 7 percent. Furthermore, during the first years of the reforms, Vietnam similarly navigated a U.S. trade embargo and lacked access to multilateral institutional funds. However, this influx of investment overcame these obstacles and allowed multinational corporations to construct supply chains, which subsequently drove Vietnam's export strategy. Given that Cuba struggles to produce anything for the international market, ranking as the 138th largest export economy in the world,

foreign investment could provide an avenue to bolster its global competitiveness.

State-administered agricultural reforms could further alleviate this problem. Approximately 29 percent of Cuba's land is arable, compared to 21 percent of Vietnam's. Yet, due to the inefficiency of collectivized agriculture, Cuba imports approximately two-thirds of its food at an annual cost of more than \$2 billion. While Castro initiated a program that leased state-owned land to farmers through 10-year contracts, with renewal contingent on the farm's performance, it forced them to sell crops back to the government at a below-market price. Though Vietnam's domestic agriculture situation initially mirrored this, the government extended the leases to over 50 years and did not impose restrictions on crop sales, while still utilizing state-owned land. In the absence of price controls, Vietnam not only achieved food self-sufficiency but exported a surplus. Although Cuba recently expressed willingness to move in this direction – lengthening agreements to 20 years and doubling the amount of land first-time farmers can lease – there is potential to go further. If Cuba deepened these types of reforms, it would help mitigate the country's food shortage while reducing dependency on imports, enhancing the country's economic sustainability.

There are inherent limitations to extrapolating a model from a different world region. Vietnam not only has a unique political history and culture but may have better embraced opening its markets due to the established influence of the southern part of the country. However, state-driven economics and free-market principles are not mutually exclusive. With few reliable allies left, Cuba should look inward to solve its economic woes, which may require searching elsewhere.

Paving the Way Brazil's Push for Opening Indigenous Land

Charles Rinderle

On September 24, 2019, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro addressed the United Nations General Assembly, chastising other member states for their criticism of Brazilian domestic policy. In particular, Bolsonaro addressed his desire to modify Article 231 of the Brazilian Constitution and open indigenous lands for commercial use. Citing vast mineral and agricultural potential, Bolsonaro claimed he would boost the struggling Brazilian economy and "civilize and modernize" indigenous groups. Indigenous leaders and activists swiftly decried the move. A joint statement by the 16 peoples of the Xingu region (the largest protected zone of indigenous land in Brazil) condemned Bolsonaro's actions, claiming the UN speech was merely an attempt to get world leaders to turn a blind eye to ethnocide. Internally, Bolsonaro's domestic policies are linked to a sharp increase in extrajudicial deforestation and invasions of rapidly-shrinking indigenous land. Unless stopped, Bolsonaro's current push will not only hasten the invasions of indigenous land, but will also strip indigenous groups of their last and strongest protections, paving the way for complete destruction of ancestral lands and extermination of modern Brazilian indigenous life.

Eversince Brazil's military dictatorship bulldozed and massacred its way through the Amazon in the 1960s and 1970s, land rights and survival have been synonymous for Brazil's 305 indigenous groups. In particular, Article 231 of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, written after the dictatorship's overthrow, recognizes the basic right of Brazilian indigenous to exist and thrive on their ancestral lands. This affirmation has been the cornerstone of Brazilian indigenous policy over the last four decades and is recognized as the most fundamental of protections for nearly 900,000 people.

Bolsonaro's current push, although frightening, is an expected challenge to the norms established by Article 231. Quoted in the late 1990s saying "it's a shame the Brazilian cavalry hasn't been as efficient as the Americans, who exterminated the Indians," Bolsonaro has long been perceived as an enemy for

Brazilian indigenous. During the 2018 presidential campaign, his biggest promise was to not demarcate "one centimeter more" of indigenous land, a move that he has since upheld. In doing so, Bolsonaro froze increased protections for Brazilian indigenous, setting the stage for directly challenging Article 231 and the question of indigenous land protection at its core. Presently, only 60.4 percent of the 688 indigenous territories in Brazil are officially recognized. Numerous groups live alongside highways or farms, uncertain if their ancestral lands will ever be acknowledged. Furthermore, without federal recognition nor

69,000 football fields of indigenous territory had been destroyed in just one region. Accompanying the destruction are ecological loss, depleted food supplies, shelter and access to medicinal plants.

Although the Brazilian government can claim independence from the current destruction of indigenous land, Bolsonaro's policies and rhetoric are viewed as a legitimizing factor for the invaders. In particular, indigenous leaders compare Bolsonaro's push to modify Article 231 with the dictatorship's slogan, "a land without people for a people without land," referring to the

and Human Rights, whose minister is infamous for being anti-indigenous. After the Brazilian Congress blocked the move, Bolsonaro slashed FUNAI's budget, to the point where in the 8.5m hectare Javari region, only 18 employees remain, limiting their ability to detect let alone intervene in the ongoing incursions by miners searching for gold. Bruno Pereira, the head of uncontacted indigenous groups at FUNAI, was also dismissed without apparent reason. In response, Brazilian experts wrote an open letter claiming that the dismissal would "provoke genocide" against uncontacted and recently contacted peoples.

Bolsonaro's push to amend Article 231, however, represents a fundamental shift in anti-indigenous policy. Despite being in its nascent stages, it is clear that Bolsonaro has tired of sitting by and waiting for illegal industry and invaders to clear the land for him. By directly attacking Article 231, Bolsonaro revealed his endgame, as by modifying the economic exploitation clauses, he would legally open up ancestral lands for private use and destroy the concept of protected territory in Brazil. Indigenous leaders, in a series of public statements, expressed concern that their lands would be sold to foreign interests and that they would be forced off or killed.

Despite the severity of Bolsonaro's push, it is yet in its early stages and can be stopped. As shown with FUNAI, the Brazilian Congress has proven somewhat hostile to clear, overreaching power moves by Bolsonaro. An attempt to dismantle the national indigenous healthcare industry was likewise stymied by widespread public protest. Although the fate of Article 231 remains unclear, one truth is indisputable. Should Bolsonaro's administration succeed in modifying the Constitution, indigenous life in Brazil will undergo rapid and dramatic change, destroying lifestyles that have survived six hundred years of colonialism and hostility.

expansion of agribusiness in the 1960s-70s. The broad support Bolsonaro enjoys by agribusiness amplify these comparisons. Furthermore, on his first day in office, Bolsonaro tried (and failed) to place indigenous land demarcation under the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture. Environmental fines for illegal logging have also fallen by 30 percent under Bolsonaro, significantly reducing the penalties in the rare instance invaders are caught.

Bolsonaro's administration has also worked to heavily limit the Brazilian government's ability to monitor and respond to threats against indigenous territory. Early into his Presidential term, Bolsonaro pushed to place FUNAI (Brazil's National Indian Foundation) under the control of the Ministry of Family, Women,

“ Should Bolsonaro's administration succeed in modifying the Constitution, indigenous life in Brazil will undergo rapid and dramatic change, destroying lifestyles that have survived six hundred years of colonialism and hostility. ”

protection, illegal mining, ranching, and logging organizations often move in and force indigenous groups out.

Even within protected or recognized territories, indigenous leaders are plagued by illegal industry, and can do little to protect their rapidly-shrinking land while the Brazilian government stands by. By Bolsonaro's September UN speech, there were 153 recorded invasions of indigenous territory in 2019, more than double 2018's total. Trespassers often arrive armed, leading to numerous deaths over the last several decades, including the murders of several prominent Brazilian activists. The true concern, however, lies in the destruction of indigenous land, especially for groups living in the Amazon. Rede Xingu+, an indigenous-environmental coalition, estimated

Mexico's Appeasement of Drug Cartels Will Only Facilitate More Violence

William Brown

In early October 2019, a war-like scene broke out in the northern Mexican city of Culiacán after a series of stunning missteps by security officials. A forgotten warrant, escaped prisoners, and no plan for backup were just a few of the massive oversights made by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and his military. These circumstances led to a gunfight in the streets of the city between the country's most notorious drug cartel, the Sinaloa cartel, and militarized police. Children leaving class hid behind cars while prisoners escaped from detention facilities amid the exchange of gunfire. The cartel quickly encircled the soldiers, according to eyewitness reports. This battle culminated with eight dead and with eight Mexican soldiers captured by the cartel, arguably a fate worse than death. But all was not lost, as Ovidio Guzmán López, the son of the infamous founder and former leader of the cartel, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, was captured by police. The very same day the Mexican government decided to release him, along with three other Sinaloa members, back to the cartel as part of a "political deal" to quell violence.

This unprecedented step of releasing a cartel leader after capturing him following a military operation was not received well by

the people of Culiacán, let alone the rest of a nation facing increasing levels of violence. Many pundits in Mexico called it a momentous failure for the country, a notion echoed by citizens who stated that they no longer believed the government could protect them. A statement released by a coalition of former Mexican military officials said the move worried them. Mexico seems to have taken a few steps back when it comes to defeating drug traffickers, and much of the blame lies at the feet of AMLO.

This abject failure to strike a blow to the Sinaloa cartel is a symptom of AMLO's willingness to appease the cartels in the name of peace. This strategy is not working. Murder rates in Mexico have soared in the past year, currently sitting at an average of 90 murders per day, and show no signs of slowing down. Cartels continue to bring in substantial amounts of revenue each year and are growing in their defiance of the nation's government. Extreme displays of power, such as the hanging of 19 bodies from a bridge next to a banner threatening rival cartels in Michoacán, are becoming more and more frequent. In the face of all this violence and bloodshed, AMLO has stuck to his campaign promise of fighting the cartels with "hugs, not bullets." Notably, he called an ambush of soldiers in Michoacán

that left 13 dead "regrettable" and stated that he believed that the police should not interfere with crime in order to prevent more killings.

If AMLO's appeasement strategy had worked in the past, this move would not have caused such an uproar, but it hasn't. Instead, he is allowing these criminal networks to grow unabated by security forces and is signaling to them that he has no plans to interfere with their business. When AMLO announced in January 2019 that there "was no more war" with the cartels, he said that he wanted to leave the past behind and move toward a more peaceful future. Allowing cartels to continue to grow is antithetical to the process of achieving peace in Mexico.

AMLO has proposed some policy initiatives that would lessen the stranglehold drug traffickers have on the nation, such as decriminalizing all drugs. However, the issue with this proposal is that the cartels are not just selling their product in Mexico but also in the United States. Therefore, decriminalization in Mexico would not necessarily lead to decreased violence between cartels fighting over market share. Mexico has a judicial system that is under-equipped to handle reported crime, with only four percent of crimes reaching the

judicial system due to a lack of judges and prosecutors. AMLO's refusal to accept American aid geared towards the war on crime, such as funding for more judges and police equipment, believing it to be at odds with his pivot towards development instead of force, is leaving the country idle in the face of increasing cartel presence. Instead of confronting the problem head-on, AMLO suggested funding a church-run television network to promote morality in the nation and to convince cartel members that there is a better path.

Not only are AMLO's policies of appeasement not working in the short-term, they are setting up decades of unbridled crime in a nation that is nearing its breaking point after decades of persistent violence. If criminal enterprises are allowed to expand without any effective pushback, the country will soon reach a point where events like the one seen in Culiacán become commonplace. Innocent Mexicans will continue to experience increasing levels of violence until cartels fall out of power. The government is already outgunned and outmanned, and as AMLO speaks in platitudes he fails to understand the gravity of the situation. This gap in preparedness will continue to widen, and the consequences from this inaction will be felt long after AMLO and his party are no longer in power.



Guatemala and the CICIG: A New Era of Corruption in Latin America

Jordan Halpern



CICIG was a shining example for anti-corruption measures—without it, the fight against impunity across Latin America faces risk of backsliding.



The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) led the charge against corruption across Guatemala since 2007. After the thirty-six-year civil war that rattled the country, many criminal networks and government institutions allied, forming what Amnesty International defined as a "corporate mafia state." Guatemala was nearing a breaking point in its fragile democracy, and to avoid total collapse, the government agreed to support the CICIG. The initial goal was to limit impunity in the Guatemalan judicial system. Through conducting investigations and collaborating with the Attorney General's office and other prosecutorial bodies to fight against corruption and crime, CICIG helped strengthen state institutions and limit impunity in the country. During its twelve years of operation, the UN-backed investigative body dismantled dozens of crime networks, removed corrupt politicians from office, and prompted prosecution for hundreds of criminals. However, as of September 2019, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales ordered the organization to shut its doors. The dissolution of CICIG is

detrimental not only to Guatemala's internal stability but it will have an immense impact on immigration in the region and on the fight against corruption across Latin America.

CICIG was highly effective in curtailing crime and corruption across Guatemala. The homicide rate in the country dropped by nearly 32 percent during CICIG's existence – an approximate 2 percent annual reduction. Additionally, CICIG investigated and helped prosecute numerous high-level politicians. In 2015, Guatemalan prosecutors charged former President Otto Pérez Molina and his wife following a CICIG investigation into their involvement in a massive corruption network known as 'La Linea.' Roxana Baldetti, Molina's vice president, was sentenced to fifteen years for running a separate corruption network involving a scam with an Israeli-based water cleaning company. She was also involved in 'La Linea,' at least two other corrupt scam networks, and cocaine trafficking in the United States, all of which she stands to face charges for. CICIG has been instrumental in collecting evidence and instigating prosecutions in each of these

investigations. Current President Jimmy Morales' announcement that he would not renew CICIG's mandate came shortly after CICIG had started an investigation into him and his campaign for accepting illicit campaign contributions and fraud. Without CICIG, impunity and corruption in politics will likely grow unchecked.

Due to CICIG's impressive and impactful achievements, over 70 percent of Guatemalan citizens support CICIG as of 2017. Shortly after the body's officials were forced to vacate their headquarters in Guatemala City, protesters painted a mural on the outside walls of the compound: "Thank you CICIG. The people will not forget. Justice will remain."

Additionally, with the official end of CICIG, the group's staunch supporters face a great deal of danger. In a conversation with Reuters, a politician imprisoned following a CICIG investigation shared a chilling message: "In politics, if you're going to attack, you should never leave the wounded behind... Now we have the list of investigators and prosecutors who are going to pay for being such bad people with all of us." To that end, the Guatemalan Congress has recently formed a specialized commission, intending to investigate CICIG's allegedly 'corrupt' and 'biased' conduct. The commission is a group of five staunchly anti-CICIG politicians—two of which had been investigated by the group for corruption. The commission has the authority to seek jail time for those they are investigating, which range from prosecutors to CICIG allies. While Guatemala's Supreme Court declared the move unconstitutional, due to increasing strife between Morales and the Constitutional Court (including pressure by the Morales administration to impeach pro-CICIG judges on the court), compliance with the ruling is no guarantee. In August 2018, CICIG requested to drop Morales' immunity so he could be charged with the crimes they had investigated. While the Supreme Court ruled in favor of CICIG, Congress defied the ruling. The defiance is less surprising when considering that nearly half of the members in Guatemala's Congress have faced or are facing criminal investigations, according to the U.S.

Congressional Research Service.

Increased instability in Guatemala will impact surrounding countries and exacerbate the number of refugees forced to flee dangerous conditions. Prior to CICIG's dissolution, tensions surrounding immigration in many Central American countries already ran high. Guatemala and the U.S. recently signed a 'third safe country' policy deal, which will put further strain on a weakening political and economic system in Guatemala. Without CICIG limiting the crime and corruption in the country, instability, poverty, and violence are bound to spread, increasing the number of refugees fleeing dangerous conditions.

The CICIG was a shining example for anti-corruption measures—without it, the fight against impunity across Latin America faces risk of backsliding. Inspired by the model in Guatemala, in the past few years, multiple countries have initiated anti-corruption measures. In 2016, Honduras launched the "Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras." Even as recently as September of 2019, El Salvador launched the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador, a near one-to-one copy of CICIG. Jimmy Morales sets a disturbing precedent: if anyone with an anti-corruption body finds themselves facing a corruption investigation, they could simply refuse to renew the mandate.

Guatemala's President-Elect, Alejandro Giammattei, is set to be inaugurated in January 2020. While he does not plan to renew CICIG's mandate upon assuming office, he claims he will implement a smaller, locally-run commission against impunity. However, one of CICIG's most significant advantages is its ability to foster independent and unbiased investigations. This cannot be achieved when the government itself is largely still entrenched in illicit criminal networks. The future stability of governments across Latin America depends on the ability to limit impunity. The CICIG model offered a bold, effective way of doing so. Its absence will undoubtedly be felt in Guatemala and across the globe as the region enters a new period of potential instability.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place:

The Future of the Environment under Populist Leaders and the Example of Brazil and Bolivia

Kayleigh Crabb

Bolsonaro and Morales' interaction with the Amazon rainforest is a critical example of the danger that populist leaders can pose to the environment.

As a future plagued by the negative effects of climate change looms nearer, with extreme weather and rising sea levels already posing serious threats, it is becoming more pertinent than ever that international action is taken to mitigate climate change. The international community recognized this in 2015, when almost every nation adopted the Paris Agreement to limit the global temperature increase to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius. However, the globe is facing a unique political challenge to reaching the goals of this agreement; rising populism is becoming a significant hurdle to solving the climate crisis and other environmental issues. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro and Bolivia's President Evo Morales exemplify the ability for populist leaders to impair global efforts to protect the environment and climate by sacrificing long term sustainability in exchange for short term gain.

In early 2019, the Amazon rainforest began burning at a rate not seen for a decade. The Amazon is the largest continuous rainforest in the world, home to about 10 percent of all known animal species. It spans a portion of nine countries in South America, and it is one of the largest carbon sinks in the world. The Amazon alone absorbs and stores around two billion tons of carbon dioxide each year, or 5 percent of total emissions worldwide. However, burning the rainforest releases large amounts of carbon and prevents more from being stored. If the Amazon continues to shrink substantially or disappears, the consequences to global climate stability would be disastrous. Locally, sporadic and extreme flooding and droughts would widely increase, leading to more poverty in the region

and disproportionately impacting indigenous groups.

The vast majority of the Amazon rainforest lies in Brazil, squarely under the control of far-right populist President Bolsonaro. Promoting economic growth was one of his core campaign promises, which earned him an endorsement from Brazil's farming lobbyist group. Each year, farmers in Brazil slash-and-burn areas of the rainforest for agricultural purposes. However, this year there have been more intense and frequent fires than usual. The Amazon Environmental Research Institute claims the burning is directly correlated with intentional fire setting. This has led many to believe the burning may be so severe due to the rhetoric, lack of enforcement, and deliberate dismantling of environmental protections and institutions by the Bolsonaro administration. Brazil's primary environmental enforcement agency, IBAMA, issued 20 percent fewer fines from January-July of 2019 than during the same period in 2018. Not coincidentally, the current amount of forest burning in conservation areas in 2019 is twice the average from 2010-2018.

When Bolsonaro was subjected to international criticism for standing by while the forest burned, causing fatalities and illegal logging, he vaguely blamed non-governmental organizations for setting the fires to undermine his government. He also suggested that a wildlife refuge near Rio de Janeiro could be turned into a "Brazilian Cancún," referring to the highly developed and tourism-dependent city in Mexico. Furthermore, he rejected aid to fight the fires from some of the richest democracies in the world, perhaps due to a personal feud. While he has claimed he will take a "zero tolerance" approach to environmental degradation, his record strongly suggests he will do otherwise.

Brazil has received the most media attention, but its neighbor to the southwest is experiencing extreme fires while comparatively evading international attention. Bolivia's populist, far-left president Evo Morales campaigned on promises of environmental democracy and was elected largely by the country's indigenous majority as a 'man of the people.' He charmed the population with his modest background as a coca leaf farmer and the prospect of being the first indigenous president. However, Morales has not represented the interests of his base on numerous occasions, most notably when he failed to protect Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory by allowing a highway to be built through the area. Like Bolsonaro, Morales has promoted an agricultural boom since he took office, issuing a decree allowing slash-and-burn farming. Many speculate this could be a major contributing factor to the forest fires in Bolivia, which are hitting the Amazon Basin as well as the Bolivian grasslands and other forests. The Defense Minister of Bolivia, Javier Zavaleta, baselessly blamed "saboteurs" for the fires. While Morales eventually accepted international aid to fight the fires, it would be willful ignorance to assume he is truly fighting for environmental protection.

This assault on the environment under both President Bolsonaro and President Morales should not come as a surprise. A study conducted by the Guardian in March of 2019 analyzed the speech of 140 world leaders and, based on their rhetoric, ranked them from 0-2, with 2 representing the highest degree of populist speech. Bolsonaro and Morales both appeared on the scale, with Bolsonaro receiving 0.5 or "somewhat

populist" and Morales 1.5 or "very populist." Populist leaders frequently take actions that result in short-term benefits for a particular subset of the population but may harm the nation in the long term. Such shortcomings stem from the anti-elitist motivations by which constituencies elect populist leaders. However, climate change demands long-term mitigation efforts in collaboration with other nations. Historically, most actions to limit greenhouse gas emissions have been top-down and driven by elite actors in conjunction with international governments and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, many of the characteristics of populist leadership appear to directly oppose environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

While Bolsonaro and Morales differ on other issues, it is clear that one of the world's most important environmental resources is trapped between two volatile leaders. Bolsonaro and Morales' interaction with the Amazon rainforest is a critical example of the potential danger that populist leaders can pose to the environment. In recent years, some of the world's largest producers of greenhouse gases have elected leaders that many would consider populist, including the United States, India, Mexico, and Indonesia. When adopting the Paris Agreement the vast majority of nations indicated that progress in environmental health and combating climate change was important. The nations still committed to protecting the environment should turn their attention to populist leaders worldwide, if their leaders have not already followed suit.

“Bolsonaro and Morales' interaction with the Amazon rainforest is a critical example of the danger that populist leaders can pose to the environment.”

Canada's recent election exposed deep divisions within a historically harmonious country. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, head of the Liberal Party, won a narrow victory in the national election on October 21st to assume his second term. While Trudeau won the election, the Conservatives took more of the popular vote, leaving him to govern with a minority in Parliament. The Conservative Party, led by Andrew Scheer, was heavily supported by Canada's Western Prairie Provinces. Trudeau carried the vote in the Eastern provinces, highlighting the regional divide within the country.

Canadian voters challenged Trudeau's progressive agenda by subjecting him to a divisive and arduous campaign. After riding a wave of international support during his first leadership bid, Trudeau faced backlash during this election for buying an oil pipeline, bullying his female attorney general, and dressing in black and brown face, among other transgressions. Trudeau made many mistakes both as a young man and as prime minister. Some transgressions have stemmed from hypocritical policy decisions, and others from his questionable character. The recent election revealed the deep divisions within Canada and signaled a deeper reckoning on what it means to be a truly worthy, moral, and in this case liberal, leader.

While many believe Trudeau is preferable to his Conservative Party rival, he is pushing a conflicting agenda. He claims to champion indigenous rights, women's issues and climate-change measures, but some of his actions have shown that he is not fully dedicated to his stated priorities. Trudeau has gone from a global icon of liberal values to a good-enough candidate struggling to hold on to power.

Countries around the world are reckoning with the question: Have we stopped trying to pick the perfect leader, and instead aim to pick the least-problematic one? Trudeau's policy missteps reflect the hypocrisy in aspects of his liberal agenda. One example is his work on climate change. Trudeau has painted himself as a champion of combating climate change, promising Canada would reach net-zero emissions by 2050 and that two billion trees would be planted during the next decade.

However, in 2018, his government bought the Trans Mountain Pipeline for \$3.40 billion, which would carry crude and refined oil from Alberta to the coast of British Columbia, Canada. This purchase was soon blocked by the courts, because the government failed to consult indigenous people residing near the pipeline. The government restarted the project with fresh approval in June, but six new legal challenges by First Nation groups are slowing the process once again. Canada is the world's fourth largest producer and exporter of oil, but environmentalist and indigenous opposition has been a significant impediment to pipeline construction. Trudeau's desire to be seen as a climate activist is at odds with his promotion of the pipeline. He is, however, facing a conflicted

of pressuring his former attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould to cut a deal with SNC-Lavalin, an engineering and construction company facing corruption charges. She said Trudeau allegedly made "veiled threats" to her in an effort to stop the prosecution of the company. Trudeau supporters say there was no political pressure, and that the prime minister was only concerned about how the prosecution would affect local economies. However, in August, the independent federal ethics commissioner said Trudeau violated the conflict of interest act. This scandal led to the resignation of two high-level cabinet ministers, his top personal aide, and the leader of the federal bureaucracy. Trudeau insisted his actions were only intended to save jobs and protect

face many times, and despite his public apology, it is hard to ignore that he continued to think this was acceptable. He comes from a place of privilege (his father Pierre Trudeau was the 15th prime minister of Canada), so the excuse, "I didn't know better," is a painful and all too common defense for the wealthy and privileged.

While Trudeau's apology appears heartfelt, Canadians are still asking: What makes someone morally fit to lead? The Conservatives, led by Scheer, have their own moral challenges. Scheer is anti-choice, opposed to gay marriage and wary of immigration. He has blasted Trudeau for being morally unfit to lead, however many view Scheer's positions as immoral. The public



A Hobbled Trudeau Has Much to Prove in His Second Term

Grace Bristol

public. According to an Angus Reid Institute poll, approximately 69 percent of Canadians say climate change should be a top priority for the government. But 58 percent said oil and gas development should also be a priority, along with climate action. Canadians in oil-producing Alberta largely favor the pipeline, while those in Québec are generally against the 710-mile conduit that would expand capacity from 300,000 barrels a day to about 890,000 a day.

Trudeau should stop pursuing a mediocre plan that violates indigenous rights and support a more environmentally-friendly agenda that invests in green industries and jobs. He is desperately trying to please everyone, but instead is disappointing and angering both sides.

Trudeau also has been accused

the economy. While his goal may have been to protect Canadians, blocking a federal corruption and fraud investigation is unethical and illegal. His actions sent a message that any corporation, as long as they contribute something of value to the community, can be excused for their transgressions.

Moreover, the 47-year-old prime minister's character has been assailed over photos showing him wearing black and brown face at parties in the early 1990s and early 2000s. He was certainly old enough to know that was inappropriate, and many are calling for his resignation over this scandal. Jagmeet Singh, leader of the New Democratic party and the first non-white leader of a major federal party, released an emotional video describing the racism he and so many others experienced growing up in Canada. Trudeau sported black and brown

backlash to Trudeau's racist actions have forced many Canadians to choose between two candidates who have exhibited immoral behavior.

Trudeau is in a corner, desperately trying to defend his character and policies. He is lauded for being a progressive icon, but he continues to pursue two-faced objectives. Canada is an example of a nation electing a good-enough candidate, because the choices were unsatisfactory to many. Trudeau enters his second term carrying baggage that will test his political endurance. He must adjust his agenda to actually support progressive causes and work to unite Canadians on both coasts. Trudeau may be a relatively decent and liberal prime minister, but Canada should re-examine the candidates they put forward so voters are not forced to choose the good-enough candidate.



Mexico and the USMCA:

Why Little Will Change for Mexican Workers

Tuhin Chakraborty

In July 2019, United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer testified in front of the House Committee on Ways and Means to satisfy Congressional concerns regarding the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the Trump administration's replacement for NAFTA. At the hearing, one of the most controversial provisions in the agreement discussed was the requirement that Mexico would need to reform its labor laws to allow for stronger union collective bargaining and higher wages for certain Mexican workers, particularly in the automobile parts industry. While Lighthizer and his team believe that the USMCA will be a giant step towards increasing Mexican labor welfare through its pro-union elements, a further analysis of Mexico's domestic affairs posits substantial skepticism of the aforementioned claims. Upon analyzing the USMCA in light of Mexican government legislation, such skepticism can indeed be justified, as USMCA requirements

are not likely to significantly improve working conditions in Mexico. Mexico lacks the financial resources and corporate support to effectively enforce the terms of the agreement. There is currently little to no progress on increasing current Mexican national minimum wage, which is far lower than wages prescribed by the USMCA.

A step up from NAFTA's guiding principles concerning labor, the USMCA contains explicit directives aimed at ensuring that Mexican unions have unhampered power in collective bargaining for better workplace conditions, benefits, and wages. To comply with such directives, on May 1, 2019, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) signed a law creating independent Mexican labor courts for dispute resolution, contract registration, and legal protection against coerced labor. The new law protects the right of unionized workers to vote for union leaders in secret ballots directly overseen by the newly created Federal Conciliation Center and Labor Registry (Centro

Federal de Conciliación y Registro Laboral, or CFCRL). This is so that employers cannot interfere with the voting process and pick leaders who support their interests. Additionally, companies have to enact protocols to eradicate forced labor and all forms of workplace discrimination, and are also obligated to recognize a union's right to strike as long as the union maintains the support of at least 30 percent of its employees. While members of AMLO's political party, Morena, are applauding the law's passage as a great victory, labor advocacy groups across North America are extremely doubtful that the Mexican government can actually enforce its new policies.

For the past 50 years, unions in Mexico have negotiated contracts with employers known as "protection agreements," which are made exclusively between union leaders and employers. These agreements often heavily favor employers and have led to an influx of foreign direct investment but relatively little growth in worker wages and working conditions from collective bargaining. Although the new laws demand independent elections and accountable union leadership, they say nothing about banning these protection agreements. Even if workers are aware of their rights and press a complaint against corrupt negotiations, the current texts of the USMCA and the new labor law allow for the accused (i.e. the employer) to "unilaterally block the formation of a dispute resolution panel." AMLO may be personally sympathetic to workers, but his administration is crippling its ability to oversee and enforce its new labor protections. In September 2019, the Mexican government announced that it was reducing its labor budget to help pay for more soldiers at the country's southern border.

Furthermore, the May 2019 reforms can expect little support from the business community. Gustavo de Hoyos, the president of Coparmex, a powerful Mexican business lobbyist group, denounced them as a shameful capitulation by the Mexican government to American influence. The idea that the Mexican government will somehow follow through and actually help workers with its recently passed USMCA-inspired federal labor law by not only crippling its own enforcement mechanisms financially, but also alienating the business community, seems both counterintuitive and highly unlikely.

The USMCA stipulates that roughly 40 percent of US auto imports from Mexico must be made by workers with wages of \$16 or higher. The average Mexican worker makes around \$2 an hour, but the Mexican minimum wage is approximately \$4.15 for a full day's work, indicating a disparity between expectations and reality. Although President Obrador has promised to raise base wages to keep up with inflation, those promises center around an increase to barely \$5 a day, a far cry from what the USMCA seeks from the Mexican auto industry. Speaking of raising wages in this sector of the economy, even such a localized sign of progress has been called into question. The USMCA states that companies wishing to avoid the \$16 rule entirely simply could pay a 2.5 percent tariff on the manufactured products they send to North American trading partners. According to Mexican economists like Luis de Calle, many companies may just choose to pay the tariff, as it makes better economic sense in the short run. Furthermore, there are 700,000-800,000 auto workers in Mexico, which is only around 1.5 percent of the entire country's labor force. Despite American sentiments about how the USMCA is going to level the playing field and augment wage equity, there will likely be no statistical impact on wages in Mexico overall.

Despite Mexico's enforcement shortcomings and their economy's overall wage stagnation, the USMCA will probably be enacted by all three participating nations, because it is exceedingly difficult to monitor compliance on the labor regulations of the agreement. In fact, Mexico's undersecretary to North America, Jesús Seade, recently rejected all international attempts to increase international compliance monitoring of the USMCA, a strong signal that at least Mexico is ready to move forward with the trade deal. Also, since NAFTA led to trilateral trade increases valued in the hundreds of billions of dollars, the United States, Canada, and Mexico have too much to gain in this trade deal to let it fall through over labor disputes. However, whatever happens with the USMCA, the economic welfare of the Mexican working class will likely see no improvement.

#ChileDespertó: A Case Study for Failed Neoliberal Politics

Martina Villalobos

Chile has been taken over by mass protests with anger and frustration pouring onto the streets. From abroad, this surge in popular activity has taken many by surprise. On a continent where economic stability seems to evade almost everyone, Chile has always been hailed as the exception, and sold around the world as a 'capitalist success story.' This uprising is shaking up that image. For about three weeks, Chile has experienced mass turbulence—two massive protests have taken place on the streets of Santiago, where more than two million people congregated demanding change. While those looking from the outside may see the idealized image of Chile's success story fracturing, Chileans are not shocked. They are responding to long promises, from both sides of the political spectrum, that free markets would lead to prosperity, but these market-based promises have failed them.

#ChileDespertó, or "Chile woke up," is the unifying chant of the protestors, who are demanding economic reform and the expulsion of its current president, Sebastian Piñera. Chileans are crying out in favor of better access to health care and education, pension system reform, nationalization of natural resources, a crackdown on corruption, recognition of indigenous rights, and even a new constitution.

In 1970, the free election of the socialist Salvador Allende marked a new era of Chilean politics. The hope of many Chileans was the birth of a prosperous and equal society.

However, these dreams were easily crushed in 1973 by the military coup d'état. What took place in the country instead was the fast privatization of many sectors of the population in a neoliberal experiment. With the help of the Chicago Boys, economists trained by Milton Friedman, the dictatorship implemented legislation that would deregulate and privatize almost everything. Laws like the one concerning the State of Emergency, first passed in 1958 but greatly extended under the dictatorship (in the constitution), serve to protect the state as a part of the market economy. The state therefore only guarantees the value of money and sets up the legal and defense structures required to secure private property rights. For the Chilean people, this meant a complete overhaul of the health care system, failing schools, poor pensions, and even the systematic privatization of water. As a result, Chile is witness to the growing inequality of its people.

In the 1990s the country transitioned from the Pinochet dictatorship to a democracy, but this came with an important caveat; the laissez-faire policies implemented under the dictatorship would remain. So, while experts have qualified the following decades as marked by unfettered growth (in contrast to the rest of the continent), what is becoming painfully clear is that this growth has evaded large swaths of the population.

Inequality is embedded within Chile. The middle class is struggling with low wages, debts and high prices. Chileans are dealing with a privatized retirement system

that is leaving the older sectors of the population in extreme poverty. Education reform has not been as successful as promised. Multiple collusion scandals between toilet paper companies, poultry industries, and pharmaceuticals have crowded the news cycles. These realities erode the image of a thriving Chile.

While the protests were sparked by a 30 Chilean peso increase in subway fares, it is really rooted in growing economic disparities. These protests have transformed into a countrywide movement demanding economic reform, even a governmental overhaul.

President Piñera has responded to the surge of protests with hostility. He first declared a State of Emergency (SoE). He also implemented a country-wide curfew. The SoE was intended to ensure private order by restricting people's civil liberties, movement, and right to assembly. He sent about 10,000 armed military personnel to Santiago to contain the growing unrest. These measures are an echo of the past harkening back to the abuses endured under the dictatorship. Instead of calming the situation, they have done the opposite; it[MOU2] has further enraged the population. In a second attempt to restore order, the President eliminated the fare increase and has promised higher pensions, better health coverage, higher taxes for the rich, and pay cuts for politicians. During that time, 8 members of his cabinet have been replaced. These measures are being taken as "more of the same," and the protestors are still on the streets.

The governments that followed the dictatorship preserved the laissez-faire economic system, and today, these policies represent a threat to Chile's political stability. Chileans see the economic precarity they are experiencing as a result of the conservative economic policies, and they want change. To them, it was never just about 30 pesos, but 30 years of decaying quality of life.

Protestors and experts alike agree that the country needs structural reform, including the replacement of the 1980 constitution adopted under the dictatorship. If the protesters are successful, it would mark Chile's real emergence from the Pinochet regime.

The installment of neoliberalism as a hegemonic political force has led to the destruction of Chilean society. When President Piñera declared an SoE, he reopened the wound of the dictatorship, a regime marked by systematic political repression as well as the persecution, torture, and murder of dissidents. He reaffirmed the state's power as one legislated by private interests. In doing so, he is dismantling the healing of the trauma of the dictatorship. He is invoking the memory of a violent past into a turbulent present. Students, who were the primary organizers of the first protests, are now fighting hand in hand with older generations who survived the dictatorship. The timeline of Chile's history is blurred on the streets of Santiago. The cries of the past are echoed in the cries of today.

A Mere Seven Words: China's Powerplay

Archana Prabhakar

A mere seven-word tweet posted in mid-October sparked a massive shock and long lasting ripples in sports news, and later, the world. "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong," tweeted out by Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey, in support of pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong, resulted in an outburst from the Chinese government, which proceeded to cancel television and internet streaming of the NBA exhibition games being played there. When the NBA released a statement timidly defending Morey's right to free speech under the First Amendment, China's CCTV Network responded, "any remarks that challenge [China's] national sovereignty and social stability are not within the scope of freedom of speech." All eleven of the NBA's official Chinese partners – from a travel company to a fast food chain – have suspended ties with the league. There is clearly a lot at stake for the NBA. The Chinese market makes up at least 10 percent of the league's current revenue, and may reach 20 percent by 2030. What does China's economic hegemony mean for freedom of speech on the international stage? On the horizon, it seems like there will be an eventual erosion of power from the people as companies and organizations strive to remain in China's good graces.

The Constitutions of China and the United States each enshrine freedom of speech, but China's totalitarian regime has long employed a narrow view of that freedom, and American companies have long accepted those restrictions when doing business in China. Now, however, China is seeking to control not only what is said in China, but

what is being said about China. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the United States finds itself in a contest of ideas and principles with a country in its own weight class. This time however, the United States and China are economically intertwined: the trade volume between the two countries is the greatest of any between two countries in the history of the world, and the mutual dependency that has been formed must be maintained for the economic health of both entities, a form of mutually assured destruction dubbed "Chimerica."

While many NBA partners have spoken out saying China's sovereignty over Hong Kong is non-negotiable, China's message to foreign companies and their employees seems to speak even louder: watch what you say about us if you want to continue business here. This hardball response to Morey and the NBA fits a pattern of threats against foreign organizations which stumble into the country's sensitive internal politics. China's efforts to impose speech restrictions on international companies have largely succeeded. Last year, the Chinese government removed references to Taiwan from their websites. The Civil Aviation Administration of China sent a letter to more than forty foreign airlines telling them that they should not place China, Hong Kong and Taiwan on equal footing, and must refer to "China Taiwan" or the "China Taiwan region." The four American airlines affected by this order, American, Delta, Hawaiian, and United, complied with China's orders wholeheartedly. Other recent capitulations include fashion retailer Coach recalling t-shirts that read "Hong Kong,"

instead of "Hong Kong, China," and Marriott firing a social media manager in Omaha for "liking" a tweet posted by a group that backs Tibetan separatists. Some companies have tried to evade the issue altogether by insisting that they simply want to 'avoid politics.' Blizzard Entertainment, a subsidiary of the California video game maker Activision Blizzard, banned an esports player for shouting "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times" during an online tournament, and confiscated \$10,000 in winnings. The company, which later returned the money and reduced the ban to a six-month suspension, said it would have taken the same action if the player had shouted in opposition to the Hong Kong protesters.

There is no easy answer to the question of how international firms should do business in China. However, we have clearly seen what hasn't worked. President Trump has weakened the ability of American companies to stand for American values, including free expression, by failing to firmly oppose China's demands. A White House spokeswoman last year described China's order to airlines as "Orwellian nonsense," but the Trump administration, which has been quick to threaten China with harsh consequences for its trade policies, did not defend the airlines by warning of similar consequences to China's efforts to suppress free speech. If American companies are to stand up for American values, the U.S. government should be in their corner.

Furthermore, we can look at

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America's response to Beijing's efforts to manage foreign corporate influence in the country, too. The Chinese government views American corporations as vehicles for American political influence. The fact that a laundry list of high-level U.S. politicians have commented on the dispute while the U.S. is negotiating a trade deal with China only proves that Beijing is right to see incursions by U.S. businesses into China as a threat. Seen in this light, arguments that the NBA should insist on American speech rules in China are arguments for using American corporate power to meddle in another state. This would trouble a country in any context, but it is likely especially worrying given the United States' history of virulent and aggressive corporate imperialism. The ultimate question then becomes: who has the upper hand, and what will it cost to wield economic power?

China's clear efforts to subvert American expressions of free speech and American firms' clear willingness to abide by Chinese interests on Chinese territory makes it probable that American values of free speech will gradually deteriorate abroad. Unfortunately, the American government is doing a poor job of reinforcing these values through international business partnerships. An active stance by the U.S. government for freedom of speech can strengthen American companies' exercise of speech both domestically and globally, thus maintaining the balance of free speech and national sovereignty that is essential to unsettling Chinese encroaching soft power.



Righting Wrongs: The Struggle for Western New Guinea

Samuel Rosenblum

In the far east of Indonesia, thousands of miles from the capital of Jakarta, lies the area known as Western New Guinea. Made up of the provinces of Papua and West Papua, it is roughly the size of California and has a diverse population of hundreds of tribes that speak hundreds of different languages. Despite being a part of Indonesia for over fifty years, the marriage between Western New Guinea and the Indonesian state has been ugly, fueling a consistent desire for independence in the region. This struggle has particularly been agitated in recent months, with an incident in August that allegedly saw Papuan students desecrating the Indonesian flag and nationalist groups responding with racist chants towards the Papuans. This incident has since grown into an outbreak of protests by Papuans in Indonesian cities and widespread violence in Western New Guinea, leading to a harsh military crackdown, and resulting in forty deaths and many more arrests. With the political situation in this remote region becoming increasingly fraught, and considering its historical and economic issues, Indonesia must extend an olive branch to the people of Western New Guinea and address some of their omnipresent complaints about poor conditions.

The recent history of Western New Guinea reveals many of the underlying reasons why Papuans are seeking independence. Following a brief period of independence in the 1960s, the region was annexed by the former Indonesian dictator Suharto in a sham referendum called the "Act of Free Choice," in which Suharto claimed Papuans to be too "primitive" to determine

their own sovereignty and limited the franchise to a small group of hand-picked and coerced voters. Inspired by the fall of Suharto in 1998, the Papuans increased their calls for independence, a movement which coincided with that of former Indonesian colony Timor-Leste, calling for the "Act of Free Choice" referendum to be reversed and for a legitimate vote to be held. However, these voices were ignored and suppressed. Since this integration, more and more Indonesians from the main island of Java have migrated to the area in order to work in the mines and timber yards, and Papuans have become seriously concerned about Indonesian cultural imperialism. Fewer and fewer Papuans are living in the major Papuan cities, and instead, their shops and homes have been taken over by new arrivals from the main part of Indonesia. Over the course of fifty years, Papuans feel that they have been seriously wronged and forced to cooperate with an abusive and uncaring state that has done more to subjugate and harass the Papuans than to work in their best interests.

Despite the great harm caused by the present situation, there is a strong economic case for maintaining control of Western New Guinea. According to the University of Texas at Austin, Western New Guinea contains some of the greatest mineral wealth in the Indonesian archipelago. Large deposits of oil, gold, and copper have given Western New Guinea great material wealth. One particular mine, the Grasberg mine, has copper and gold reserves worth at least \$40 billion USD. In addition, Papuan timber has an estimated value of \$78 billion USD.

Despite this great material wealth, the people of the region have not reaped its benefits. For the majority of these mines, the Indonesian government keeps 20 percent of the profits, while foreign backers keep the remaining 80 percent, taking both the Papuans' natural resources and potential revenues. The Indonesian government's own statistics report that Papua is Indonesia's poorest province and West Papua its second-poorest, with 28 percent and 25 percent of their populations living below the poverty line, respectively. In addition, as TIME's Febriana Firdaus has reported, the Indonesian military has been brought in to help clear even more land for natural resource extraction, often violating local tribal land claims, seriously polluting the local environment, and forcefully subjugating the local population in order to "maintain control." Natural resource extraction has left the people of Western New Guinea deeply impoverished and bitter towards an Indonesian government which has actively worked to suppress them.

In response to these conditions and despite apparent sympathy from the Indonesian government, the situation in Western New Guinea has only grown more fraught. In 2014, during his first presidential election, President Joko Widodo campaigned in Papua and West Papua on a promise to "listen to the people's voices" and directly address the concerns of Papuans. As a result, he secured 27 of the 29 voting areas in the region. Despite these pledges, the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence has reported that rampant human rights abuses by the military

continue, with thousands being subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, and killing. In response to the previously-mentioned protests of August 2019, the Indonesian military has only intensified its strict control of the region and heavily cracked down on dissent, as well as enforced internet outages and strict access on entry into the region.

If President Widodo wants to keep his word and actually "listen to the people's voices," then he would be wise to listen to Papuans' concerns. To his credit, President Widodo has taken numerous trips to the region and made serious strides to improve infrastructure in this extremely rural area. However, this is not enough to win unconditional support. Instead of expropriating the land from its people, President Widodo must actively work to break this exploitative cycle and allow the Papuan people to reap the economic benefits of their land through methods such as including Papuans in discussions of land use and hiring Papuans to help extract resources. Allowing the local tribes to have some semblance of self-autonomy would allow both sides to work cooperatively for the benefit of each other.

While it may seem like the only possible move within the Indonesian government to crack down further on dissent and make it more and more costly to speak out, the long-term impact will not benefit Indonesia. Harsher restrictions and military crackdowns will only ensure that Papuans are further disillusioned with the Indonesian government, and only propagate the already popular independence movement, or worse, potentially

Meating China's Demands:

The Alternative Meat Industry as a Market-Driven Approach to Environmental Sustainability

Nick Hollman



CICIG was a shining example for anti-corruption measures—without it, the fight against impunity across Latin America faces risk of backsliding.



Plant-based meat alternatives were first introduced to China over 2000 years ago. The original purpose of these products was to support the Buddhist population and the religion's commitment to vegetarianism. According to a recent report by the Good Food Institute, out of this demand grew two of China's leading companies in plant-based alternatives, Whole Food Perfect and Godly, but these products have failed to attract non-vegetarians because of their historical significance and taste dissimilarities with their meat counterparts. However, China could soon see the introduction of "2.0" plant-based meat alternatives and cultured meats that appeal to both vegetarians and non-vegetarians in the general public. With this new industry, meat alternatives as a whole would not only serve a historic purpose, but also mitigate the environmental harms associated with the growing animal agriculture and aquaculture industries.

China is currently home to the largest aquaculture and animal agriculture industries in the world both in terms of production and consumption. The scales of these

industries create a sustainability challenge for China. Researchers from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Gansu Agricultural University estimate that the contributions of these industries range from 18 percent to 34 percent of China's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Most emissions consist of nitrous oxide and potent methane gases from livestock management that contribute to air pollution issues and climate change. Further, environmentalists identified waste from animal agriculture as a cause of the growing "dead zone" in the South China Sea and pollution in China's freshwater lakes. These consequences create obvious problems for biodiversity and sustaining ecosystems. Relatedly, the extensive land and water use for this industry poses further threats. These environmental concerns are not limited to animal agriculture, either. According to a review article from Huazhong Agricultural University, overfishing and the release of pathogens through poor waste and pollution management in China's aquaculture industry threaten habitat depletion. Given that these harms are inextricable from China's exponential growth,

they are expected to increase over the coming years.

The transition from a reliance on these industries towards alternative meats appears to be an environmentally promising strategy for mitigation. For instance, a report on the environmental prospects of cultured meat in China estimates that they would use 7 to 45 percent less energy, 78 to 96 percent fewer GHG emissions, 99 percent less land use and around 90 percent less water use. Plant-based meat alternatives too, from companies like Beyond Meat, create less of a carbon footprint similar to cultured meat with 90 percent fewer GHG emissions, 99 percent less water use, and 93 percent less land use, according to a report by the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan. Both alternative meat products offer a greener option for China, but such benefits could only be realized after they have become mainstream and competitive in the market.

The attitudes of Chinese consumers towards these products will play a large role in the transition and the environmental benefits they bear. Various surveys of consumer preferences and behavior in China seem to be in favor of such a transition. For instance, one report suggested there is a rising demand for meat products that are advertised as coming from environmentally sustainable sources. In fact, many Chinese consumers are willing to pay more for these kinds of products. An additional survey from the University of Bath on consumer perceptions of plant-based and clean meat found that Chinese consumers reported to be more accepting than American consumers towards cultured meats and plant-based products that have yet to be introduced to their markets. Many of these findings are admittedly limited to reflecting preferences of major cities in China among high-income and well-educated consumers. However, general trends in Chinese markets also seem to be indicative of consumer receptiveness. For example, The Good Food Institute's Industry Report claims that there has been a noticeable and consistent increase in the (non "2.0") plant-based meat industry in China of 14 percent every year over the past five years. This report also shows that there have been significant investments

into related products such as plant-based snacks and milks.

Throughout any transition of market changes and new industries, it is hard to ignore the power and interests of the Chinese government. What role would the Chinese government play in this transition to a more sustainable food system? Across other environmental topics, current efforts from the government look discouraging. For instance, although China remains in the Paris Climate agreement, they have failed to enforce stronger regulations on emissions at the recent UN Climate Summit. Further, China has followed suit with the U.S. in relaxing environmental regulations across industry lines and, according to a review on China's Energy Law and Policy, renewable energy sources are still underused. Despite this, the Chinese government seems to be receptive to environmental concerns raised from the public, especially relating to water and air pollution. The alternative meat industry may appeal to these attitudes towards sustainability through their far less taxing consequences on water use and pollution. This gives the alternative meat industry an advantage by supporting the interests of the Chinese government.

The success of the alternative meat industry in China would help alleviate many environmental challenges associated with the current practices of the animal agriculture and aquaculture industries. This opportunity now depends on Chinese consumers, the timely engagement of key companies, and government support. Even with these assumptions, however, there are numerous uncertainties about the future of such a new industry. For instance, given the cultural and historical significance, how would Chinese consumers react if most "2.0" alternative meat products came from the U.S. as opposed to domestic companies? And, perhaps most importantly, how long would the transition take for this new market to become mainstream and for China to reap the environmental benefits? Amid these uncertainties, it remains clear that alternative meat carries the potential for bringing China one step closer to satisfying consumer concerns and promoting sustainable development.

Escaping the Giant

Suraj Sorab

Palau legend tells of an insatiable giant who continuously ate but soon exhausted the resources of his caretakers. The villagers had no choice but to eventually try to slay him. The giant, upon finding out, recognized how his greed had nearly starved those who had raised him and chose to give the people a gift. His body shattered into hundreds of pieces and where they landed into the ocean, the islands of Palau formed. This tale of insatiability parallels our world today, and just as the giant's hunger had consequences, so too do our actions affect climate change which actively threatens communities and countries, like Palau, in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Such island countries face three major problems stemming from climate change: rising seas, extreme weather, and ecosystem degradation. The small size of many island nations magnifies the predicament posed by climate change, and as they attempt creative solutions, perhaps the most potentially successful is also one of the more drastic.

The most salient problem affecting island nations in regard to climate change is rising sea levels. According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), sea levels since 1992 have been rising at roughly three millimeters annually, and this rate has been increasing as ice caps melt. Entire countries like Kiribati could be fully underwater by the end of the century according to the highest estimates of sea-level rise. The Marshall Islands is an exceptionally low-lying country, with its highest point standing a mere

ten meters above sea level, which leaves it particularly vulnerable to rising seas. The journal *Science Advances* predicts other countries like the Maldives could be fully uninhabitable by the middle of the century. In a more immediate sense, rising sea levels could salinate already scarce sources of drinking water, creating water crises in these ocean-based communities far sooner.

and increasing infrastructure restoration requirements. Even though rising sea levels threaten fresh-water sources in the long run, floods caused by major storms could easily overwhelm fresh-water supplies of smaller countries in the coming years.

Aside from the threat of rising sea levels and floods, the ecosystems upon which many of these communities



Even islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans that are not as vulnerable to rising sea levels face challenges from extreme weather. The NOAA reports that regional temperatures hit record highs for three consecutive years, and global weather patterns have responded. In the Pacific, many countries face more intense cyclones and prolonged droughts which affect food security, infrastructure, and housing. King tides, or high tides of exceptional height that typically occur a few times a year, have become more frequent, causing more damage than in previous years

rely on are under threat, creating a more indirect but equally damaging effect of climate change. According to National Geographic, coral reefs which are home to sea life that helps sustain island communities are bleaching due to warmer oceanic surface temperatures, a harbinger of declining reef health and increased scarcity of fish, crab, and other sources of food. Coral reefs and fisheries are significant to the survival of Pacific and Indian Ocean countries, not only for sustenance but also for tourism, which is now slated to fall in the coming decades due to climate change, further

damaging future prospects for citizens of these countries. A 2018 paper in the journal *Marine Policy* outlines how small-scale fisheries employing about 100,000 people in the West and South Pacific are under threat from climate change. In countries of only several thousand, with economies and life based around the sea, ecosystem degradation affects basic survival.

The island nations cannot wait for the politics of larger countries. Many island countries have begun implementing measures to confront and adapt to climate change, some of which could have larger implications for other threatened regions of the world. According to the German Society for International Cooperation, Vanuatu has begun raising heat-tolerant pigs and increasing solar power adoption for activities related to coral reef farming. The Tongan Ministry of Food and Agriculture has developed a climate-change focus in its 2015 Framework for Action on Food Security. These are concrete steps to battle climate change and can be adapted to other countries as needed. Affected island states are also incorporating climate change considerations into economic development plans and education curriculums. Expanding these efforts to other affected island nations, when combined with practices like coral reef farming and livestock genetic engineering, could provide more time for these island states to come up with a longer-run solution.

Mutually Assured Construction:

How Competition from China's Belt and Road Initiative Could Benefit the Environment

Warren Yu

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an unprecedented undertaking. With the financial backing of a trillion U.S. dollars and an established presence in over a hundred countries, the BRI represents the apex of China's diplomatic and economic statecraft. Naturally, China benefits from its patronage of developing countries. New ports, roads, and railways serve a political and strategic purpose. And while China has been eager to present its efforts as a commitment to regional cooperation, powerful skeptics remain. The United States is particularly wary of the BRI's aims. But global tensions like these could be serendipitous; insights from arms race models hold the key. Succinctly put, competition between these two economic titans could—in a best-case scenario—be harnessed for a more optimal goal: environmental protection. If China were to utilize the BRI to spearhead an eco-friendly agenda (with greater investments in renewables, research and development, etc.), competition would yield net benefits for society.

But is a green BRI even feasible? Arguably, yes. Although massive infrastructure projects can negatively impact ecosystems, the BRI could mitigate potential harms. Formal policies like environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) are noteworthy; they integrate economic planning with environmental monitoring. These mechanisms have been increasingly adopted throughout newer projects as part of a wider effort to address the BRI's effects.

Additionally, China has over the past decade promulgated a series of surprisingly robust regulations on sustainable development. New laws, standards, and recommendations signal a strong commitment to environmental protection. Altogether, this is an encouraging trend. While there may be shortcomings in the standards of China's environmental safeguards, there is a basis for improvement to occur. A green BRI may indeed be a feasible reality.

By building off of traditional arms race models, we can use several insights to construct a new framework and explore a slightly similar idea: an economic arms race. Crucially, this would not involve the competition for superiority in arms. It would instead focus on the struggle for dominance in investments, capital, and market influence. Let us assume that states like China and the U.S. will always pursue ends that produce the most self-benefit. In a way, this is not an unrealistic assumption. After all, Chinese investments in foreign countries and businesses are not entirely altruistic: national interests are at stake. These investments are all part of an international competition for influence, market access, and even military presence. If China manages to outspend its rivals, it will gain all of these things and more. It will benefit immensely—to the detriment of competitors like the U.S. Consequently, China's BRI generates outsized economic and security concerns for other countries: it is a direct challenge to their utility.

The BRI, with its massive reach and financial backing, represents an escalation in an economic competition. In a traditional arms race, it is argued that reciprocity of strategies is the most optimal decision. For instance, if your opponent actively expanded their arsenal, you would do best to follow suit. Staying complacent would mean falling behind, since an armed state could easily overpower an unarmed one. This logic holds true for our framework of an economic arms race. Rival states are compelled to match China's level of investment in order to counter the expansion of their influence. It would not be ideal to be cornered out of a market. Again, this is not an unrealistic premise. In 2017, the US announced its commitment to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP). Essentially, the US had created an American-backed investment platform, a direct counterweight to China's BRI.

Assuming also that international relations are characterized by a lack of information, states would only have knowledge of foreign motives based on policies adopted. Reputation is thus incredibly important. With no central authority to enforce a decision, reputation allows states to make credible actions or even threats. Given that the BRI could become a green, global initiative, a Chinese commitment to sustainability (bolstered by a decade's worth of legislation) would signal an eco-friendly agenda. Rival states—already engaged in a struggle to maintain utility and dominance—

would interpret the green BRI as a new challenge to counter. In this manner, a commitment to eco-friendliness would work to China's benefit: it would develop a valuable, positive reputation as a green power. But moreover, rival states will be incentivized to match China's green development strategy with green policies and investments of their own. Should they ignore an escalation on this front, they risk losing potential ground to China. And multiple states pursuing a green platform under an economic arms race would provide enormous benefits for the environment. Competition over the BRI could lead to rather positive outcomes.

To reiterate, it is possible that this is all just a best-case scenario—a hypothetical at most. After all, there is no guarantee that countries like China or the US would want to commit to eco-friendly initiatives in the first place, even when presented with the option to do so. But the reciprocity of strategies is highly likely. The existence of the FOIP suggests that America has not disregarded the BRI's influence. With Chinese and US investments flowing into underfunded areas, crucial economic developments can occur. And if China were to hone its efforts on making the BRI a truly green initiative, it is likely that rival states would be compelled (to some degree) to reciprocate and match these policies. A state of mutual distrust could lead to mutual benefit: protection of the environment.



Australian Asylum: Not a Pacific Solution

Justin Ballard

When it comes to refugee policy, Australia is a land of contradictions. On the one hand, its refugee resettlement program is the third-largest in the world, bested only by the United States and Canada in total refugee intake according to a 2018 United Nations report. Even members of the Coalition, the conservative coalition currently in power, have boasted about the “generosity” of Australia's humanitarian migration programs. At the same time, anti-immigration sentiments abound as the same party that lauded Australia's giving spirit also recently ran on a platform pledging to freeze refugee quotas and cut overall migration.

Amid these contradictions, a particular dichotomy stands out from the rest: Australia's disproportionate focus on asylum seekers arriving by boat as opposed to those arriving by plane. While a mere 810 asylees arrived by boat and a staggering 80,000 arrived by plane between 2013 and 2018, the so-called ‘boat people’ bear the brunt of discriminatory Australian border and refugee policy. In order to warrant the refugee-friendly reputation it claims to have and appease border management concerns, Australia should eliminate its harsh deterrence policies against maritime asylum seekers in the Pacific and instead specifically address its inundation of airport arrivals.

Maritime arrivals are explicitly targeted by the Australian government through a program called Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB). Established under the Coalition to secure Australia's borders from human smuggling networks, OSB aims to turn away all ‘illegal’ boats without exception and processes those deemed potential refugees on offshore camps. As a result of this stringent policy, it

has become nearly impossible for refugees to enter Australia by sea, violating the international principle of ‘non-refoulement’ or not sending refugees back when seeking asylum.

More than just a guideline, Australia is obligated to assist these maritime asylum seekers under non-refoulement. In being a party to the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, its Protocol and other human rights treaties, Australia is egregiously disregarding international commitments with its zero-tolerance policy of boat arrivals. While breaking international law in the name of border security is already illogical given the relatively low arrival rates of maritime asylees — especially in comparison to airplane arrivals — the humanitarian concerns OSB creates is the main source of outcry. Hailing from countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, boat arrivals seek to escape persecution and human rights abuses. Yet, in being turned back by Australian officials, passengers are forced to trade one nightmare for another, as the countries they end up in are often no better than the ones they fled. Sri Lanka and Vietnam, for example, have been known to arrest, interrogate and even torture these asylum seekers. In prolonging their suffering through its dubious border control objectives in the Pacific, Australia's proclaimed “generosity” towards refugees rings hollow.

Meanwhile, airplane arrivals are treated in a much different manner. Citizens primarily of China and Malaysia, these asylees enter Australia through tourist and student visas. Once safely inside, they apply for asylum knowing that Australian refugee policy affords them protection with a bridging visa. This temporary visa allows airplane arrivals to reside and often legally work in Australia while officials

review their case. Yet, the process takes over two years to complete on average, a figure not including the additional years needed to process appeals in a backlogged court system. While Australia's bureaucratic processes stall, asylum seekers can potentially earn money in a first-world country, an outcome incentivizing others to follow suit. In the end, this unaddressed influx of airplane arrivals counteracts Australia's border control efforts as well as stated support for refugees.

That is, in focusing on the human smuggling networks in the Pacific under OSB, Australia's approach ironically ignores the growing network sustained by airplane arrivals. As Labor's home affairs spokesperson Kristina Keneally noted, human traffickers have simply “shifted their business model from boats to planes.” In being denied the Pacific, these criminals have found a more lucrative market in sponsoring the flights of asylum seekers, as the ability for airplane arrivals to stay and work for an extended period in Australia facilitates their efforts. Once inside Australia, asylum seekers are funneled into “illegal labour-hire companies” and “brothels” by human traffickers, according to Keneally. Not only then is Australia undermining its own border security efforts with current policy, but asylum seekers are also being pushed into dangerous situations — a stain on Australia's refugee-friendly reputation.

Australia's prevailing border and refugee policy needs to go. Beyond failing to effectively address border management concerns, the current system leads to inhumane consequences for boat and plane arrivals alike. To begin reforming it, Australia must first and foremost start abiding by the principle of non-refoulement and other human rights treaties it subscribes to. Not

only would this policy change fulfill international commitments, but it would also re-align Australia's efforts on the border with its other refugee assistance programs. Moreover, eliminating boat turn-backs and closing detention centers would cut costs: UNICEF reported that Australia's deterrence endeavors in the Pacific cost \$6.5 billion between 2013 and 2016.

The funding originally destined for those activities could instead be utilized to address the more pressing concern posed by airplane arrivals. One of the main problems resulting from and contributing to the influx is bureaucratic overload: government organizations like the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) are overwhelmed by asylum applications. This newfound funding could thus be used to expand the AAT in order to streamline the refugee intake process, which in turn could prevent the smuggling of airplane arrivals. The faster application review times as well as greater scrutiny these funds allow for would make it harder for human traffickers to take advantage of the current system. Moreover, these funds could be used for increased cooperation with organizations like INTERPOL, allowing for stricter background checks at airports and the like with the input of a third-party.

Currently, Australia is a nation divided on policy. The government transgresses against international refugee conventions yet has an admirable refugee resettlement program; it patrols its coastlines in the name of border security yet has not paid similar attention to those arriving by air. However, by welcoming boat arrivals and taking a greater interest in airplane arrivals, Australia's reputation for being a safe harbor for the world's persecuted will become consistent across the board.

“Australia's proclaimed ‘generosity’ towards refugees rings hollow”

It's Time for the Rohingya to Return

Zayna Syed

In late August of 2017, Rajuma stood in a riverbank, alongside dozens of other Rohingya women, when soldiers ripped her baby from her arms, and threw him into a fire. Later, the same Myanmar state soldiers would gang-rape Rajuma and murder her mother, sisters and brother, according to reporting from The New York Times. Rajuma's story is not unique. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have been subjected to mass murder, rape and torture, with the United Nations proclaiming the group under threat of genocide. Now, two years later, most of the Rohingya have ended up exactly where their oppressors claimed they were from: Bangladesh.

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group in Myanmar. Many of them lack formal education and come from rural fishing communities. Ethnic tensions have existed for centuries between the Rohingya and the state's majority-Buddhist population, with much of it stemming from British colonization in the 19th century and catalyzing during World War II. The British showed little respect for Buddhism and the pre-existing political order, which caused Buddhists in the region to naturally resent them. However, most minority groups, including the Rohingya, were pro-British. During World War II, many Buddhists supported the Japanese, who invaded the region in 1942, while the Rohingya remained loyal to the British, who promised them their own state after the war. The British reneged on this promise, of course, leaving some Rohingya to lobby for northern parts of the state that were majority Muslim to join East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after Burma won independence in 1948. This initiative failed, and caused the new Burmese government to

see the Rohingya as disloyal.

The idea that the Rohingya are disloyal and "Bengali" outsiders continues to this day. In fact, Myanmar's government still refuses to call the group "Rohingya," because their name translates to "of Arakan," a region within Myanmar, thus legitimizing their claim to the land. Since independence, the Rohingya have regularly been subjected to discrimination, violence, and arbitrary detention. The violence peaked in late August and early September of 2017, after the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a militant group that claims to fight for Rohingya rights, attacked police posts and attempted to raid an army base. That is when Myanmar's army responded with what UN fact-finding missions have called ethnic cleansing, causing around 700,000 Rohingya to flee into Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, a poor and overpopulated country, embraced Rohingya refugees upon arrival, with border officials turning a blind eye towards making the Rohingya apply for refugee status (since many fled without the necessary paperwork). However, after two years of hosting, the country, especially its poor, are starting to feel the effects of adding refugees to an already overcrowded country. Despite what Myanmar may think, Bangladesh does not think of the Rohingya as Bengalis. The government has restricted Rohingya refugees' freedom of movement and access to the Internet, and in August 2019, attempted to repatriate refugees back to Myanmar. Not surprisingly, almost no Rohingyas wanted to return, since Myanmar still refuses to acknowledge the ethnic cleansing and dubiously claims that the Rohingya set their own homes on fire in order to elicit "international sympathy".

Myanmar estimates 200 refugees returned, and even that may be generous. Experts say Rohingya will return home when they feel that the state has acknowledged its crimes. Thus, accountability and repatriation are intertwined.

Some steps towards accountability have been taken, very recently. On November 11, 2019, Gambia filed a suit against the Myanmar government for crimes against humanity in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Gambia did so on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), a group of 57 Muslim-majority or Islamically-influence states, which is funding the lawsuit. However, the court is unlikely to accept the suit. The ICJ was established to settle disputes between two states, disputes that typically refer to economic matters and almost never include crimes against humanity. Those are typically reserved for the International Criminal Court (ICC)—which Myanmar is not a party to, and thus cannot be prosecuted in. If the ICJ accepts the case, their decision would transform international human rights law. Unfortunately, it would also disrupt the entire international legal system—which would prove an enormous problem for the United Nations, who "like their structures," according to Hardy Vieux, Legal Director for Human Rights First.

While the Gambia suit holds promise, the plight of the Rohingya is still by-and-large a forgotten one. International leaders may condemn the human rights abuses, but almost none are willing to take substantive action. And unlike other diaspora communities, there are few Rohingya who can advocate for their people on a global scale, resulting in international apathy. In fact, at the November 2019 ASEAN conference, which organizes Southeast Asian countries to discuss economic and political issues, the 7-page statement included no mention of the Rohingya. The Rohingya want to return home, as long as they can live safely, and remaining in Bangladesh would pose an enormous burden on the country. The ideal solution is repatriation. Implementation, however, requires a coordinated international effort.

The first step involves additional litigation. Ideally, the UN

Security Council would create an international tribunal to prosecute bad actors, since a tribunal entails real enforcement mechanisms and is within the jurisdiction for crime against humanity litigation. Conventional logic would suggest that China is likely to veto such a tribunal, since it has trade relations with Myanmar and prosecution would set a bad precedent for their persecution of minority groups. However, other member states could argue that China would benefit from endorsing a tribunal—if international pressure on China's persecution of the Uighur increases (as it has been, although not from the U.S.), they could use their support of the Rohingya as a deflection mechanism.

Additionally, the U.S. can take further steps to pressure Myanmar's government. This can be done directly and indirectly. The US should impose political sanctions on all members of Myanmar's government and military (which effectively controls the government), including Aung San Suu Kyi, who won a Nobel Peace Prize, yet has turned a blind eye to the persecution of the Rohingya. It should also pressure allies India, Japan and Thailand to limit trade relations with Myanmar until they take steps to genuinely repatriate the Rohingya and pay reparations. It is unclear if the current administration would be willing to take steps to do so, given its lack of concern for human rights violations. However, it could be possible with the right amount of public pressure. The real problem is that rising powers in the region ignore the human rights abuses, because Myanmar offers a new market and an addition to their sphere of influence, especially with Japan and India. However, pressure from the US may make Myanmar less enticing.

In Defense of GSOMIA

Will Kiern

Tensions over colonial history between Japan and South Korea are at an all-time high. In August, government officials in South Korea decided to withdraw from the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), an agreement between the two countries facilitating military information exchanges, specifically focused on North Korea and its nuclear missile programs. While the intelligence agreement has given the two countries leverage against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), a rise in South Korean nationalism prompted populist-backed politicians to back out of this pivotal agreement, rendering the Republic of Korea highly vulnerable to the DPRK. A breakdown of the Japanese-South Korean alliance would lead to the collapse of the main security apparatus in Northeast Asia and leave North Korea free to exert unrestrained influence in the region. South Korea should work to dissolve unreasonable tensions with Japan and renew the GSOMIA agreement, since the country's security relies heavily on a Japan-Korea alliance. This will allow South Korea to prioritize more pressing economic and security threats from China and North Korea.

Japan and South Korea have two distinct explanations for why GSOMIA broke down. Japanese officials alleged that South Korean companies transported chemicals, imported from Japan, to North Korea. As a result, the Japanese government restricted the export of three chemicals to South Korea. The intent for the export regulations was clear: Tokyo officials have consistently requested that South Korea explain its demand for such large sums of those three chemicals, only to be ignored by South Korean importers who refused to hear their concerns. However, South Korean officials have maintained that the regulation of the three chemicals, vital ingredients

for companies like Samsung Electronics Co., was a direct retaliation for the 2018 Supreme Court ruling for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to pay reparations for its use of South Korean "comfort women" — who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army — as well as forced labor. Yet South Korea fails to acknowledge an earlier case for such reparations made in 1965 by former President Park Chung-hee, which saw Japan pay \$800 million USD in reparations to permanently settle the issue of war crimes during World War II.

and numerous apologies from the Japanese government. The Minjoo Party of Korea, the leftist party of Moon Jae-in, has asked for renegotiations and a "sincere apology," calling the recent compensation deal a "terrible agreement" due to the supposed lack of sincerity in Japan's apology and the sense of entitlement for more compensation. Following the series of controversies surrounding former Japanese war crimes, the chemical export regulation led to an unnecessary backlash by South Koreans,

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The rise of ethnic nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment has led many South Koreans towards the path of self-destruction.

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The compensation eventually fueled the South Korean economy to the point of transitioning its status to that of a developed country, giving rise to numerous Korean conglomerates (most notably Samsung) that were able to compete in foreign markets.

In recent years, however, protestors in South Korea have demanded further compensation, arguing that the prior reparations only reached the government of South Korea at the time as opposed to directly helping victims of the war. Even with compensation of the 1965 Treaty, a subsequent treaty was established by President Park Geun-hye allowing South Korea to receive \$10 million for comfort women survivors

who began to boycott Japanese products and travels. Amid popular South Korean resentment against Japanese practices, populist South Korean politicians, fueled by anti-Japanese mob mentality, have amassed support through their endeavor to "not back down" against Japan. The next stage of the conflict led to the Japanese removal of South Korea from their export whitelist of preferred trading partners, which inevitably led to Korea's subsequent removal of Japan from their own whitelist.

The rise of ethnic nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment has led many South Koreans towards the path of self-destruction. To many Koreans, shared ethnic and cultural

identity trumps shared political ideology, and the history between the two countries has deterred numerous South Koreans from engaging in peace-building with the Japanese. Politicians fueled by such populist mentality have harnessed it in their campaigns at the expense of South Korean security concerns, as shown in the recent advent of a North Korean nuclear missile crisis. In a survey conducted by Asan Institute for Policy Studies, South Koreans viewed Kim Jong-un more favorably than Abe Shinzo. Furthermore, according to a Gallup poll by the Korean Research Center, soon after the meeting between Kim Jong-un and President Moon Jae-in, 78 percent of South Korean respondents stated that they "trusted" Kim Jong-un. South Korean disparities of trust between Japanese and North Koreans became more apparent as the general Korean population affirmed their support for the Inter-Korean Open Rail Project in December 2018 while opposing the plan to build the Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel.

South Korea's survival in the international arena is wholly dependent on its military and economic alliance with Japan. Resolutions of historical enmities are necessary, and such actions would serve as a baseline for progress. Without a consolidated partnership between the two countries, Japan and South Korea would eventually face decreasing economic leverage compared to the increasingly influential Chinese economy along with an unsolvable security concern from North Korea. The renewal of GSOMIA is merely the first step in easing its tensions and re-establishing ties with a long-forgotten enemy; thus, addressing the common enemy across the Korean Demilitarized Zone must be the priority of both nations.

The Naya Indira:

India's New-Old Populism

Jeh Z. Mory

Indian democracy has endured for over seventy years, despite the occasional bumps in the road. The most notorious of these was 'the Emergency,' a 21-month period marred by mass arrests and the suspension of civil liberties and habeas corpus, declared by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. However, these structures survived largely due to the leadership of its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who took care to display due deference to Parliament in order to strengthen the fledgling legislature. Additionally, one can attribute India's rapid economic transformation since 1991 to the stewardship of three Prime Ministers: P.V. Narasimha Rao, who initiated market liberalization and globalization, his successor Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Strangely, according to an India Today August 2019 Mood of the Nation poll, few regard any of these men as the country's 'best' Prime Minister. A sixth of respondents favored Indira, with Vajpayee, Nehru, Singh, and Rao lagging behind her. The only leader to outperform the leader who declared the Emergency was another authoritarian populist: over a third of respondents favored incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is surprising, considering Modi's record of establishing a National Register of Citizens to aid the deportation of Muslim refugees who fled Bangladesh for the eastern state of Assam nearly fifty years ago, enabling rampant cow vigilantism, suppressing media criticism, and compromising the independence of the judiciary. Why, then, do a people so jealously protective of their democratic freedoms yield their admiration to such brazenly autocratic leaders? Indira and Modi's genuine political talents and Indians' appreciation of "bold" and "decisive" leaders, explain much of this apparent paradox, portending Modi's continued electoral dominance.

The similarities between Indira and Modi run deeper than mere authoritarianism. Both leaders were gifted orators, which enabled them to personally connect to their

people in a way the erudite Singh, Vajpayee, and Rao could not. Their populist policies and rhetoric, from Indira's nationalization of India's largest banks to Modi's abrogation of Kashmir's special constitutional status, enhanced the lustres of their personalities to domestic audiences, especially when contrasted with the back-and-forth chaos of the democratic process. Dr. Singh's second government, beset by venal ministers and coalition partners, was especially prone to this "policy paralysis," allowing Modi to prioritize speed over Parliamentary consultation in his decision-making. As Shashi Tharoor, a Member of Parliament (MP) from the opposition Indian National Congress (INC), observed, despite Modi's habitual steamrolling of major legislation without the slightest Parliamentary oversight, the Indian public has largely appreciated "bold" solutions even when their results have been underwhelming. Modi's unilateral demonetization of five-sixths of India's currency, which only briefly affected his popularity despite inflicting a full percentage point reduction in GDP and millions of job losses across the country, serves as a prime example. Indians similarly appreciate Indira's boldness despite the untold damage state micromanagement and the related "License Raj" system inflicted on the economy.

Curiously, preceding this year's elections, unemployment reached levels not seen since Indira's premiership. Overall, Modi's shoddy policy record has attracted criticism from multiple intellectuals. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has either disputed their contentions or questioned their Indianness; intellectuals as a class have been routinely condemned by BJP leaders as "anti-national," "Leftists," or "Westerners." This boldness has carried over to the leaders' foreign policies. Modi's Balakot airstrikes and Indira's 1971 war with Pakistan enhanced their national security credentials and popularity. Their belligerence won Indians' admiration, regardless of their efficacy. One can view their foreign policies as extensions of their domestic policies,

in which the means of grandstanding, posturing, and faux-decisiveness justify the ends. Assertiveness on the global stage is an easy political point-scorer, and Modi and Indira exploited such moments to bolster their domestic reputations. This becomes especially apparent when one considers the timing of Modi's unilateral abrogation of Jammu & Kashmir's bespoke constitutional status; the move utterly distracted the public from a flagging economy.

Ultimately, both rose to the top of the greasy political pole quite simply because they were the most gifted politicians of their eras. While Indira was initially regarded as a gungi gudiya ("mute doll") by her rivals, she successfully outmaneuvered them by portraying them as out-of-touch elites. This mirrors Modi's shedding of his hardline Hindu nationalist image by embracing a single-minded focus on development. His 2014 campaign instead elected to attack the ruling Congress Party's record on corruption and promote Modi's "Gujarat model" of development, capitalizing on his record leading that state for twelve years. Many of the nation's rural poor especially have since experienced real progress in electrification and basic sanitation. Again, this mirrors Indira's garibi hatao ("remove poverty") slogan, which helped her assemble a thumping majority in the 1971 elections.

Fundamentally, Modi and Indira's brazenly totalitarian use of their personal brands has afforded them an unusual security from even monumental blunders. Demonetization, a flagging economy, and rising inter-religious tensions have barely dented Modi's invincible aura, while Indira triumphantly returned to power just three years after her defeat and imprisonment on corruption charges. As Modi continues to emulate Indira's style of governance, it is likely that his government becomes more populist at home and belligerent abroad just as the country's economic hiccup requires another round of necessary but perhaps politically unpalatable reforms rather than another round of unsustainable populist sops. Just as

the country requires a deft political hand to navigate a range of foreign policy challenges from the rise of China to the country's burgeoning relationship with the United States, Modi's leadership has experienced souring relations with India's neighbors (barring Bangladesh), muddled and unclear signs vis-a-vis the United States and China, and the absence of an overarching foreign policy vision. As with Indira, domestic troubles caused may well induce Modi to embark on rash misadventures, a tendency he has already displayed with demonetization. Worryingly, Modi, like Indira before him, has proved able to withstand broad failures on these fronts, even as several of his predecessors lost re-election with less controversial resumes. It is entirely possible that Modi will find himself in position to gradually remake a "Naya ("New") India" in his image, even as he ironically tarnishes Hinduism's and India's historical record of religious tolerance over the centuries with his narrow Hindu nationalist agenda.

The Crown: A Review of Europe's Remaining Monarchies

Although monarchies may seem to be relics of the past, eleven still remain in Europe. Below are brief descriptions of a few of these remaining monarchies, explaining their modern roles and listing key royal figures.

Belgium

Maeve Skelly

The current Belgian Royal Family includes King Philippe, his wife Queen Mathilde, and their four children. King Philippe is the eldest son of King Albert II and Queen Paola and the grandson of King Leopold III and Queen Astrid. The Belgian Monarchy, established in 1831 as a hereditary constitutional monarchy system, was patterned after the United Kingdom. The King, bound by the constitution, is intended to act as an arbiter and guardian of Belgian national unity and independence, as Belgium got its independence in 1830. The reigning monarch has a number of constitutional responsibilities. Not only does the monarchy symbolize feelings of national unity, it also represents the country in public functions and international meetings. The monarch has federal executive power, meaning they have the power to appoint or dismiss ministers, implement laws passed by the Federal Parliament, and manage international relations. However, the monarch is required to exercise their powers through their ministers. The monarch regularly meets with members of the government, including the prime minister, to discuss and receive updates on pressing issues. Every meeting the monarch holds is organized by their personal political cabinet. Furthermore, the monarch has the power to appoint members to higher positions, and acts as one of the three major components of federal legislative power. The Federal Parliament, established in 1830, almost simultaneously with the monarchy, cannot pass a law without the monarch's signature.

Denmark

Megan Rossiter

Tracing its origins back to 900 CE under the rule of Gorm the Old and Harald Bluetooth (fun fact: the wireless technology is his namesake), the Danish monarchy is the oldest monarchy in Europe. Like most other European monarchs, the Danish monarch's power is limited, as Denmark is considered a constitutional monarchy. Overall, the monarch has a largely symbolic role since they do not take part in party politics. Some of the monarch's functions include appointing newly elected prime ministers, approving laws passed by the Folketing, and awarding honors and medals. The Danish monarch and their immediate family also attend major ceremonies, receive foreign officials, and promote charitable causes. Queen Margrethe II is the current monarch of Denmark, having ascended the throne in 1972 after the death of her father, King Frederick IX of Denmark. She is also the granddaughter of King Christian X, renowned for his role in promoting Danish patriotism during the German occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945. Although the Danish royal family tends to stay away from gossip columns, much attention has recently been paid to Prince Nikolai of Denmark, grandson of Queen Margrethe. Nikolai, who has modeled for fashion houses Dior and Burberry, has not only been the subject of Danish tabloids, he has also been featured in Vogue, Cosmopolitan, and even Business Insider.

The Netherlands

Kerri Kenney

Though its framework is championed as a representative of contemporary democracy, the Netherlands remains a constitutional monarchy with an admired royal family. At first glance of the Dutch constitutional definition of its monarch, the role of the monarch seems tyrannical. However, in context, the monarch is rather powerless regarding the establishment of laws because their signature is only one of many that are needed, they are completely separated from the legislative branch, and their ministers do the majority of the governing. Ultimately, however, the King or Queen is still the official head of state and thus is considered important to the functioning and morale of the Netherlands and its people. The Netherlands is currently led by King Willem-Alexander and his family, which consists of his three young daughters and his respected Argentinian wife, Queen Maxima. Though as a prince he was known as a controversial partier who didn't take his royal role seriously, he salvaged his image as he prepared for the inheritance of his acclaimed mother Queen Beatrix's throne by taking frequent tours of the country and working in the United Nations. He has since been known as progressive and representative of an ordinary Dutch citizen, causing the royal family to become popular in the media and the idea of a more modern Netherlands to spread throughout the nation and the world.

Spain

Sumaya Tabbah

Felipe VI of Spain ascended the throne on June 19, 2014 following the abdication of his father, King Juan Carlos I, making him the youngest European monarch. Prior to his ascension he was trained in each of Spain's armed services academies, earned a law degree from The Autonomous University of Madrid, and received a Master of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University in Washington D.C In accordance to the Spanish Constitution, he serves as head of state and commander-in-chief of the Spanish Armed Forces and promotes relations with Spanish America and the Former Spanish East Indies. His reign has centered around retaining a sense of shared Spanish history, modernizing the royal house through prohibiting royal gifts, banning royals from doing business, and reducing his own salary by 20%. As Spain is a constitutional monarchy, the King is stripped of conventional powers denying him interference with the government. Similar to many remaining monarchs, King Felipe serves as a figure of State, seen as a symbol of Spanish unity and culture.

Sweden

Derek Shan

Carl XVI Gustaf, the seventh member of the House of Bernadotte (which traces its origins to France), has served served as the King of Sweden for the last 46 years, making him its longest-reigning monarch. He became second in line to the throne after the death of his father Prince Gustaf Adolf in a 1947 plane crash, when he was less than a year old. In 1973, he ascended to the throne, presiding over a reorientation of the monarchy from cultural to social and environmental issues as it receded into a largely symbolic role after constitutional revisions. Three years later, he married Queen Silvia, a linguist he met at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. Their pre-wedding gala saw ABBA perform "Dancing Queen" live for the first time. Despite outcry over a botched cover-up of an apparent sex scandal in 2010, both he and the monarchy remain popular, with support for the monarchy still well over 60 percent despite recent renewed calls for its abolition from the democratic socialist Left Party.

United Kingdom

Benjamin Miller

The Monarchy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is objectively the most iconic and world-renowned royal family in present-day society. At its helm sits Queen Elizabeth II, who has reigned as head of state over Britain, its territories, and other countries since 1952. The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, meaning that although Queen Elizabeth is the head of state, the Prime Minister oversees Parliament, which includes the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Throughout the years, the British royal family has come under harsh scrutiny as it has maintained its relatively limited power, surrounded by an ever-critical press and a watchful public. The most recent example of this scrutiny surrounds the seemingly close relationship between Prince Andrew and notorious sex offender and trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. The royal family has also been the subject of intense public curiosity and fascination from Princess Diana to Meghan Markle to Netflix's The Crown. Despite growing discussion surrounding the necessity of a royal family in Britain, most Brits are in favor of the monarchy, viewing it as a powerful symbol and representation of British greatness and idealism to the broader world, even as Britain's global influence has diminished over time.



Looking South, Another Missed Opportunity

Aidan Woutas

On an increasingly fractured continent, a glimmer of hope for European unity appeared this past summer. Against the idyllic backdrop of Lake Prespa, straddling the border between North Macedonia and Greece, the two countries finally settled their longstanding name dispute. Twenty-five years of hostility ended as North Macedonia changed its name on the explicit promise of EU and NATO accession talks as a reward. Concurrent to these negotiations, neighboring Albania undertook its own changes, implementing steps laid out by the EU as prerequisites to membership. This included judicial reforms and giving the Union's Frontex border agency access to internal police operations. However, when the EU had the chance to reward Albania and North Macedonia for their progress at mid-October's summit, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark, following Emmanuel Macron's lead, betrayed these promises and vetoed the opening of accession negotiations. Despite the outrage of other European leaders over the move, the door is now closed to Albania and North Macedonia's membership for the time being.

France had its stated reasons, but this decision is ultimately the latest example of European leaders allowing their internal disputes to adversely affect the EU's foreign policy, both in the Balkans and beyond. Their reasons for rejecting accession talks included dissatisfaction with current policies and institutions that

should be rectified before adding new members and objections to the current accession process itself. While these arguments do have some legitimacy, much of the French government's motivation under Emmanuel Macron seems based instead on internal political disputes with other member states. Anticipating the UK's absence, disagreements between France and Germany, the bloc's two largest and most powerful members, have come to define European politics as of late. The two, which strenuously disagreed over the accession issue, were at loggerheads during last summer's fraught selection of the next European Commission president, and often spar over monetary and defense policy.

When analyzing France's stated concerns about the need for reform in Albania and North Macedonia, it becomes clear that they are simply masking their grievances about intra-bloc politics; accession talks with Serbia and Montenegro are both underway despite egregious violations of democratic norms, and in Serbia's case, growing ties with Russia and China. Macron instead fears enlargement of the bloc would merely insert more variables into the bloc's politics at a time when he is seeking to shape its future. In the Balkans' case, this undermines the bloc's trust with countries in the region, opening the door to more security challenges and malign influence from Russia, China and Turkey. All three countries have sought to establish a more

robust presence in the Balkans and thereby increase their influence over all of Europe. The EU's foreign policy strength, meanwhile, weakens. The belief that the Balkan question will simply go away for the EU is a deeply flawed one.

Indeed, the security situation in the region — which has seen the most recent armed conflicts on the European continent — is only deteriorating. In nearby Bosnia, the Serbian minority entity Republika Srpska has been agitating for secession and its leaders have stepped up their ethno-nationalist rhetoric. Both Bosnian Muslim and Serbian factions have been organizing security forces which threaten to destabilize the situation further. The organized crime that originates in the Balkans, particularly in Albania, stands only to worsen without the increased crime fighting capabilities that EU agencies could provide. Russia and China, meanwhile, have undertaken concerted efforts in recent years to increase their presence in the region. Last year's referendum confirming North Macedonia's name change saw unprecedented amounts of Russian interference while China's infrastructure investments have indebted leaders across the region to their illiberal regime. At the same time, Erdogan's regime in Turkey has leveraged its identity to establish more influence in the Balkans' Muslim communities, including in Albania. If the EU continues to fail in providing a viable alternative for Balkan countries, these footholds are

likely to only continue to grow.

One thing all Union members can agree on is the desire for stability on the continent and the prevention of malign influence on its neighbors. Closing the bloc off to growth is wholly counterproductive to that end, and instead engenders only greater instability. In the wake of the accession decision, Serbian president Alexander Vucic said it vindicated Serbia's growing ties with Russia and China. Throughout all of this, Albania and North Macedonia are left in the lurch. Albania, which stands to benefit tremendously from EU membership, talks about damaged motivation for reform. North Macedonia, meanwhile, has called early elections for April, where the nationalists who were deposed several years ago for corruption could harness anger over France's veto to regain power and pull out of the Prespa agreement. With the Balkan countries' entreaties to the EU only ever seeming to end negatively, the impetus to look eastward toward Russia, China and Turkey, all three of which seek to undermine Western Europe's influence in the region, only grows.

Macron claims to have the bloc's best interest in mind in closing it off to expansion. This is simply a continuation of the closed-minded, inward-looking thinking that has already affected Europe's standing so substantially. Albania and North Macedonia are prime examples of countries in the Balkans that have attempted serious engagement

The Conservatives Paving The Path For The Union's Breakup

Benjamin Miller

In a 2017 speech, former Prime Minister Theresa May touched on the core of her Brexit strategy when she confidently stated: "it's why we will put the preservation of our precious Union at the heart of everything we do. Because it is only by coming together as one great union of nations and people that we can make the most of the opportunities ahead." May's promise to preserve the Union, a collection of distinct nations — England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland — is borne from the very foundation of her political party: the Conservative and Unionist Party. As the name suggests, the Conservatives were founded on the belief that ensuring the survival of the Union was paramount, and was the basis of every momentous decision they made. In fact, both May and new Prime Minister Boris Johnson label themselves "one nation Conservatives." Despite May's dedication to this basic principle, throughout the Brexit process, the Conservatives have morphed into a different party. Boris' rhetoric is less absolute. In fact, the current UK Prime Minister once wrote that "allowing the Scots to make their own laws, while free-riding on English taxpayers ... is simply unjust." According to a June YouGov poll of Conservative Party members, 63 percent would want Brexit to happen even if it meant Scotland leaving the UK, with 59 percent saying the same regarding Northern Ireland. It now appears that Johnson's Conservative Party cares very little about preserving the Union, and instead more interested in protecting short-term political interests.

In the aftermath of Brexit, talk of secession from the Union has taken the form of whispers in Northern Ireland and shouts in Scotland. Fundamentally, outside of England, an increasingly frustrated populace

is becoming keener on holding their own referenda, this time to leave the United Kingdom and remain within the European Union.

The concept of having a united group of fiercely patriotic nations under one national government is remarkable, but also fragile. By flirting with a No-Deal Brexit, and even by supporting the very concept of Brexit to begin with, PM Johnson and the Conservatives are risking the future of the United Kingdom.

PM Johnson is less overt in his unionist messaging than former PM May. He frequently employs his "get on with it [Brexit]" phraseology as a mechanism for uniting the country, despite great division over the fundamental concept of Brexit. He is simply hoping that moving forward with Brexit will unite the country, while failing to acknowledge that many are anti-Brexit and do not support his irresponsible approach to the issue. Polling across the United Kingdom spells potential trouble for its future if the catastrophic effects of Brexit are actualized. In Scotland, support for independence hovers between 50 and 60 percent. In Northern Ireland, a majority now support unification with the Republic of Ireland with a poll showing 51 percent in favor. Even polls in Wales show support for independence up to 33 percent in support of secession if it meant staying in the EU.

Of the nations within the United Kingdom, Scotland would likely be the first domino to fall. Having previously held a referendum on UK membership in 2014 in which Scots voted to "remain" 55 percent to 44 percent, Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon is pushing for another. Her new argument is that Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, and therefore it is unjust to

force Scotland to stay aboard a sinking ship. This argument is built off of Sturgeon's long-held belief that Scotland should become independent and free from the chains of London decision-makers. Since the Brexit referendum, support for independence has increased substantially, providing Sturgeon the backing to continue her campaign for a second post-Brexit referendum. However, Johnson has said he will block Scotland from holding another referendum, because democracy seems to only matter when it favors the Conservative agenda.

Another alarming development of a Tory-led Brexit is the possibility of Northern Ireland choosing to reunify with the Republic of Ireland, which would reverse over a century of division between on the isle of Ireland, and possibly re-ignite sectarian conflict. Northern Ireland has been a consistent sticking point in the Brexit negotiations. The primary element that has been scrutinized the most has been the Northern Irish backstop proposal by PM May. The backstop would ostensibly keep Northern Ireland in the EU Single Market until a further agreement could be put in place. Brexiteers, including prominent Conservatives such as Jacob Rees-Mogg, claimed this to be 'Brexit lite' and not delivering upon the referendum. Another is the possibility of a hard border between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, which would not only negatively affected the Northern Irish economy, but also harken back to a time of sectarian conflict. These possible outcomes would be direct results of a Conservative Brexit, one that does little to consider the implications to the people of Northern Ireland.

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The concept of having a united group of fiercely patriotic nations under one national government is remarkable, but also fragile.

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A small panic has seized the economic policy minds of Europe this year. Once the United Kingdom breaks from the European Union, only 12 of the world's top 100 companies will be "European," down from 28 a mere decade ago. Against this backdrop, onlookers imbued the recent merger proposal between Germany's Siemens and France's Alstom with elevated importance. The merger sought to create a multinational high-speed train and railroad signaling technologies conglomerate large enough to rival China's state-owned CRRC Corporation, but was ultimately blocked in February by the European Commission.

In the wake of the Siemens-Alstom decision, France and Germany jointly authored a manifesto calling for the

Commission has reviewed over 6000 transactions through the EU Merger Control Regulation. Of those, it only intervened to prevent fewer than 30. That represents a merger success rate upwards of 99.5 percent and includes more than just small, under-the-radar deals. In 2019, for instance, a merger between the German and Belgian companies, BASF and part of Solvay, the 8th and 93rd largest global chemicals producers, received a green light. Merger regulators do not simply slam their gavels at any proposal that they loosely intuit to be too large. Rather, the decision to intervene occurs through a predictable process. Regulators consider the size of the market in which the merger would occur to see how much market share it would occupy, assess the potential for abuse of a dominant position

slash costs, since the government guarantees it a monetary or regulatory crutch. Moreover, they gain an incentive to devote resources towards lobbying policymakers to sustain their status as national darling, behavior known as "rent-seeking" in economics, which squanders resources on efforts that do not add to any inherent productivity in the market.

Proponents of state sponsorship of European champions argue that if Europe does not sport industrial giants of its own, its companies will be outmaneuvered in foreign and domestic markets by U.S. and Chinese competitors, rendering the benefits of competition moot. Such reasoning falsely assumes that bigger is better, regardless of how that is achieved. Evidence from European economic

of the EU's political purpose. Ever since the early days of the European Coal and Steel Community, the deal was to hand over tariffs, customs, and protectionist policy and in return receive unimpeded market access for exports, cheaper imports, and freely flowing capital. Such terms were steeped in a pro-competitive worldview and required trust in the supra-national governing body to ensure that each member played by the rules. Picking industrial winners, however, lends itself to favoritism and bureaucratic opacity, which erodes the EU's image as a neutral, nonpolitical arbiter. Moreover, Europe's largest companies are already overwhelmingly Western European. If these should grow to dominate trade in their respective sectors across the European single market on the back of EU-sponsorship, smaller and less

Squaring Off Against European Industrial Champions and their Fans

Daniel Evans

EU to revise its industrial competition policy, arguing that Europe otherwise stands to lose to increasingly large Chinese and American corporations on the world stage. Names like Google and Alibaba are often thrown around as examples of large foreign bogeymen. To correct this imbalance, the manifesto proposes that the EU ease its merger crackdown and adopt a more lenient stance towards state aid for businesses. Such calls amount to advocating for Europe to advance national champions of its own, companies that are leaders in their field and are supported by close government ties. The suggested pivot towards an era of European industry champions and relaxed merger policy is misguided. Not only does it contradict basic economic principles of efficient markets, but it defies the political tenets on which the EU itself was founded.

Claims that the EU overly restricts the growth of large corporations are hardly fair. Since 1989, the European

post-merger, and then weigh those drawbacks against the possibility for the merged company's increased scale to drive down product prices. When they block a merger, chances are good that the evidence heavily indicated potential for market abuse at the expense of consumers.

If anything, Europe's economy currently teeters towards being too concentrated. Between 2012 and 2018, the European Commission saw a steady increase from 272 annual merger cases to 395, with a rising number of acceptances. The EU therefore stands to benefit from promoting more competition in its single market, not less. Conventional textbook economic arguments illustrate why: competitive markets increase product variety, lower prices, and divert investment away from stale underperformers towards the most promising new innovators. Selecting one company and pumping state aid into it reduces the incentive for the chosen incumbent to innovate and

history ought to lay this belief to rest. In the 1970s, for example, Great Britain doled out ineffective grants and conducted expensive nationalization efforts for companies like British Leyland and International Computers Limited. The fact that these entities and others like them effectively no longer exist attests to their inefficient management, stale product lines, or financial woes. Even Airbus SE, the aerospace conglomerate held up as an example of what the Siemens-Alstom merger could have aspired to, has had historically required massive cash injections to keep it afloat, only succeeding once governments stopped their micro-management.

Impervious to these concerns, the EU released a draft in August of a plan to create a €100 billion EUR sovereign wealth fund, which would allow the EU to purchase shares in EU-based corporations. A new European industrial policy that abandons its competition ideals in favor of a "bigger is better" philosophy risks losing sight

prosperous member states would rightly feel betrayed, given that their own domestic industries require the most support. The funds Western European champions would repatriate back to their home countries risks further increasing the regional wealth imbalance.

Those in favor of propping up champions would do well not to lose sight of the fact that the EU, molded in the ashes of post-war Europe, was created for countries to agree on economic means towards meta-economic ends. For the founding Western European economies, this meant political cohesion. Southern and Eastern European countries, in turn, were sold on a dream of convergence in living standards towards those of the rapidly growing existing member states. The adverse political effects that can accompany sponsoring European champions may ultimately threaten the EU's ability to fulfill either of those.

Is Europe's "Green Wave" Here to Stay?

Derek Shan

Tensions over colonial history between Japan and South Korea are at an all-time high. In August, government officials in South Korea decided to withdraw from the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), an agreement between the two countries facilitating military information exchanges, specifically focused on North Korea and its nuclear missile programs. While the intelligence agreement has given the two countries leverage against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), a rise in South Korean nationalism prompted populist-backed politicians to back out of this pivotal agreement, rendering the Republic of Korea highly vulnerable to the DPRK. A breakdown of the Japanese-South Korean alliance would lead to the collapse of the main security apparatus in Northeast Asia and leave North Korea free to exert unrestrained influence in the region. South Korea should work to dissolve unreasonable tensions with Japan and renew the GSOMIA agreement, since the country's security relies heavily on a Japan-Korea alliance. This will allow South Korea to prioritize more pressing economic and security threats from China and North Korea.

Japan and South Korea have two distinct explanations for why GSOMIA broke down. Japanese officials alleged that South Korean companies transported chemicals, imported from Japan, to North Korea. As a result, the Japanese government restricted the export of three chemicals to South Korea. The intent for the export regulations was clear: Tokyo officials have consistently requested that South Korea explain its demand for such large sums of those three chemicals, only to be ignored by South Korean importers who refused to hear their concerns. However, South Korean officials have maintained that the regulation of the three chemicals, vital ingredients

for companies like Samsung Electronics Co., was a direct retaliation for the 2018 Supreme Court ruling for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to pay reparations for its use of South Korean "comfort women" — who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army — as well as forced labor. Yet South Korea fails to acknowledge an earlier case for such reparations made in 1965 by former President Park Chung-hee, which saw Japan pay \$800 million USD in reparations to permanently settle the issue of war crimes during World War II.

and numerous apologies from the Japanese government. The Minjoo Party of Korea, the leftist party of Moon Jae-in, has asked for renegotiations and a "sincere apology," calling the recent compensation deal a "terrible agreement" due to the supposed lack of sincerity in Japan's apology and the sense of entitlement for more compensation. Following the series of controversies surrounding former Japanese war crimes, the chemical export regulation led to an unnecessary backlash by South Koreans,

identity trumps shared political ideology, and the history between the two countries has deterred numerous South Koreans from engaging in peace-building with the Japanese. Politicians fueled by such populist mentality have harnessed it in their campaigns at the expense of South Korean security concerns, as shown in the recent advent of a North Korean nuclear missile crisis. In a survey conducted by Asan Institute for Policy Studies, South Koreans viewed Kim Jong-un more favorably than Abe Shinzo. Furthermore, according to a Gallup poll by the Korean Research Center, soon after the meeting between Kim Jong-un and President Moon Jae-in, 78 percent of South Korean respondents stated that they "trusted" Kim Jong-un. South Korean disparities of trust between Japanese and North Koreans became more apparent as the general Korean population affirmed their support for the Inter-Korean Open Rail Project in December 2018 while opposing the plan to build the Japan-Korea Undersea Tunnel.



If there is one word that best describes Green Party successes, it would be "anomalous."



The compensation eventually fueled the South Korean economy to the point of transitioning its status to that of a developed country, giving rise to numerous Korean conglomerates (most notably Samsung) that were able to compete in foreign markets.

In recent years, however, protestors in South Korea have demanded further compensation, arguing that the prior reparations only reached the government of South Korea at the time as opposed to directly helping victims of the war. Even with compensation of the 1965 Treaty, a subsequent treaty was established by President Park Geun-hye allowing South Korea to receive \$10 million for comfort women survivors

who began to boycott Japanese products and travels. Amid popular South Korean resentment against Japanese practices, populist South Korean politicians, fueled by anti-Japanese mob mentality, have amassed support through their endeavor to "not back down" against Japan. The next stage of the conflict led to the Japanese removal of South Korea from their export whitelist of preferred trading partners, which inevitably led to Korea's subsequent removal of Japan from their own whitelist.

The rise of ethnic nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment has led many South Koreans towards the path of self-destruction. To many Koreans, shared ethnic and cultural

Italy's Immigration Balancing Act

Maeve Skelly



Can the new administration reverse Salvini's harsh stance on immigration?



August 8th, 2019, then current Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini of Italy effectively toppled his own government when he filed a 'no confidence' motion against Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. This motion ended the Lega Nord party's coalition with the Five Star Movement, and Salvini hoped Italy would resort to a snap election where he could become Prime Minister. But, the Five Star Movement formed a new governing coalition with the center-left Democratic Party and Conte remained PM. The new administration, composed of Prime Minister Conte and his ministers, is tasked with the delicate balancing act of aligning itself with the EU by softening the hardline anti-immigration policies introduced by Salvini while keeping Italian citizens satisfied, as those policies were what won Salvini widespread support. Given the difficult task at hand, the new government is likely to soften its anti-immigration rhetoric without changing the actual policies in place.

Hopes that the new coalition will try to revert to softer

immigration policies than Salvini's, are unlikely. Local policing efforts, backlash from Salvini, and existing public support for harsher immigration policies are just a few barriers the government will face. Salvini adopted a similar stance to American President Trump: "Italy first." This rhetoric, combined with public opinion on immigration, may actually bolster support for Salvini.

The reason for believing Italy may move toward a more humane immigration policy is primarily due to the striking differences between Salvini and Luciana Lamorgese, his successor as Minister of the Interior. Unlike Salvini, Lamorgese is an independent official who has repeatedly stated that she wants Italy's security laws to be more humane. She has a nuanced understanding of immigration policy, with over 30 years of experience in the Interior Ministry, and differs from Salvini in that she primarily works under the radar, without a social media presence, a space where Salvini and many other populists harness their base of support. Her appointment to the position of Deputy of the Interior

seems like an attempt to restore the immigration regulations to a position of stability, law, and tolerance.

Conte has repeatedly voiced his desire to adopt a "responsible, accurate and structured" approach to immigration. He wants to crack down on illegal migration and human smuggling while integrating asylum-seekers, who maintain a right to stay in Italy. While this evident change in rhetoric is not the only way Italy can alleviate harmful immigration policies, it does exhibit a shifting priority toward embracing migrants.

Reforming immigration, while evidently a priority for Conte, is not a simple task. One barrier that the new government will face in immigration reform is backlash from Salvini and his supporters, who have successfully infused anti-immigrant sentiment within his base and much of the general population. It is likely that Salvini will turn to social media and criticize Prime Minister Conte and his coalition for their lack of respect for law and order in immigration policy. This would play directly into the base of supporters he built over the course of his time in power. Salvini clashed with the EU on a multitude of immigration issues, especially regarding boats transporting migrants. Because he is no longer a leader in the government, he will continue to frame Conte's new coalition as one under Northern European influence in an attempt to fire up his base of populist supporters. In reality, some Northern European countries are willing to reform European asylum laws to try to relieve some pressure from Italy and ensure the new government is more EU centered than Salvini's.

Salvini's outward rants on social media should not be taken lightly by the EU and other supporters of humane migration policy, as the coalition must maintain the electorate's support while balancing new migration policy. According to Giovanni Orsina, a political scientist of Rome's Luiss

University, "Most Italians like the closing of the ports; so changing this policy in fact could be quite damaging to the reputation of this government." This analysis indicates Lamorgese does not have much room to maneuver when it comes to vessels heading for Italian ports. This is especially dangerous for the new government to continue in the majority, because approximately 35-40 percent of Italians still support staunch nationalists like Salvini. The new coalition could fall quickly, and Salvini's Lega party could return to power, a concerning possibility for Italians that support Conte's humane immigration policy reform.

Even with Salvini's administration out of government, refugees and immigrants in Italy are trapped in cycles of harassment. Migrants in Italy face police violence and xenophobia, mostly due to harmful anti-immigrant rhetoric circulating through the media, often endorsed by Salvini's government. That hateful speech enforces stereotypes upon which local police officers directly act, contributing to the high unlikelihood that Italy's new government is successful in changing its immigration policy. Not only is the fear instilled in migrant communities by local police officers unenforceable at a federal level, but it is rooted in racism, a sentiment which is near-impossible to combat through national policy efforts.

While Conte's government has expressed efforts to reform immigration, the actions of local police officers inhibit the national government of Italy from moving closer to a more humane immigration system. In order to ensure "migrant rights are human rights" in Europe, the Italian government must acknowledge the effects that local police enforcement has on immigrant communities. Without a change at this level of government, national immigration reform cannot and will not occur.

One for All, All for None

Jack Wroldsen

In October 2019, after President Donald Trump pulled a thousand military personnel out of Syria, many feared a security crisis loomed over the United States. Hundreds of Islamic State (IS) prisoners escaped detention facilities, but President Trump was confident that his move would not impact American security; when asked how the withdrawal would hurt the United States, he responded, "they're going to be escaping to Europe." Indeed, the European Union (EU) faces a new threat that its neighbor across the pond will not. ISIS fighters, fleeing Kurdish custody, will become threats elsewhere, with Europe as a primary target. With the continent experiencing continued effects of the refugee crisis which has also exacerbated terrorist activities, the need for unified European defense policies is more vital than ever.

European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen's announcement of a European defense branch, guided by the now-enacted Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) scheme, is an attempt for Europe to unify its defense strategy. However, her plan focuses on defense from threats external to the EU and does not focus on the more-prevalent danger: internal attack. Von der Leyen failed to highlight the necessity for defense against intra-EU threats which have plagued the continent for the past five years. One way to prevent future attacks is the creation of codified, centralized European intelligence sharing. Ultimately, to further European defense policies and thwart future attacks, von der Leyen's PESCO-backed defense branch must formulate an EU intelligence arm

which houses current organizations and streamlines collection and regulation.

In 2015, wide holes in the EU's counterterrorism net were revealed by the Paris and Brussels attacks. No comprehensive, shared list of suspected extremists existed, enabling the attackers to travel through irregular migration means into the EU via Greece. The attackers travelled in and out of the EU on multiple occasions, some being detained but then released, others never being questioned. While Belgian authorities knew one attacker was radicalized, French police released him after he was questioned. The problem even extends beyond religious, jihadist attacks. Europol's 2019 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report noted the existence of a cyclical terror threat: as jihadist attacks occur, far-right terrorist cells and attacks grow, which promulgates further jihadist attacks, and so on. The 2015 attacks reveal the importance of intelligence-sharing in the bloc; European citizens can freely cross border, but bloc-wide databases of information and suspects do not exist.

European states have since beefed up resources for their intelligence agencies and tightened legal codes on citizenship and jailing sentences, but the same structural problems plague the Union. There is no unified intelligence collector, and no way for intelligence to be properly disseminated. Part of that problem comes from the EU's patchwork solution to its intelligence community; more than seven separate organizations exist under the EU umbrella for intelligence-sharing purposes, including Europol, the Club of Berne, and the European Union Military Staff. Under these organizations,

the EU itself has no method of data collection, processing, and dissemination, and must rely on member nations to voluntarily give intelligence to the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre. Its contributions to bloc-wide security are thus limited, as the data and information it analyzes comes only from member nations who can choose what to give to the organization and what not. The database "TECS" helps member states log a perpetrator's basic characteristics, and the Schengen Information Systems II database tracks legal requests and suspects, but these databases are under the authority of two separate agencies and have two separate data criteria. Furthermore, Europol is unable to share intelligence outside EU borders, posing problems when terrorists enter and exit the EU. According to the Czech interior minister Milan Chovanec, until recently only



The European Union needs connected intelligence-sharing, but how?



five or six countries fully shared information to Europol. While some framework for intelligence sharing exists, the EU lacks authority to demand intelligence, and current mechanisms limit its ability to operate.

What Europe needs to properly mitigate future terror threats is a unified intelligence network underneath one agency. A supranational authority which exercises tasking, controlling, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence would produce better EU intelligence than the current system, where information must be cobbled together from various sources and with varying codes and regulations. Housing databases under one roof, for example, streamlines dissemination and regulates how and what kind of information is coded, providing more-comparable data for

member states and the EU overall. If the EU agency could mandate the collection of intelligence, asymmetric information would no longer impede EU-wide intelligence dissemination and would garner stronger, more accurate results.

Issues of trust impede the creation of this supranational EU agency – German ministers in 2017 claimed bilateral intelligence sharing was faster and enabled nations to trust who they share their intelligence with – but solutions to this problem already exist in the EU framework. In Europol, each member state is represented by a European liaison officer, who is required to share relevant intelligence on behalf of his or her state. While information-sharing usually occurs through TECS, an EU agency could utilize liaison officers as the primary movers of intelligence into databases. These officers, familiar

with the sources of their national intelligence and aware of their national concerns and interests in sovereignty, may redact information in extreme cases and ensure that the intelligence they provide is being used fairly and effectively.

As the EU faces the threat of IS fighters re-entering the continent, a danger reminiscent of the rising religious jihadist and far-right attacks from 2014, and a new Commission President announces interest in solidifying EU defense policy, the bloc must look to streamlining EU intelligence gathering and sharing. While the current system appeases individual member states' interests, it does little to truly protect the EU's collective security.

'Never Again' Again

Konrat Pekkip

If there is one country that people would assume not to repeat the mistakes of its past, it is Germany. The German approach to coming to terms with its atrocious past is widely regarded as one of brutal honesty, and one that would prevent a calamity like the Holocaust from ever happening again. Yet, despite the countless reassurances from the German state that #neveragain means never again, neo-Nazis made a full-blown comeback in 2019: In June, Walter Lübcke, a conservative politician who had previously called for a more tolerant stance towards refugees, was assassinated by a neo-Nazi in his own home. More recently, on Yom Kippur, another neo-Nazi attempted to commit mass-murder in a synagogue in Halle, killing two people and leaving the country in dismay. Unfortunately, the re-emergence of Nazism is not a new phenomenon, and the terrorist acts of 2019 should not have come as a surprise to anyone. While the Lübcke case brought the topic back into the spotlight, the truth is that Germany has had a neo-Nazi problem for decades, and the government's unwillingness to address it has severely amplified the gravity of this year's events.

Take, for instance, the horrific attacks of the "National Socialist Underground" (NSU), a terrorist group that murdered nine Turkish, Kurdish, and Greek immigrants to Germany over the course of a decade; these crimes were only brought to light in 2011, twelve years after the terrorists committed their first murder. In the media, this series of terrorist acts was ridiculed. By referring to the crimes as "Döner-Murders" — a term rooted in social othering that lumped together victims of diverse ethnic backgrounds — the media further marginalized the already distressed non-white community in Germany. Moreover, journalists continuously referred to the terrorist organization as a trio of murderers, even though more than 100 associates of the group, who supplied money, weapons and false identities, were identified as culpable in the aftermath.

While the media's flawed reporting on the NSU murders aggravated the

situation for the surviving families and immigrants in Germany more broadly, no major media organization actively assisted the terrorist group in evading justice, unlike some law enforcement agencies. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), which acts as the domestic intelligence agency of the German state, was well aware of the NSU's criminal activities. In recent years, the agency has been caught in a plethora of scandals, all of which pertain to officials harboring ideological sympathies for the Neo-Nazi movement. In some cases, agency officials were supposed

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Germany has had a neo-Nazi problem for decades, and the government's unwillingness to address it has severely amplified the gravity of this year's events

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to secretly infiltrate neo-Nazi networks and report on criminal activity from within. Instead, those officials turned against their own organization and supplied neo-Nazis with intelligence from the BfV. In a different case, a high-ranking official in the agency admitted to destroying files related to the NSU murders after the crimes were revealed in 2011. Lastly, in the case of Halil Yozgat, who was murdered in his own café in Kassel, a BfV agent witnessed the murder as a customer of the café but did not report it to the police or his own superiors in the BfV, covering up the identities of the NSU terrorists.

The BfV is not the only law enforcement authority with ties to the neo-Nazi scene. The German police in recent years has been involved in multiple affairs dealing with white supremacy in their

ranks. In one case, police officers in Frankfurt sent out a letter threatening to kill Seda Basay-Yildiz, a lawyer of Turkish descent who had previously represented one of the victims of the NSU. Calling her a "rotten Turkish sow," the police officers signed the letter with "NSU 2.0". In yet another case, police officers in Dessau are currently facing charges for covering up the murder of Oury Jalloh, a refugee who was burned to death under mysterious circumstances in police custody.

Not only are there countless, well-organized structures of neo-

the now-banned "Heimattreue Jugend" (HJ, not coincidentally the same acronym used to describe the Hitler Youth), a neo-Nazi youth organization, and had frequent appearances at neo-Nazi demonstrations across the continent. Considering the extremist activities of some party members as well as the right-wing radical rhetoric exhibited by many in the AfD, many democratic politicians condemn AfD figureheads as "spiritual arsonists" of the recent terror attacks haunting the country.

However, not all mainstream politicians are equally as direct in calling out the fascist AfD for what it is. Instead, high-ranking members of the center-right CDU and FDP oftentimes equate the right-wing extremist views of the AfD to those of the far-left Die Linke. In their eyes, all extremism is equally bad, which is why they refrain from differentiating between the well-established, democratic-socialist views of Die Linke and the radically anti-democratic views of the AfD. By equating the two, conservatives both legitimize the unconstitutional positions of the AfD and undermine the validity of a left-wing critique of the political center. In doing so, conservatives actively contribute to the AfD's electoral successes as they refuse to acknowledge the dangerous sentiments the party radiates.

Germany's neo-Nazi problem is like a festering wound, and it will not magically be cured unless its symptoms are treated. A look at the past shows that the government is capable of effectively cracking down on terrorists, as it did in the 1970s, when it swiftly shut down the left-wing extremist Red Army Faction. However, comprehensive counter-terrorist action is only possible if there is a strong political will behind it. Evidently, this is not the case, and it will not be possible until we dispel the notion that left-wing extremism is as dangerous and deadly as right-wing extremism. As long as the status quo of the discourse does not change, reactionary forces will always find a way to divert pressure from them onto those on the left.



The Russian State: A Hammer in Search of a Nail

Sumaya Tabbah

Crimean Tatars, an ethnic and religious minority in Crimea, are no strangers to state repression. Yet, the immediate wave of targeted persecution following the Russian annexation of Crimea has only increased in intensity five years later. The state accuses members of the community of being affiliated with Hizb ut-Tahrir—a group that promotes an Islamic caliphate but denounces violence as a means of achieving it—and uses anti-terrorism efforts as a pretext for arrest, a justification that echoes Russian reasoning for intervention in Syria. It is not unusual that a community indigenous to the Crimean peninsula resists Russian occupation of the territory or that the Russian state uses threats of terrorism as a pretext for this repression. This narrative, justifying intervention in Syria and domestic repression of minority communities, thinly veils increased power consolidation by the Russian state.

According to data by FreedomHouse, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that tracks and scales each states' political freedoms, levels of freedom in Russia peaked in 1999. Since then, democratic norms of freedom of expression, free and fair elections, limits on elected officials power, and protection of the rights of minorities, have steadily decreased. Russia's highest recorded score placed it in the "partly-free" category.

Over the past two decades freedoms have steadily decreased with a push to consolidate power by eliminating political opposition, targeting media, and increasing repression towards minority ethnic groups participating historically in anti-imperialist movements.

In the five years since the annexation of Crimea, the crackdown against the Tartar community has caused life for 250,000 Tatar Muslims to disintegrate. Beyond disappearances, torture, and arrests aimed at prominent members of the community, Tatar Muslims have been denied work, use of their native language, private publications, and cultural consistency in an effort to forcibly assimilate the population or force migration off the peninsula. The most common charge made against detainees is membership to Hizb ut-Tahrir. While involvement in this group is legal throughout Europe (excluding Germany) and Ukraine, it is illegal in Russia. As an occupying power, the Russian state disregards Ukrainian law used before the occupation and enforces federal law. The use of this ban to repress the Crimean Tatar community is a blatant violation of civil rights and an example of the state's use of democratic institutions, such as the criminal justice system, for political means.

Human Rights Watch (HRW), claims that while arrests are made under the pretext of terrorism, most people are targeted for their religious identification. Their most recent report regarding the issue states that,

"the evidence against the Crimean Tatars prosecuted is not that they engaged in, advocated, or aided and abetted acts of violence. Rather, the evidence...is primarily discussions during meetings, often in private apartments, on interpretations of the Quran or Russia's actions in Crimea, or possession of religious literature." These arrests violate procedural safeguards outlined in both Russian and Ukrainian law.

Beyond banning their use of language and membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir, Russian government forces carried out mop-up operations in which house-to-house searches ended in the indiscriminate arrest of military aged men. Reasons for these arrests are rarely stated, and with limited information regarding detainees, most are eventually labelled missing or dead. The human rights situation in Crimea continues to deteriorate as a direct result of the Russian Federation authorities violation of humanitarian law. That this is an unprecedented act of repression by the Russian state, meant to deny freedom of religion, speech, and expression, is undeniable— it is the pattern of rhetoric employed to justify these acts that points to power consolidation.

The portrayal of those who oppose Russian occupation as terrorists or national security threats fits the larger narrative curated by the Russian state to bolster political endeavors throughout the population at large. As one Russian official stated, "The increase in the number of extremist crimes can be explained by the behavior in leaders of...Crimean Tatars. These people express readiness to commit terrorist attacks and sabotage." Yet Islamist violence (in the broadest definition of the term) accounts for only 19 percent of all violence in the region and a mere 3 percent when the definition is narrowed. Academics have proved time and again that indiscriminate repression, when targeting Islamist violence, is ineffective in deterring extremism, as violent actors are not supported (financially or ideologically) by local populations, but rather by a larger international base. Both these facts are conveniently lost on Russian officials when determining action in the region. The state has successfully perpetuated the narrative that ethnic and religious minorities are responsible for the majority of violence and that they do not behave like rational actors, making wide-scale repression of the community justifiable.

The Russian state is deflecting responsibility and avoiding institutional change by predominating

the narrative blaming Islamist violence for both domestic problems and international conflict, as seen in Syria. Annexing Crimea and propping up Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria are both attempts to distract the domestic population from increased power consolidation. Beyond citing economic influence and political leverage in its intervention in Syria, the Russian state promotes its support of Assad's regime as a campaign to reduce potential security threats posed by terrorist organizations throughout the Middle East. The Russian State claims that left unchecked, Syrian opposition groups would infiltrate historically 'problematic' areas of Dagestan, Chechnya, Crimea and Ingushetia. This, it is argued, coupled with a growing extremist network, means that propping up Assad's regime prevents the export of terrorism to the Russian Federation.

In a speech made to the United Nations, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the state's support of Assad stating that, "Islamic State camps train militants from many countries, including the European countries...Russia is not an exception. We cannot allow these criminals who already tasted blood to return back home and continue their evil doings." This narrative's continuity between domestic repression and international intervention is no coincidence. To the international community it may be relatively easy to look past Russian 'anti-terror' rhetoric due to the country's human rights violations in Syria and Crimea— yet these brief examples are symptoms of a greater issue, consolidation of power.

Disproportionately reporting threats of extremism to domestic populations leads to concentrating power in the hands of authority figures deemed capable of preventing the threat. This is not a quick process, but one that occurs over decades ending in a few people controlling the government. Russia has effectively performed this consolidation with little response from the international community, mostly because this process is so gradual that each action alone does not warrant an international response. Now with the intention of the state undeniably being to restrict political freedom, it falls to the Russian population and international community to resist this consolidation of authority.

"The world has forgotten about Alan Kurdi too quickly," said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a speech before the United Nations General Assembly this past September. He said this and more all while holding the picture of the boy that so rocked the world just a few years prior. Yet, his words rang hollow as they were followed by a call for the establishment of a safe zone that, while seemingly well-intentioned, would not actually help little boys like Alan, but would instead continue to serve as a deterrent to asylum claims for refugees and force repatriation to a still insecure region of Syria.

Following the sudden withdrawal of one thousand U.S. troops from northern Syria in October of this year, Turkey began its third military incursion into the region. For Erdogan, this decision was not solely a mission to repel Kurdish forces. Yes, that was undoubtedly a large part stemming from years of armed conflict and dispute between the Turkish state and the Kurds. As, in Syria, the YPG (Kurdish People's Protection Units), is considered an extension of the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) which is designated as a terrorist group by Turkey, and a number of other countries. But, this was also a decision stemming from widespread domestic political pressure mounting within Turkey to 'resolve' the refugee crisis. After days of clashes with Kurdish forces, Turkey and Russia brokered a deal to establish Erdogan's proposed 'safe zone,' which would achieve both of his goals: repel Kurds, and create a space to which Turkey could forcibly repatriate Syrian refugees.

A 'safe zone' as defined by Human Rights Watch is an "area designated by agreement of parties to an armed conflict in which military forces will not deploy or carry out attacks." Such areas are technically different from 'no-fly-zones' and 'demilitarized zones' however they are often jointly employed.

Necessarily then, combatants must not be present within such an established area, meaning, the creation of a 'safe zone' in northern Syria grants latitude to Turkish forces to repel Kurdish forces, as evidenced by a statement from Erdogan that Turkish forces would "crush Kurdish militia fighters if they did not withdraw from the 'safe zone,'" which constitutes a 19 mile deep zone along the Turkish-Syrian border. This shifting of territory following the U.S. withdrawal and

abandonment of its Kurdish allies, and subsequent Turkish offensive has already, since October 9th, displaced over 200,000 civilians in the region, exacerbating the problem Turkey is claiming to address.

Still, proponents of the 'safe zone' in northern Syria continue to be vocal about its proposed value. If properly established and secured, safe zones serve to create a space within a conflict zone where civilians can seek shelter without having to leave and travel to another country seeking asylum. Echoing sentiments expressed in Erdogan's UNGA speech, routes to seek asylum outside of Syria are notoriously dangerous for refugees. The establishment of a safe zone



Safety First? How Erdogan's Proposed 'Safe-Zone' in Northern Syria is Anything But Safe.

B.A. Bacigal

within Syria where refugees would be able to go, would help them avoid the dangers of abuses by smugglers, or travel related death, like drowning, the cause of so much loss in the Mediterranean, and what claimed the life of Alan Kurdi.

But, what is deliberately understated by Erdogan, and all those support the 'safe zone', is that the success of a safe zone is wholly determinate upon the maintenance of the security of the established area. From Kibeho in Rwanda, to Mullaitivu in Sri Lanka to, Srebrenica in Bosnia, safe zones have failed remain 'safe' for long, and have more often than not ended in historic tragedy. If Erdogan is to pursue his stated goal of resettling two million refugees to this 'safe zone' he will almost indelibly be subjecting them to the very danger and violence that caused them to flee.

The very real threat in northern Syria is not a proposed resurgence of ISIS which has been touted by many as a fear, but the violence of Syrian government forces in Idlib. A city that is already overwhelmed by internally displaced people, and the last opposition-held territory in Syria, Idlib is an obvious target for the Assad regime. Under the guise of targeting terrorists, the Syrian government and its Russian backers have maintained a persistent violent campaign in the region that is not likely to cease was a 'safe zone' to be established. So, for how long is Erdogan willing to keep his 'safe zone' safe? Or after political will to keep pouring money, troops, and resources into northern Syria runs out, will Turkey pull out like the U.S.

did? A safe zone can only ever be a temporary solution, and when it comes to repatriation -- which should be the 'end' of refugeedom, this is ephemeral at best.

3.6 Million refugees live in Turkey, and despite being welcoming at first, with international financial support waning, it is no secret that Erdogan would like to lower this number. Reports have already come out from Amnesty International revealing that, under threat of violence or in exchange for necessary goods like food, water, and blankets, Syrian refugees in Turkey are being coerced into signing 'voluntary return' agreements. Turkish officials claim that to date 315,000 people have already left for Syria on a 'voluntary' basis, however Erdogan is looking to up that number nearly six times over in the next few years. As one of the report writers, Anna Shea,

says "Turkey deserves recognition for hosting more than 3.6 million women, men and children from Syria for more than eight years, but it cannot use this generosity as an excuse to flout international and domestic law by deporting people to an active conflict zone."

Erdogan's plan achieves a number of his goals, it repels Kurds from the Turkish-Syrian border, in essence, engineering the region to be majority Arab instead of Kurdish, and it creates a place to repatriate refugees, lifting the hosting burden from the Turkish state. However, serious problems arise due to the danger of destabilizing an already tenuously held region of Syria, a lack of infrastructure capable of

adequately hosting such numbers, and a lack of ability on behalf of Turkey to ensure security in the so-called 'safe zone' particularly for the long term. These too are just the risks assuming that Turkey is truly repatriating refugees voluntarily -- much more likely is a continuation of the practice of forced repatriation in violation of international law and to the detriment of the individuals sent there.

A 'safe zone' in northern Syria will not protect little boys like Alan Kurdi fleeing violence, it will subject them to further violence. Under the guise of assistance, Turkey's short-sighted solution is not and cannot be built to last.

Breaking the Ice: The Arctic Scramble

Alberto Della Torre

Discussions at the UN Climate Change Summit that convened this past September concerned the urgency of adapting to, combatting, and ultimately solving this worsening crisis that will, among many other impacts, decimate island nations, ruin agricultural economies, and transform the environment as the modern world knows it.

However, while climate change poses a major threat to many nations, a different attitude to climate change has been rather overlooked by Nordic nations as well as Russia, which could stand to benefit from the melting of Arctic sea ice. Russia has gotten a head start; unlike the Nordic nations, it has prepared for the Arctic sea ice's inevitable melting. At this point, given the inevitable prospect of continued shrinking of the Arctic landmass, it is in the best interest of the Nordic nations to start planning how they will manipulate the changing Arctic climate for their economic and political advantage.

It has been scientifically proven that melting in the Arctic region is due to man-made climate change, and there are no signs this melting will abate soon. The UN Environment Assembly published a report in early 2019 which concluded the Arctic has lost 40 percent of its ice since 1979. Much of this ice is within the territories of Norway, Greenland and Russia. Additionally, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report determined that the number of ice-free months will increase as the temperature continues to increase.

The contributors to much of this environmental degradation happen to be the nations with much to gain: Norway, Denmark, and Russia. For example, although Norway and its citizens champion its position as the 'second most eco-friendly' country in the world, it uses the area to extract petroleum and fish. The same applies to Denmark, as it gains from its Arctic constituent, Greenland, and Russia with petroleum and transportation connections there.

An estimated 22 percent of the world's total oil and gas lies beneath the ice in the Arctic, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Plus, there are copious amounts of uncovered minerals, potential fisheries, and space for new transportation routes to be made.

Russia recognizes the potential in the Arctic and is beginning to heighten its forces and surveillance in the area. Since about 2017, Russia has been building up its fleet of forty-plus nuclear-powered icebreakers to use for shipping in the Arctic Northern Sea Route, while Norway's fleet is composed of two icebreakers and Denmark's is nonexistent. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has also started reviving many of its Cold War-era military bases around Siberia, giving off rather provocative messages to the rest of the world about Putin's intentions in the region. This is certainly more explicit than any measures taken by the Nordic nations thus far.

A potential Russian takeover of the area looms as time progresses. Ignorance of Russian actions by

the Nordic countries, instead of mimicry of Russian proactivity, could be detrimental to their futures, as it would result in an intense loss of economic and political potential. Access to even more of these resources, which could only occur if the ice were to melt and make entry available, could transform the Nordic economies and increase their dominance in their respective economic specialties instead of letting Russia solely benefit from these resources. Norway could expand their shipping fleet, the fourth largest in the world, even more by establishing new shipping lanes through the Arctic, an idea that China has referred to as "a new silk road." Greenland would increase its value as a territory for sale, like American President Donald Trump suggested early this year, if it were to utilize its melted ice sheet and take advantage of the potential for fisheries in the region to increase their fish farming exports.

One complication is that the official distribution of this area is tenuous. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), nations can lay exclusive claim to waters up to 200 miles from their coastline, called Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), for economic purposes. They can also extend their claims, if their continental shelves stretch more than 200 miles into the Arctic Ocean, which these specific nations' do. However, this agreement has been contested in the area for years, because the Arctic nations have pursued overlapping claims relating to their EEZs that have yet to be determined. There have been numerous attempts by Arctic

nations, especially Norway and Russia, to agree on EEZs and their limits. For example, the Ilulissat Declaration was announced in 2008 by Arctic-bordering nations to uphold the idea of the Arctic as a peaceful zone without specific territories, but participants' commitment to this declaration has faded. Specific events, such as in 2007 when Russia placed their national flag in an area of the Arctic that Denmark claims is a part of Greenland, expose this lack of commitment.

Though there are many options that Norway and Denmark could choose from to stake their claims in the Arctic, composing an agreement like the 1959 Antarctic Treaty may be one of the most successful and fair methods. Effective since 1961, the Antarctic Treaty regulates international relations on Antarctica and ensures that it is used solely for international scientific interests, not military or political interests. Its goal of peace and stability on the continent has been upheld rather successfully since its signing. A similar treaty that encourages fair Arctic transportation flow and scientific endeavors, especially those relating to climate change in the Arctic, would definitely be successful in maintaining peace but also encouraging stability -- as long as it also caters to and solves the long-lasting question of each country's EEZ claims. If an agreement like this is not pursued soon, as climate change worsens daily and countries like Russia continue to infringe on the Arctic's materials, it may be too late for the Nordic countries to have a fair and beneficial claim in the area; the ice will already be broken.

Finland: The World's "Happiest" Country?

Megan Rossiter

For the past two years, Finland has held the title of "happiest country in the world," per the United Nations' World Happiness Report. The report, released every March, ranks the happiness of countries by measuring variables such as income levels, strength of social support programs, and life expectancy. Overall, however, the report emphasizes factors that contribute to comfortable lifestyles; it does not necessarily measure the emotional status of countries' citizens. Describing countries as "happy" based on these variables is misleading, especially in the case of Finland, a country which its own citizens consider to be melancholic in nature. Although the report may not measure the true "happiness" of countries, understanding why "happy" countries are ranked as they are allows us to examine life satisfaction and its influential factors.

Following the announcements in 2018 and 2019 that Finland was the happiest country in the world, news sources were quick to release articles admiring the lifestyles of Finns. Having been ranked as the happiest country in the world two times in a row, surely Finland had the secret to happiness! "Want to Be Happy? Try Moving to Finland" read one New York Times article. An article by Afar cited "Finland's friendly locals, thriving culture

and coffee scenes, and unfettered access to nature" as reasons for the happiness of Finns. Travel + Leisure's "Why Finland Is Consistently the Happiest Country on Earth" discussed the ranking of Finland, accompanied with a cheerful video of sunny, Finnish seascapes and smiling blondes. Altogether, most of the articles exploring Finland's status as the happiest country in the world displayed the country as a Nordic utopia.

However, by most standards, the culture of Finland is dark and melancholic. With a love for heavy metal (Finland has the most heavy metal bands per capita at 54 per every 100,000 residents) and sarcastic humor, Finns do not often come across as "happy" people. According to Anu Partanen, author of *The Nordic Theory of Everything: In Search of a Better Life*, Finns "are often pessimistic by nature and reserved about their emotions...this Finnish happiness we hear about is not about dancing or smiling or being outwardly happy." In fact, smiling is perceived as strange: the tagline of one Finnish joke is that if a stranger smiles at you, they are "either crazy, drunk, or an American." This dark nature of Finnish culture is complemented with its long and cold winters, during which one can expect only six hours of sunlight in the southernmost point of Finland.

In the northernmost point, the "polar night" occurs, during which there are 51 days of never-ending darkness.

Considering the long, harsh winters and the gloomy sentiment of Finns, why is Finland so "happy"? To better understand this, I spoke with Janni Kerkkänen of Espoo, the second-largest city of Finland. When I asked Janni if Finland is truly a "happy" country, she explained that most people in Finland were surprised by the study. She cited Finnish comedian Ismo Leikola, who joked that when the study was released, everyone in Finland thought to themselves "so am I the only one who is not happy?" How could these results be correct for a country whose citizens are so pessimistic and self-deprecating?

As Janni explained to me, Finns aren't necessarily "happy"; instead, they're able to be satisfied and secure with their life situations. In Janni's opinion, this is attributed to "the Finnish way of thinking," which emphasizes the attitude of "this isn't the worst, so I'll be okay." When asked how they are, it isn't uncommon for Finns to respond that they're "not bad" or that "things have been worse." Other, more brutally honest answers are not uncommon, either. Overall, there is a greater acceptance of acknowledging when bad things are happening and

understanding that things will not always work in your favor, which, according to Janni, is important for being happy.

Janni also cites the ability to disconnect from the workplace as another factor. When Finns are away from work, they are away from work. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum, the Finnish capital of Helsinki was listed as the best city for work-life balance, a key factor being its minimum of 30 days of vacation leave. Compared to Americans, there is less guilt associated with taking time off and much less time spent working. Through this disconnect, there is more leisure time, notably for outdoor activities. According to a 2012 study, the average Helsinki resident spends 15 percent of their total time outdoors. The average American, meanwhile, only spends 5-7 percent of their time outdoors.

Despite the influence of these factors on overall happiness, is it really fair to base "happiness" on the strength of social support programs and levels of income? According to Janni, the answer is 'yes': "I feel much safer to live in a country where if I get sick or fired, I won't have to sell everything I own to survive." As explained by Janni, those who need medical care are "more likely to seek support from social security than for donations on

GoFundMe," a phenomenon which has recently become prevalent in the U.S. as healthcare costs become increasingly unaffordable for many Americans. Unlike the U.S., Finland has a universal healthcare system and its funding comes from the taxes of its citizens. Although Janni states that the system may not be perfect, the tax system is progressive. Citing her father, Janni stated that at the end of the day, "he is indeed happy to give half of his paycheck away to ensure everyone else has a better opportunity to be happy in their lives—but satisfied will do!"

Although the United Nations' World Happiness Report may not measure the true "happiness" of a country, it does indicate life satisfaction. In the case of Finland, "happy" may not be the correct term to describe its citizens, yet one can argue that Finns are at least satisfied with their lives. Ultimately, understanding how and why certain countries have higher life satisfaction may indeed lead to greater happiness. While there is no "true" way to be happy, perhaps we could learn from the Finns on how to be more satisfied with our lives. After all, things could always be worse.

Second Arab Spring?

From Egypt to Lebanon to Iraq, uprisings have emerged across the Middle East in the past few months in what may appear to be a second Arab Spring. Protestors' demands, while all connected with a desire for human rights and improved livelihoods, are different from country to country depending on the contents of the government which they are revolting against. Understanding the diversity of political leadership in the Middle East provides insight into why certain nations are in the midst of revolution and others are silent.

Lebanon

Basil Alsubee

The current Lebanese political leadership adheres to the confessional system established with independence from the French mandate. Because the nation-state had historically been planned for Maronite Lebanese leadership by the French, the President must be a Maronite Christian; to appease other sects in Lebanon, the Prime Minister must be a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament must be a Shia Muslim. Due to the recent Civil War, demographic studies in Lebanon remain contentious, though many believe that Muslims far outnumber Maronite Christians in Lebanon at the moment with the mass migration of marginalized Palestinian and Syrian refugees into the nation-state.

Lebanon is currently experiencing a crisis in leadership: the usual confessional leaders have faced tremendous pressure from protestors angry at corruption, economic instability, and political incompetence. On October 29th, 2019, Sunni Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri announced his resignation. Current Speaker Nabih Bari and President Michel Aoun also face pressure to step down from a historic cross-sectarian crowd of protestors. There is no telling what the Lebanese political leadership might look like a month from now. If protestors have their way, a whole new set of faces might shake up the entrenched leadership of Lebanon.

Yemen

Tahani Almujaheed

Tensions in Yemen's political leadership have always existed, dating back to the Cold War, as well as Yemen's civil war in the 90s, which initially led to a unified Republic of Yemen. While there is an internationally recognized government within the South under the Saudi and U.S.-supported leadership of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthi movement, opposed the political corruption and economic instability of the then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh, taking complete control of North Yemen in 2014. For Yemenis, this introduced both regional and sectarian divisions throughout their homeland.

To make matters more complicated, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a UAE-backed separatist movement that aims for an independent South Yemen, has had continuous strife against the Hadi-run government as well, hoping to dominate the region. With many outside forces playing a role in the power dynamics within Yemen, the people are the most affected by the failing political structure. As of October 2019, there is a draft of a Saudi-brokered deal that would restructure the Hadi-led government by adhering to new political and economic agreements with STC, in hopes of ending the power struggle in South Yemen and uniting forces against a Houthi take-over.

Iraq

Amira Mandwee

Iraq's government has been through a slew of structural transitions in the past 40 years. Following its ousting of Saddam Hussein, the United States established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to oversee Iraq promptly after the occupation. In June of 2004, the CPA redirected sovereignty to the Interim Iraqi Government, which used the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) as its acting constitution until the drafting of the 2005 document that currently guides the country. The TAL decreed that Iraq practices a republican, federal government system with power shared among the central government, 18 governorates, and local and municipal governments alongside the recognition of Kurdistan's autonomy. Its structure consists of an executive branch (with a Presidency Council and Council of Ministers), a legislative branch (with a Council of Representatives), and an independent judicial branch (with a Higher Judicial Council and Federal Supreme Court, among other federal courts).

Though the constitution is meant to guarantee basic human rights, the Iraqi government is violating these terms by failing to provide basic necessities. The recent major protests that have broken out are largely due to citizens' lack of food and water, employment, sound infrastructure, and any hope for a government which provides for them. Until there is a solution to the state's corruption, as well as to the economic and social barriers preventing citizens from attaining quality education and employment, the Iraqi government and its constitution can be considered futile.

Turkey

Maya Zreik

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan approved a new system of government through a controversial 2017 referendum, which formally went into effect in the summer of 2018. The new system placed most of the state's power in the office of the executive—Erdogan himself—and heavily centralized what was previously a system with various checks and balances on presidential authority. The parliament's power has been thoroughly weakened, the office of the prime minister has been eliminated, and the president now serves as the heads of both the state and the government. Turkey has been plagued by economic difficulties in the past several years, and Erdogan's party has claimed that this new system will allow for stabilization of government and a better ability to address pressing matters such as economic instability.

The newly centralized system of government is the latest instance of Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism. Erdogan served as Turkish Prime Minister from 2003 to 2014, and then as president from 2014 to the present day. Under his leadership, Turkey has faced severe democratic backsliding, with a series of purges leading to the arrests of tens of thousands of journalists, activists, and professors suspected of criticizing the government.

Oman

Quentin Powers

Home to the world's third-longest serving leader and longest serving leader in the Arab world, Oman's political scene more closely resembles that of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, rather than Yemen, with whom Oman is usually mentioned in the same breath due to geographic proximity. Officially the Sultanate of Oman, the country is led by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, who took power from his father in a 1970 coup d'état. Qaboos strategically utilized the country's oil resources to establish new infrastructure and usher in higher levels of education. He also established an absolute monarchy—he currently holds the roles of prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, head of state, and commander-in-chief. While the government certainly functions, it is by no means a democracy in which the common man has input.

Such pure power has created a bottleneck at the top of the Omani state. Qaboos has a hand in everything; he has absolute control with almost no oversight. Oman does not allow for any political parties, and allegiance to the state is often seen as allegiance to the Sultan. The intense association of Qaboos and the government could create trouble for the next Sultan—Qaboos has no children and his successor is not readily apparent, though it is theorized that Qaboos has named him in secret. Even so, the next Sultan will have to fill the shoes of a man that has led the country for almost five decades and will have to navigate the course of an economy that is driven primarily by a resource that is rapidly depleting. While Oman remains relatively prosperous with absolute power in the hands of one man at the moment, his demise could seriously threaten the country's long-standing peace and progress.

Palestine

Ethan Concannon

Although operating under Israeli occupation, the Palestinians have still been able to achieve some level of self-governance and political diversity. Following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was created in 1994. The PNA government has three distinct branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. The legislative branch is made up of a 132 seat unicameral parliament with multiple parties and the executive branch is led by a directly-elected president. This office has been held unilaterally by Mahmoud Abbas since 2005, and prior to that, the post was held by Yasser Arafat.

From afar, the Palestinian Authority appears to be a functioning and democratic government, but unfortunately, the government fails to live up to its democratic mandate. Parliamentary elections have not been held since 2006 because of the disagreements between Fatah and Hamas, leaving the Palestinian people with a malfunctioning and unrepresentative legislation. Additionally, although there have been talks of having presidential elections, there have been no presidential elections since 2005 when Abbas took over, leaving the PNA looking more like a Fatah/Abbas-dominated institution rather than a legitimate government that has the mandate of the Palestinian people.

Libya

Maheem Syed

Since the 2011 removal of authoritarian leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, Libya has been in a constant state of turmoil between opposing political factions. This ongoing frustration has plunged Libya into a civil war. The public remains divided over what constitutes the country's accepted governing body.

The House of Representatives, elected in 2014, has the backing of the Libyan National Army and the powerful General Haftar. Meanwhile, the Government of National Accord is the internationally-recognized government of Libya. The divide between foreign relations and the army has caused numerous Middle Eastern countries to back one party over the other; both the UAE and Egypt have supported the National Army by launching airstrikes on opposing factions. Additionally, there is the General National Congress and many smaller, splintered rival groups each vying for Libya's land and oil.

Due to the lack of a widely accepted single governing body, different regions of Libya have been overtaken by fighting, and have no standard education, health, or legal system. This has created a power vacuum that has only increased the rise of smaller factions and the re-establishment of terrorist organizations, like Daesh, hoping to expand their territory and influence within Libya. Within the last few years alone, the in-fighting and added terrorist threat have displaced over 3,000 Libyans. Surrounding countries are either reaping the benefits of the war, or avoiding involvement with the refugee crisis at all. This political division prevents the formation and development of a stronger governing system after the Arab Spring in 2011. Since those first major protests, instead of seeing the change intended from al-Gaddafi's removal, Libya has been stuck in a cycle of military machismo that is unlikely to stop soon.

Transcending the Uprisings in Iraq, Lebanon, Algeria, Sudan, and Egypt: A Reawakening of the Arab Political Consciousness

Ayah Kutmah

The revolutions of 2011 represented the largest shake-up of the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the Arab world since the establishment of the modern Middle East. Assuming the moniker of the "Arab Spring" to reflect the parallels in democratization waves of Eastern Europe and Latin America, the revolutions displayed a similar domino effect, beginning in Tunisia followed by Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen. The uprisings, radical in their aim, targeted some of the most despotic and dictatorial regimes in the world. Beyond the individual revolutions, however, the Arab Spring was exceptional in creating a broader, transcendental awakening of the regional political consciousness. The collective generation and absorption of media allowed for the establishment of new norms that reflected these revolutionary themes. In turn, the rulers of these countries, fearing the potential of their own people to turn against them, clamped down in their own polities, consolidating power and further banning any opposition.

In a self-fulfilling prophecy, many of the leaders of the Arab world, both in countries that experienced uprisings and those that didn't, warned of the potential of ensuing chaos. Utilizing the age-old "strong man" fallacy that the West often used towards them, they argued that the Middle East required strong rulers to keep internal stability and order. The disintegration of revolutions into counter revolutions, insurgencies, and civil wars seemingly led their prophecies into fruition, and served as a backdrop for increased state repression. Beyond the regime-level, the chilling effect of the Arab Winter permeated individual and society-level discourse. The wars that compounded Syria, Libya, and Yemen, coupled with the failures of the revolutions in Egypt

and Bahrain, reinforced the narrative among Western and Middle Eastern commentators, politicians, as well as the societies themselves, that change was inconceivable and only brought with it war and destruction. These new norms served as a form of self-censorship for would-be dissidents, and if they didn't, the states' agents did not hesitate to remove them. The chilling effect turned the Arab Spring into an Arab Winter, a reinstating of a pre-Arab Spring status quo: strong man rulers, lack of political freedoms, corruption, and precarious (in)stability. The Arab Spring was dead, the regimes of the region effectively argued — pacifying their people, once again, by fear.

And yet, over seven years later, new anti-government protest movements arose in Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, and most recently, in Iraq and Lebanon. Yet, the coverage and analyses of these protests, both in the West and in the Arab world, have been short-sighted and inattentive, often examining movements in isolation to each other and in isolation to the time period they are situating themselves in. Rather than being viewed as intricately connected to the past revolutions of the Arab Spring, as a repudiation of the myth of the "death" of the Arab Spring and the need for dictatorial regimes, or as a potential springboard for a new political discourse on the Middle East, each is separated as a "unique" event, against a "rogue" system, or, more often, as due to "bread-and-butter" economic grievances.

Following this point of view, the Sudanese revolution was against a particularly rogue dictator, the Algerian revolution was against an aging president, the Jordanian protests were against an economic policy, the Egyptian protests were an abnormal

disruption in reaction to corruption, the Iraqi revolution is expected turmoil in a violence-stricken country, and the Lebanese revolution is in response to proposed WhatsApp taxes. Yet, of paramount importance and repudiation to this viewpoint is the circulation of the famous demand and slogan that defined the Arab Spring: "The people want the downfall of the regime." The phrase, originating in the 2011 Tunisian Revolution became a cornerstone demand in subsequent revolutions in the region, highlighting collective grievances against autocratic, abusive, and corrupt regimes. Even as Western and Arab news stations covered them as singular events against singular policies, the protest movements themselves highlighted the transcendental nature of their struggles by propagating artwork, chants, alliances, and rhetoric that linked their movements to the successes of each other and to the ideals of the Arab Spring. Beyond the citizens of these countries themselves, nationals of the surrounding Arab countries and the Arab diaspora have similarly coalesced around this narrative, allowing for a collective reawakening of the Arab political consciousness that had been quelled by the Arab Winter.

At the same time, these movements do not follow an exact pattern to form an "Arab Spring 2.0," as some have proposed. It is clear that the nature of these movements differ from the 2011 revolutions. While the revolutions of the Arab Spring targeted extremely abusive personalist dictatorships and were relatively coordinated in their movements and their close temporal proximity, the past and present movements in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Algeria, with the exception of Sudan and Egypt, targeted more hybrid regimes that aren't entirely

tied to one leader. Some ongoing revolutions, such as in Lebanon and Iraq, simultaneously transcend and target post-war sectarian divisions and political systems, opening themselves up for less centralized state violence and more violence by state or sect-allied paramilitaries and militias. In Jordan and in Egypt, protests were effectively co-opted and repressed by concessions and state terror. In Algeria and Sudan, successful revolutions have removed the heads of state, and continue to push for system-level change and transition.

Nonetheless, the root grievances that brought forth the Arab Spring, abusive political systems that breed state violence, corruption, sectarianism, and economic crises, continue to bring forth these more recent movements, and, if left unaddressed, will only produce more uprisings. The failure to see these movements in tandem with each other, and to instead reduce them to dissatisfaction with bread prices or new tax policies, dismisses the methods in which these movements have built off of each other in rhetoric, tactics, and demands. More consequentially, such analyses ignore the fracturing of the Arab Winter and the repressive spell brought on by the autocratic regimes of the region. The reawakening of the Arab political consciousness, and the onslaught of protests and revolutions it brings serves as a reminder of the precarious nature of "stability" in the Middle East, and the inability of the status quo to as a permanent pacification of indigenous calls for system-level change.



Vision 2030: A Crown Prince, YouTube, and Social Activism in Saudi Arabia

Basil Alsubee

On April 25th, 2016, young Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman announced the ambitious Saudi Vision 2030. Recognizing a historic dependency on oil wealth and foreign labor, Bin Salman launched this program to diversify and nationalize the Kingdom's economy. The systematic overhauls of Saudi society included full-scale growth of the entertainment industry, as well as lifting the controversial ban on women driving. Soon after, Bin Salman rose to prominence as a "young progressive," pushing Saudi Arabia forward and making it a more comfortable, sanitized ally to its historic Western partners. Yet, Saudi Arabia's biggest young progressives seem to be left behind in this so-called "progression": women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul and her ex-husband, YouTube celebrity Fahad Albutairi, remain brutally imprisoned for almost two years.

Fahad Albutairi and Loujain al-Hathloul's names had been near ubiquitous in Saudi

Arabia earlier in the decade. As a kid growing up in Jeddah, I vividly recall the uproar caused by a video uploaded to YouTube in 2013 titled "The drive of 26 October: Loujain al-Hathloul drives from Riyadh airport to her house with her father." However, al-Hathloul is perhaps more famous for driving from the UAE to Saudi Arabia in late 2014, getting arrested upon arrival for two months. The same year, she married Fahad Albutairi, the man responsible for inaugurating the stand-up comedy craze in Saudi Arabia earlier in the decade. In 2013, Fahad also had the most subscribed YouTube channel in the country, and became famously dubbed as "the Saudi Jerry Seinfeld" for his socially observational comedy skits. I was personally a huge fan of Fahad's growing up, even if I had failed to recognize how daring his comedy was at the time. Whether through illegal driving or a goofy YouTube show, Fahad and Loujain both pushed for social reform in Saudi Arabia, far before the supposed "Vision 2030" came into fruition.

As the decade drew on and Mohammad Bin Salman rose to power, Fahad and Loujain

seemed to have been skeptical of the promise of reform. In the last interview I have found of them together back in January 2016, the Economist asked Fahad and Loujain whether or not they see "hope" in the young figure of Mohammad Bin Salman rising to prominence and announcing major changes to Saudi society. Loujain takes a deep breath before answering: "I think he will bring a lot of change into the country as a young leader, but he needs to focus a little bit more on what the people want, instead of what he sees as potential in developed Saudi." Fahad chimes in on a more hopeful note, saying that eventually change in Saudi Arabia will happen, though he is unsure at what pace it will occur. Little did they both know that this interview would soon become a chilling glimpse into a future Saudi Arabia: a Saudi Arabia that would eventually crush two of its brightest stars.

In March 2018, Loujain and Fahad were both kidnapped and deported to Saudi Arabia from the UAE and Jordan, respectively. Human Rights Watch explains the imprisonment as caused by "anyone expressing skepticism about the crown prince's rights agenda," making the Economist interview all the more depressing. Later in 2018, rumors emerged that Fahad had been forced to divorce his wife by Saudi authorities. Loujain's Instagram and Twitter remain hauntingly available to the public. Meanwhile, Fahad's expansive social media accounts seem to have been entirely wiped off the Internet (his old show remains on YouTube, however.) The reports on Loujain have been bleak: she has faced a range of torture techniques including beating, electric shocks, waterboarding, and rape. Upon visiting her, Loujain's family claims to have seen her "thighs blackened by bruises" as she was "shaking uncontrollably, unable to hold her grip, to walk or sit normally." On Fahad, there is complete deafening silence—for all we know, he very well could be dead.

Today in 2019, Saudi

Arabia lives on in a strange paradox: to the satisfaction of its economic allies, it has carried out many of Fahad and Loujain's public demands for social change, yet Fahad and Loujain themselves remain shackled. Women are now allowed to drive and enlist in the Saudi army, new cinemas are littered throughout the nation, and concerts headlined by global superstars such as BTS, Enrique Iglesias, and Mariah Carey seem to be commonplace. Through embarking on "Vision 2030," Saudi Arabia has proven itself to its allies as an "advanced" and "modern" nation-state capable of embracing "progressive" Western pop culture. Even as it quietly and not-so-quietly represses dissenting figures such as religious television scholars, exiled journalists, and young YouTube stars, Saudi Arabia continues to receive exponentially rising foreign investments and arms sales for its brutal war in Yemen. No amount of press coverage and global criticism seems to diminish the returns of "Vision 2030"—at least, for the time being.

The story of Fahad and Loujain is but one visible, richly-documented story of repressed dissent in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Because of their Internet stardom, Fahad and Loujain's online content keeps their stories alive and well: depressingly prescient, oftentimes hilarious, and always creative. At the end of the day, Fahad and Loujain were young participants in the democratizing, freewheeling nature of the Internet. In the video of Loujain driving, her father claims "God willing, in ten years, we will be laughing at this video." It has been 6 years since then, and we are very far from laughing. Yet the videos themselves remain available online as alive, if crushing, reminders of two of the world's most important, creative young activists of our times—activists who remain abandoned to a torturous prison, as the world continues to funnel money into Saudi Arabia's hollow gloss.

Yes, They Still Exist, But Not For Long

Amira Mandwee

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Iraq's current political and social state is a product of the imperialist powers that occupy the territory under the guise of aid and guidance.
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The United Nations has marked 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages and August 9th as the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The Middle East is often thought of as a monolithic population largely by the West, and even by the people of the Middle East itself. However, its rich history and diverse culture consists not only of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, but of indigenous groups who have existed for thousands of years before the establishment of the Abrahamic faiths. The Sabean-Mandaeans are only one of these many groups. As one of the last remaining Gnostics, they are currently threatened by genocide and persecution.

Sabean-Mandaeans are an ethno-religious group originating from ancient Mesopotamia. The community comes from what is modern day Iraq and southwestern Iran, habituating along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They are generally a secluded people who prefer to live withdrawn within their own community. Historically, they have maintained their

existence in Islamic countries by gaining acknowledgement as "People of the Book." This title gives the group, alongside other recognized minorities, official recognition in Islam and grants them legal protection in the Iraqi constitution. However, such legal promises only operate de jure; the community struggles to openly practice their religion without the threat of harm.

The population of Sabaeen-Mandaeans in Iraq has greatly diminished over the past few decades, as actions from foreign and national governments continue to cultivate an environment in Iraq in which the community is unable to survive. Saddam Hussein's efforts to drain the southern marshes (where a majority of the group resided) in the 1990s resulted in the murder of a significant portion of the population and a mass exodus of the survivors. What used to be a population of 60,000-70,000 in Iraq is now estimated to be a mere 5,000. There are around 40,000 Mandaeans left in the world total, with over 80 percent of the members of the diaspora in Sweden, Australia, Canada, and

the United States.

Following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country's Mandaean community completely collapsed. The invasion planted the seeds for extremism to grow in Iraq, leading to a rise in Shi'a and Sunni Islamic militants who actively targeted non-Muslim minorities, including Sabaeen-Mandaeans. Hundreds of murders, kidnappings, and episodes of torture were justified by discourse accusing the group of impurity, witchcraft, and black magic. Sabaeen-Mandaean women were particularly targeted, because they do not wear head coverings. Members were also often victims of theft and murder, as this community is known for its trade in gold, silver, and jewelry. The dangerous livelihood that resulted from these frequent attacks left the group defenseless. Such helplessness is amplified by the fact that the Sabean-Mandaean religion prohibits members from forming a militant defense or from engaging in armed self-defense. Faced with the systematic pressure to convert, leave, or die, many Sabaeen-Mandaeans have chosen to leave the land in which their people have resided for thousands of years. The diaspora of this people is one of the greatest factors of their extinction. They are no longer able to retain their rituals or pass down their ancient language, history, or culture. Adding to the issue is the fact that it is impossible for someone to convert to Mandaeanism; members must be born into the religion. This makes the decrease in the group's population even more severe, for their birth rate is not high enough to compensate for every permanent loss.

Iraq's current political and social state is a product of the imperialist powers that occupy the territory under the guise of aid and guidance. As long as the country remains a battleground stuck in the middle of power-hungry actors, it will never catch its breath long enough to return to a state of stability and diversity. This current state of havoc is precisely what such imperialist powers want: a country where rampant extremism threatens the well-being of innocent civilians while its people are too divided or too frightened to combat such

threats. Imperialists are able to take advantage of the country through the intentional placement of corrupt officials who prioritize their own greedy agendas over the livelihood of their citizens. Sabean-Mandaeans are victims of these harmful efforts.

However, internal forces within Iraq are just as responsible for the current fate of this community. Responsible for the birth of civilization, Mesopotamia pioneered constitutions and law, science and math, and society as we know it. The loss of this Mesopotamian culture erases one of the greatest contributors to our planet and sets a precedent for other endangered indigenous groups in the region. This pattern is already apparent with the targeting of other indigenous minorities in Iraq, such as the Chaldeans and Assyrians. Further, the community has always struggled to maintain its presence against the aggressive push of Arabization in the Middle East. The noble push to unite the Middle Eastern region through one common identity simultaneously erases any pre-existing identities that seem incompatible, and, in the case of the Sabean-Mandaeans, forces upon them an identity and culture that was never theirs, but one instead that they had to adapt and assimilate to.

Their disappearance is a travesty for the country and for humankind. What is left for a group whose people are struggling to practice their language, pass on their customs, and share their stories? The current exodus is not only historic because it expedites their disappearance, but this is also the first time in the community's thousands of years of existence that they have emigrated from their land and experienced a diaspora. This disappearance is a product of many things: the inability to convert to the religion, their strict pacifistic practices, the oppression and genocide of the group, as well as the international imperialist agendas that keep Iraq in a state where it is unable to either heal from its wounds of war, or mitigate the extremist ideologies which prevent various groups from living in harmony.

Since the founding of Hamas in the late eighties, Saudi Arabia and Hamas have generally had cordial relations, with the Saudis allowing Hamas-related activities like fundraising to take place on Saudi soil. The relationship, however, has gone through some rough times. In the late 2000's, as Hamas started to become more aligned with Iran, the Saudis were unsurprisingly not supportive. During the Arab Spring, Hamas moved closer towards the Saudis again as they both supported the Syrian opposition. This alignment of positions did not last for long, though. In 2013 as Mohamed Morsi was overthrown, the Saudis threw their support behind the military leaders who staged the coup. Hamas predictably supported Morsi and condemned the coup. The new Egyptian government eventually began to put pressure on Gaza, which then led Hamas to not only resent the Egyptians but to also move closer to Iran, only worsening the relationship between the Saudis and Hamas.

More recently, the Saudis have begun to publicly display their dissatisfaction with Hamas. In May of this year, the Saudi newspaper Makkah published a list of 40 "terrorists," many of whom were affiliated with Hamas. The organization's original founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin; current leader, Ismail Haniyeh; and former leader, Khaled Meshal, were only a few of the names mentioned. That same month, Saudi journalists chose to take to Twitter and offer support for Israel in clashes between Israel and Hamas. By June, the Saudi authorities had already arrested over 60 people affiliated with the illicit organization. These few months seriously damaged the relationship between the Saudis and Hamas. These examples illustrate a long-term fallout between the Saudis and Hamas caused by the Saudis' growing relationships with the West and Israel and enmity towards Iran, which they value more than their relationship with Hamas.

It is interesting that a nation once so virulent in its attitude

towards Israel is now distancing itself from Israel's enemies and even supports the state itself. One important factor in this is the rise of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS). Since MBS's rise, he has accumulated a dangerous amount of power, showcased by actions such as arresting over 30 high ranking Saudis at the Ritz Carlton in Riyadh and attempting to appeal to the West. This appeal to the West has been driven by economic and military issues: the Saudis need to continue selling their oil on the global stage, and they also need weapons to help support their war in Yemen.

close to Trump and Kushner, MBS has chosen to distance himself from the Palestinian cause, a decision that has paid handsome dividends for Saudi Arabian weapons acquisitions. In 2017, the Saudis signed a \$350 billion dollar arms deal with the United States that has helped supply the Saudi military in their efforts in Yemen. For the Saudis, it appears to be far more crucial to gain the support of an American administration than it is to support Israel's enemy.

Hamas' connections to Iran provide the other motivating factor for the Saudi regime's shift against Hamas. Regardless

both diplomatically isolated the Iranians and negatively affected their economy. All of this has given Saudi Arabia the upper hand in the conflict between the two nations. The poor relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran has also pushed the Saudis more toward Israel, and therefore further away from Hamas. Having the same enemy has allowed the Saudis and Israelis to find common ground.

When analyzing all of these dynamics, it can be seen that a relationship with Hamas is simply not a priority for Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are



Upending Past Alliances: Saudi's Fraying Relationship with Hamas

Ethan Concannon

This attempt has resulted in a more pro-Israeli stance on the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. In 2018, MBS claimed that Israel had a right to land in Palestine, something most definitely not uttered by any Saudi politician before him. In appealing to the West and Israel, MBS has also gotten quite comfortable with US President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Kushner acts as a Senior Advisor to the President, a position in which he is responsible for attempting to negotiate a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Kushner and the Trump administration clearly have a pro-Israel bias, which is evident in decisions like moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. By getting

of Saudi sentiment towards Hamas and Israel, Iran is the primary enemy of the Saudis. The two are fighting a proxy war in Yemen that has unfortunately created the worst humanitarian crisis in our world today. And although the Saudis are not as invested in the civil war in Syria, they are worried about many of the pro-government militias, many of whom are supported by Hezbollah and Iran. Additionally, Trump's election in 2016 has allowed the Saudis to be even more hawkish against the Iranians. Trump has supplied the Saudis with weapons to continue the brutality in Yemen. He has also pulled the U.S. out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and used threatening rhetoric against the Iranians. These have

more concerned with their relationship with the West and their rivalry against the Iranians. These two concerns are interconnected to such a degree as to create a complex system where one change in one relationship can greatly affect the other relationships. As Hamas' position with Saudi Arabia becomes even more precarious, it is more likely that they will continue to turn to Iran for greater patronage, further isolating them from the Saudis and their Gulf allies. The crown prince has begun to reckon with the dilemma of balancing desires for Western investment and arms with past Saudi policies that supported Hamas.

The Meme Revolution? Maybe, But Be Careful.

Christina Cincilla

A young man poses for a photo with a medium-sized white poster in Beirut. On it is a commonly circulated image of social media influencer Kylie Jenner, captured mid-sentence sporting a rather dumbfounded expression. The text that surrounds the photo reads, "Kylie Jenner for PRESIDENCY!" A joke, of course. But the use of humor and artistic absurdism is not unique to this one poster. It's been a persisting visual theme of Lebanon's most attended and consequential protest since 2005.

What started as small scale demonstrations responding to a government proposal to tax phone calls six dollars a month on Facebook and the popular "WhatsApp" quickly transcended into a widespread show of longstanding dissatisfaction with Lebanon's political elite. Since October 17th, millions have taken to the streets, demanding large scale reforms and the ousting of the Prime Minister, who has since resigned. Many have been met with violence and resistance on the ground. Others are passive actors fueling the revolution through digital artworks and online posts.

This new wave of social media fueled protest method is not entirely distinct. We've seen the weaponization of Twitter and iconography in Tahrir Square in 2011, Gezi Park in 2013, and more. But, memes and cultural symbolism in Beirut is unique. It reflects the attitude of a country that sees itself as far more culturally and socially connected than its ineffective, corrupt, and old politicians think. It aims to fight absurdity, in this case economic and political, with more absurdity. This is not to say that the stakes are not high, but rather that the decades-long corruption and economic instability renders old protest methods outdated. Now, combatants in the anti-

government street war have new tools at their hands: memes, satire, and a more democratized social media. As one Lebanese protester himself remarked, "[W]e are here to change everything, and humor helps us do that."

Circulated throughout social media outlets, with tens of thousands of likes, are makeshift digital artworks by prominent Lebanese visual artists that showcase iconography from the protests. Rami Kanso, a Lebanese graphic designer living

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Decades-long corruption and economic instability renders old protest methods outdated. Now, combatants in the anti-government street war have new tools at their hands: memes, satire, and a more democratized social media.

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in London, was following the protests online when he saw video footage of an unarmed young woman, later identified as Malak Alaywe Herz, defending fellow protesters by kicking a minister's armed bodyguard. This singular moment became a visually identifiable symbol of the movement. Kanso later created a graphic image showcasing the kick, with a speech bubble filled with an Instagram "like button" icon above it. The work's relevance and wide-reaching circulation underscores both the pervasiveness of the social media arena in the fight, and the move to visually retell specific revolutionary events in aims of curating a traceable digital history. Some artists have even

pushed for the creation of a digital archive of all the online protest works, citing Lebanon's tendency to "not record history properly."

Other works that have been widely circulated come from Lebanese cartoonist Bernard Hage, who rendered a fake message thread from the "head of state," Saad Hariri, that was "left on read," the social media equivalent of conspicuously ignoring someone, echoing the protestors' early feelings that the ruling government had been wholly

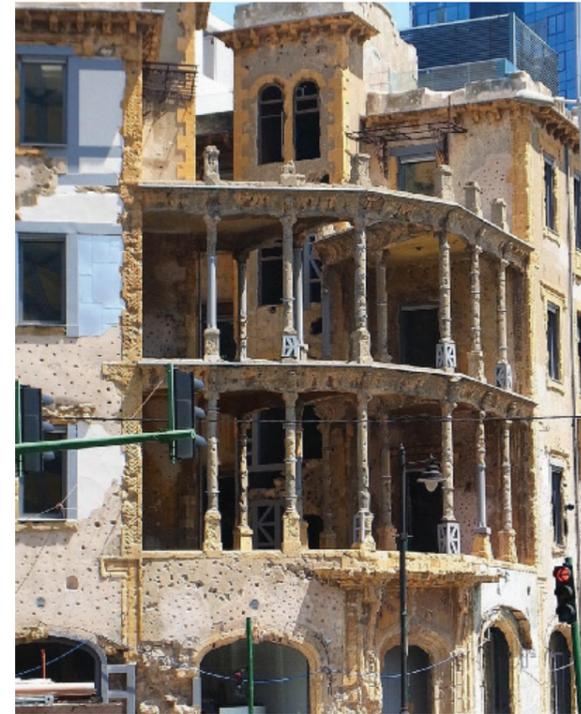
unresponsive to their demands. Hage's cartoons also highlight the move to bring the heads of state metaphorically down to the level of a text message thread. It is to supplant the formal notions of bureaucratic memorandums, and instead liken the most important figure in the government to the internet culture's dubbed "fuckboy." Protestors have made a clown of the clown, and it's working.

Other slogans commonly seen in the streets of Beirut and Tripoli showcase borrowed and modified examples of Twitter and meme-culture. This includes signs with statements like, "I'd rather be depressed but with fundamental human rights," or

"take my virginity not my future." On one hand, this can read as evidence that the movement has been coopted into a whimsical resistance by the youth, but this is not the case. All generations, political affiliations, and religious groups are deeply involved in this protest. While much of the visual culture of the on-the-ground and digital action borrows from largely youth driven meme culture, the discussion should not end there. This move to meme and satirize is a direct reflection of the absurdity of the persisting economic and political situation in the country. It is not to make light of a deeply relevant and resonant question, for which people are risking their lives, but rather to intensify and recontextualize it.

The problem arises when media outlets characterize the protests as leisure, when Layelle Saad of Gulf News remarks that "it would be hard not to want to join in this fun protest." To discuss the move to meme and make humorous is not to call the protests "fun." Instead, it is to comment on a timely shift in governmental critique and direct action. Saad's "fun" discounts the thousands pelleted with tear gas by Lebanese security forces, the millions who have been subjected to subpar living conditions and economic prospects due to the government's ineffectiveness.

And along with discussion about the move to meme, onlookers must remember what those millions gathered around the clock in city squares are there for. The Kylie Jenner poster is funny, satirical, memorable—and makes light a dire truth about corrupt politicians. But it also reminds us that those on the ground think almost anything, even rule-by-make-up-mogul, would be better than the here and now.



The Ghost of Lebanon's Civil War:

Remembering, 30 Years Later

Maya Zreik

The Lebanese Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 1990, has become known as one of the deadliest conflicts of the late 20th century. While it concluded almost three decades ago, Lebanon still suffers from its effects politically and psychologically. Lebanon is a multi-sectarian and multiethnic nation state, officially recognizing eighteen religious communities. A key element of the war's difficult aftermath has been its nature as a primarily sectarian conflict which pitted numerous groups of Lebanese citizens against each other. This landscape, in which multiple sectarian militias each fought to take hold of the nation, is in part what allowed the war to continue for fifteen years.

The civil war finally ended in 1990 with the signing of the Ta'if Agreement. At this point, trust within the nation had been fractured—this

was a war in which loyalty to sect was placed above that of nation. The transitional government's immediate concern was to reunite Lebanon into a cohesive state. To achieve this goal and prevent a cycle of revenge killings for atrocities committed during the war, the signatories of the Ta'if Agreement decided to pursue a policy of state-sponsored amnesia, or what they referred to as *la ghalib, la maghlub* (no victor, no vanquished). Under this policy, a blanket pardon was placed on all actors involved in the civil war, and all crimes committed during the conflict went unpunished. In this way, they avoided placing responsibility for crimes committed during the war on any particular person or sect. It also allowed militia heads to move directly from the street to state institutions. Some of them, such as Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri and party leaders Walid Jumblatt and Samir Geagea, remain in government today. Consequently, crimes of the war, such as murders and kidnappings, were unsolved and unpunished. Today, almost

thirty years later, this policy has continued to affect the ways that Lebanese remember and interact with the memory of the civil war. The government may have forgotten, but the people have not.

Discussion of the civil war in public settings is considered almost taboo. It is not taught in schools or discussed in detail in academia, media, or politics. As a result, narratives of the war are fractured, and each individual knows only what has been passed down through their community or family. This is primarily a result of state-sponsored amnesia, which disengages from the war completely both in speech and policy. Conspicuously absent from the aftermath of the war were any truth and reconciliation efforts, reparations for victims, or attempts to recover those who were disappeared and kidnapped, many of whom remain missing today. The lack of governmental response to the war has had the ironic effect of allowing sectarian tensions to fester; in the absence of an official narrative, each side may continue to blame the others. Additionally, the lack of reconciliation and state recognition of human rights violations have allowed trauma from the war to carry on to the present day. This becomes especially apparent in the cases of families who are still searching for their kidnapped loved ones, many of whom have formed committees which are still active to this day.

An additional aspect of the war's salience in the present day is its perceived unfinished nature. Sectarian tensions—the main driving force behind the war—continue to simmer in Lebanese society, with occasional spats of conflict in the decades since the war's end. Many within society perceive this violence as being a direct continuation of the war. In the absence of government commemoration or reconciliation efforts, there is a perception that the factors which began the conflict were never really resolved.

Nowhere is that illusion more apparent than in the governmental decision to hide the ruins of the war by building on top of them. Immediately after the war, billionaire and future Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri began a reconstruction project to rebuild the parts of Beirut which had been destroyed. Rather than simply repairing that which was already there, Hariri's vision involved creating a completely new

city on top of downtown Beirut. This project quite literally hid the destruction of the civil war under a veneer of capitalist aesthetic. The new downtown Beirut consists of a bustling shopping center and outdoor mall featuring a myriad of designer brands and overpriced restaurants. Hariri's reconstruction effort—quite like the Ta'if Agreement—intended to cover the effects of the civil war by forcefully and quickly modernizing Lebanon. When observing the new neighborhoods of downtown Beirut, it can appear as if the fifteen years of the civil war were never lost.

In recent years, citizens themselves have been taking up movements to address the legacy of the war, and these projects have been increasingly gaining momentum. In particular, Lebanese artists, both in Lebanon and in the diaspora, have been producing works aimed at addressing their family's personal history with the war. Journalists, writers, and activists have joined the movement as well, with many articulating their hope that breaking public silence around the war will lead to reconciliation and prevent such conflicts from occurring again in the future. In the past few years alone, artists have opened exhibits dealing with trauma, storytelling events have recreated events from the war, and activists have opened Beirut's first civil war museum. The museum, called Beit Beirut (House of Beirut), is a former apartment complex built in the 1930s under French colonial rule, which was taken over during the civil war to be used as a sniper's den.

Today, the house has been converted into a museum in memory of the war and was recently bought by the municipal government. Its exterior, riddled with bullet holes, has been left unrepaired to serve as a reminder. In a sense, Beit Beirut serves as a crossroads between colonial rule, the civil war, and today's post-war remembrance efforts. Projects of such a nature have raised awareness of the war's lasting effects in the present day and contributed greatly to lessening the social stigma against its discussion in public. As they gain momentum, the public discourse surrounding the Lebanese Civil War may finally address its memory on a nationwide scale.

The Hypocrisy of the Moroccan Theory of Free Speech

Maheem Syed

In theory, Law 88.13 of The Press and Publications Code of Morocco eliminates prison sentences for nonviolent speech offenses. According to this law, Moroccan journalists have the freedom to express their opinions of the government, the King, or their community. In theory, journalist Hajar Raissouni could not have been arrested for her political views and criticisms of the monarchy.

And she was not.

Instead, on August 31st, Raissouni was arrested for participating in extramarital sex and performing an illegal abortion—both practices which are punishable by an extended prison sentence. Her arrest caused an immediate national and international outcry, with hundreds of journalists and women protesting outside Rabat, Morocco's capital. Protests heightened to a frenzy, when Raissouni was forced to conduct a gynecological exam against her will, threatening her safety and her personal rights. With all of this mounting pressure, and talk on the government's restrictive policies regarding women, King Mohammed VI was forced to make a very public concession to preserve his carefully cultivated image. Raissouni, her fiancé, and her medical team were released from prison on October 16th.

To the world, this was seen as a success. Here, a legally conservative country from the Middle East—a region traditionally seen by the West as “backwards”—was willing to publicly advocate for a woman's right to an abortion, a practice widely contested in even the “progressive” United States. Following the Arab Spring, and with the recent crackdown on protests in other Middle Eastern countries, King Mohammed VI appeared to the world a beacon of hope; in his

official statement regarding the release, he painted himself as a sovereign “concerned for preserving the future of the two fiancés.” In theory, the Moroccan government was listening and reacting to the public's desires.

Nevertheless, the reality behind Raissouni's arrest shatters the image King Mohammed VI has purposefully presented to the international community. Though her release is a very progressive step toward transparency between the people and the public, and should be seen as a positive jump forward, the justification behind her arrest showcases a frightening pattern for Morocco's free speech liberties.

Since the Arab Spring protests in 2011, King Mohammed VI and his government have taken great care to exhibit themselves as level headed leaders, willing to usher the Middle East into a more contemporary era. The passage of the 2016 Press and Publication Code only reinforces the decisive changes the Moroccan government is making in its relationship with the public. Internationally, Morocco propagated its reputation of advancement by listening to its public. In reality, however, this supposed progress is merely a veneer behind which the Moroccan government uses other means to silence its opposition. They may not be permitted to arrest Raissouni for her critiques about the government directly, but there is no law stopping them from arresting her due to a multitude of other reasons.

And this is not an isolated incident. In fact, Raissouni is the 11th journalist imprisoned in Morocco since 2011, more than twice as many arrested as the previous decade entirely. It is interesting that this number more than doubled after 2011, when Morocco had allegedly begun changing their policy regarding freedom of expression.

Now, instead of directly arresting

journalists for their critiques, Moroccan authorities have begun manipulating loopholes and excuses within their more stringent penal code to remove threats to their international reputation. He promised he would not, but King Mohammed VI continues to silence journalists that aim to shed light on the Moroccan government's oversteps.

Taoufik Bouachrine, editor-in-chief of al-Jarida al-Oukhra—a news site commonly reproving of the King—is currently serving a 12-year sentence for human trafficking and sexual assault, despite there being limited connection to him directly. His trial was labeled “unfair” by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, yet he still remains behind bars.

Hicham Mansouri is another

up to government intervention in a humiliating form.

The hypocrisy of the Moroccan government and the King infiltrates journalists' faux freedom of expression. Under the pretense of progress, the government discredits journalists and their investigations, knowing that the King is more likely to be believed over journalists imprisoned for terrorism and adultery. This lack of expression not only limits the voice journalists provide to the public, but lessens the impact of the information they attempt to spread to the world. This creates a ripple effect, resulting in the government using a lack of women's rights, a lack of rights for people with disabilities, and a lack of representation of different religions to further enforce a lack of free speech.

“

The reality behind Raissouni's arrest shatters the image King Mohammed VI has purposefully presented to the international community.

”

journalist who was convicted of adultery in 2015, and was imprisoned for 10 months. Ali Anouzla has been awaiting trial for over six years on charges of terrorism, and now Hajar Raissouni's name has been added to the list. All of these journalists dared to comment on the King's reaction to protests in Morocco, deaths of laborers, and the lack of rights for people with disabilities.

In a letter Raissouni sent from prison, though she was arrested on the basis of her interpersonal affairs, authorities questioned her specifically on her work as a journalist, and her impression of the King and his government. In Morocco, there are three strains journalists are expected not to target: the King, Islam, and Morocco's claim to the Western Sahara. By targeting any of these three strains, in the government's eyes, Raissouni inherently opened herself

In theory, Hajar Raissouni was not arrested for her political views and writings. In theory, she should not have been arrested for rights over her own body. But the Moroccan government used these theories as justification to exercise frightening authority. By disguising this policing of speech under the cover of other laws, the King is able to extend his reach far beyond what the people and the international community are led to believe. This unrestricted power is a reflection of Morocco's tumultuous past in a time the world believes Morocco to be moving forward.



Murals and Museums: Transforming the Yemeni Narrative

Tahani Almujaheed

On a wall in the streets of London, a man is chained to a tree trunk by a dog while another man watches. Titled “Dirty Legacy,” this image depicts the international community's neglect of the suffering of Yemenis amidst civil war, death, famine, and destruction.

At the peak of political instability, the Saudi-led coalition has perpetuated the conflict in Yemen has displaced millions of Yemenis all over the world and within their country. Millions have lost their lives due to government corruption, civil war, and international neglect.

In response to the propaganda-filled Yemeni media, “one-voice-one color” politics, failed Western media coverage, and reductionist UN statistics, Yemeni art is becoming overtly political. It places Yemenis at the forefront of their own narrative as the conflict continuously shifts while North and South battle for political success. Wounded by the state of their country and their people, the immediate concern is survival. Feeling chained by their circumstances and ignored, Yemenis can no longer allow themselves to be silenced.

The street art phenomenon initially began around 2012, when artist Murad Subay used art to express his political and social views while engaging the broader community. Unlike traditional artists, Subay engages everyday Yemenis about their concerns, and asks them to join him in painting. He sees art as a collaborative effort and never fails to unify Yemenis in the area where he chooses to paint his murals. Subay's approach to art later gained attention through social media. Because people were intrigued by Subay's technique, style, and

endearing approach, his work spread on Instagram and Facebook, which was later covered by numerous news outlets, and more importantly, caught the attention of other people across the world. The purpose of his most recent project, “Ruins,” was to propagate the Yemeni narrative; in places where war had destroyed an area, Subay and other Yemenis would conceal what's left with murals of their own experiences as an ode to those suffering and lost. In this way, Yemenis are able to stand with their people in promotion of peace in an attempt to uplift their voices. Subay's collaborative and participatory approach makes each campaign a thought-provoking, grittily nerveing, haunting, and honest shared experience.

Since 2015, Subay has initiated “Open Day of Art”, in English: “Open Day of Art”, where people join together to create art that promotes themes of peace. In fact, Open Day of Art has been carried out all around the world, not only in cities across Yemen, but also in cities in Madagascar, India, France, the UK, the US, and more. All of the participants' works are listed under each of his campaigns, which are easily accessible as Subay keeps precise documentation through his website. It is a beautiful sight to see the global community participate, showing how art connects different communities. Even children are part of the conversation, painting rainbows and peace signs, clouds and birds. Through the hashtags #open_day_of_art, as well as its Arabic counterpart, Subay is not only reaching the Yemeni community but a larger international community who can participate in this day of creating art, all approaching the artwork with their unique knowledge and background.

The power of Subay's initiative

transcends borders; the fight for peace, tolerance, and coexistence all become shared values through the exchange of political and social experiences. It is through this mutual recognition of other communities that Yemenis are better able to understand themselves and those around them, other affected communities, and the changing landscapes and lives of their country and people.

Subay's other campaign, “12 Hours,” emphasizes twelve of what Yemenis believe are dire political and social issues within the country, including civil wars, poverty, and treason. Written in Arabic and/or English, the walls read phrases like “I want to live in peace,” and “why did they kill my family?” A child soldier is walking into his grave. A soldier holds a red balloon for child recruitment. U.S. drones are contrasted with an image of a dove. A man has a bullseye on his back: “Civil war is suicide.” A mother mourns her son: “Oh Mother, I am dying of hunger.” Such campaigns allow us to see the extent of a crisis through the eyes of those who are affected the most by spreading the stories they want to be heard.

This tradition of art extends far beyond the street context: it has been pushed into exhibits in museums all around the diaspora. In the United States, the “On Echoes of Invisible Hearts: Narratives of Yemeni Displacement” exhibit utilizes photography — images of fear, hope, and loss among the people. In Tehran, a cartoon series titled “Yemeni Resistance” features the awareness of Saudi involvement in the conflict and the perpetuated media narratives. In England, a sculpture of a skeletal body eats its own hand, while another is severed to the bone, displayed in the Imperial

War Museum. These images and stories cannot be erased. Rather, they curate and weave together the Yemeni experience and voice across borders, defying the standard media account and reaching an international community.

From digital archives to film to cartoon exhibits, there is a story to be told, and Yemenis are finally the ones telling it. Rather than consuming the media propaganda, Yemenis want to highlight their voices and show the world the truth behind these misconstrued media stories. More importantly, it is a means of coping with the loss of a homeland and promoting peace within the region, while continuously striving for survival. The art scene in Yemen never really disappeared; in fact, it seems that a loss of art would mean a loss of culture and identity. With a changing landscape crushed by war, the spirits of the Yemeni people are very much alive. In such art in Yemen and around the world, the international community have access to the changing narrative, one which Yemenis are writing themselves.

Art does not “end” war. However, as Subay himself says, “Yemen needs art. It helps us ease the agony of war.” Art is a means of healing, coping, and understanding, crossing borders and channeling conversation. Yemenis need to heal, and people should be talking about Yemen; it's starting here and now — the writing, or painting, is on the wall.

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