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LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The past year has seen a marked backlash against globalism. Significant anti-globalization movements that have been growing internationally finally reached a boiling point, resulting in major political shifts across the globe. As countries turn inward and the cries for self-protection and nationalism grow louder, we cannot help but wonder: Are we failing to move forward or is globalization failing us?

In “Africa, Accountability and the ICC,” Jake Lockledge discusses Burundi, Kenya, and South Africa’s moves to disassociate from the International Criminal Court in an attempt to protect their national sovereignty. In the face of this increased nationalism, Lockledge argues that the true motivation is leaders’ desire to escape prosecution for their own crimes.

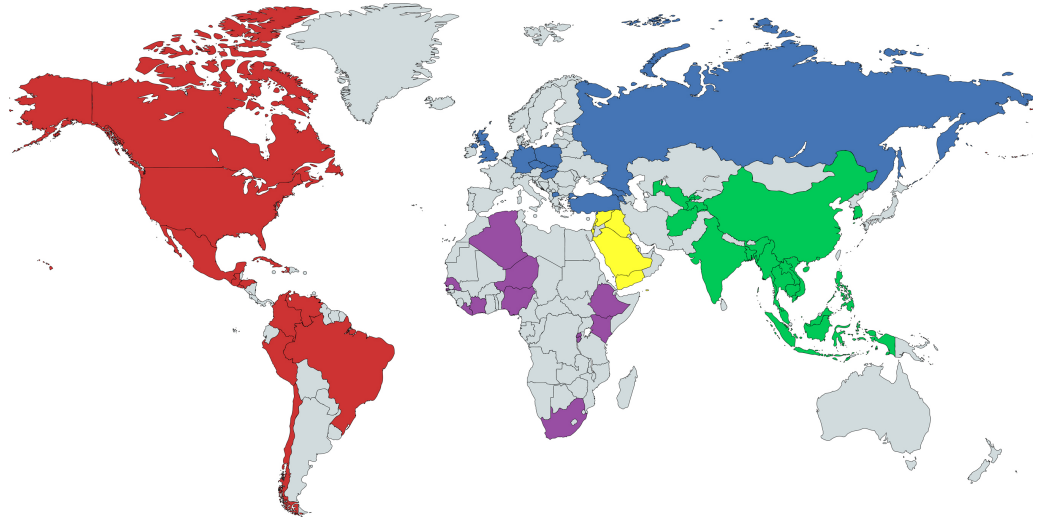
Maria Fabrizio argues that the Trans-Pacific Partnership will have negative consequences for public health in “The True Trade.” Fabrizio calls for caution in accepting the deal, which she states only advances economic and security concerns and will harm the health of the majority of Mexicans, Peruvians, and Chileans, urging the Latin American countries to protect the basic health of their people rather than strive for abstract international cooperation.

Casey Dwyer points out the positives of an isolationist United States in his piece “Light at the End of the Tunnel,” where he highlights how China benefits from US withdrawal from the South China Sea. Dwyer notes that non-interventionism on the part of the US, though economically painful for China, may be an asset in the long run.

In “No Brainer,” Jordan Sandman pushes back on countries’ turn inward by expounding on the economic benefits of free trade agreements, namely the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Sandman discusses how lack of understanding of economic mechanisms is what drives resistance to international cooperation on trade, and urges politicians in both the EU and US to improve their communication of globalization’s benefits to ensure the Partnership is passed.

Jillian Smith warns against animosity towards other countries in her piece “9/11 Bill Will Have Far-Reaching Consequences,” where she argues that US belligerence towards Saudi Arabia will break important norms in international law. Smith contends that cross-country cooperation and openness outweigh the emotional closure of suits against the Saudi government, and thus we should go against the tide of self-protectionism.

Boiling Point illuminates the complexity of today’s increasingly flat world, both in its effects and our reactions to it. In light of the upheavals of the past year, it remains to be seen whether we’ve embraced globalization with too-open arms, or if the latent anger and subsequent turn toward nationalism is unfounded.



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Africa, Accountability, and the ICC

- Jake Lockledge

Within this past year, the governments of Burundi, Kenya, and South Africa have all moved to separate from the International Criminal Court. Burundi's Vice-President Gaston Sindimwo commented on the situation stating, "we found that it was necessary to withdraw from [the ICC] so we can really be free." His sentiment has been shared amongst those governments who believe the ICC violates their right to govern independent of international involvement. However, their plea for international recognition of their nations' rights to sovereignty could more aptly be characterized as a desperate attempt for impunity. In fact, both Kenya and Burundi house leaders who have been under investigation for human rights violations and stand to benefit from a swift departure from the ICC. South Africa, in comparison, claims the Rome Statute of 2002 hinders their ability to grant diplomatic immunity under international and domestic law. Given these states' justification for their actions, the international community and citizens of each country ought to see past this facade and pressure leaders to honor their commitment to justice by remaining party to the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court.

Ratified in 2002, the Rome Statute outlines the mandate and jurisdictional components of the International Criminal Court. It gives the court the right to try individuals for egregious crimes like genocide, forced disappearances, torture, and rape. Since its inception, there have been 124 parties to the Statute, though several African leaders have expressed concern regarding the court's inclination towards prosecuting African individuals. Of the ten cases investigated by the ICC, only one has not come from Africa. South Africa's argument consequently revolves around the court's record and their government's ability to grant immunity to high-level African officials. Their Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act of 2001 grants the country the authority to refrain from arresting political leaders for their actions while in office, so long as it does not interfere with a previously agreed upon international convention. Being a party to the Rome Statute, therefore, prevents them from their domestic obligation to protect African leaders from prosecution. Their decision to withdraw could arguably be a response to criticisms

“If citizens of these African nations want to see their countries develop courts capable of ending impunity and combatting political corruption, they should petition their governments to remain party to the ICC.”

from 2015, when they ignored the ICC's request to arrest Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for his actions in Sudan.

Diplomatic immunity, rather than a necessary tool for democracy or state building, is really a tool for perpetuating political corruption and centralized power. The legal standard grants protection to leaders because they were acting within their state's power and the state would otherwise struggle without their leadership. For nations looking to negotiate with potential ICC suspects, as South Africa was with Omar al-Bashir, diplomatic immunity serves as a strong bargaining chip and is even necessary to maintain relations with other states in the region. If Africa wants to see perpetrators and instigators of gruesome crimes brought to justice, then the African community cannot allow this practice to persist. Using immunity as a political tool does not discourage politicians from ending their reign and curbing crime, it only bolsters states governed by those willing to sacrifice their citizens' rights to further their political agendas. If South Africa had really been concerned with the ICC hindering diplomatic immunity, they would not have ratified the Rome Statute in 2002, a year after they passed their Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act of 2001. It is in their best interest to encourage respect for the jurisdiction of the ICC, which already respects state sovereignty, and hold their governments accountable for their actions by the international legal standards.

The International Criminal Court is not a neo-colonialist entity pressuring the world to accept Western ideas, as some in the African Union have suggested. In fact, of the nine African cases brought before the court, five were self-referred, meaning the governments of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and Mali all supported the actions of the ICC. The cases in Kenya with Kenyatta and with South Africa's

negotiation partner Omar al-Bashir commenced following prosecutor initiatives. Prosecutor initiative allows for the court to investigate a case if they believe the country will not conduct a proper one of their own. Kenyatta did not want to leave office, so he would obviously not refer himself to the ICC under suspicion of post-election oppression, and South Africa would not arrest a prominent political figure in their region. The Rome Statute was negotiated and ratified by every state just mentioned, and they were aware of its jurisdictional implications at the time of signing. Those who argue that the ICC infringes on state sovereignty should examine the concept of complementarity – the ICC investigates and prosecutes crimes only when national courts have failed to do so. Countries like Burundi, Kenya, South Africa, and indeed any country in Africa has the right to try a case before it reaches the ICC. The Rome Statute designed the ICC as a "last resort court" with priority placed on developing the judicial infrastructures of individual countries. The ICC cannot hear every case brought before them, and criminals are less likely to commit a crime in their country of origin if they realize they might be held immediately accountable.

Citizens of these African nations who want to see their countries develop courts capable of ending impunity and combatting political corruption must petition their governments to remain party to the ICC. Whether it is diplomatic immunity or state sovereignty, any justification for withdrawing from the court really boils down to a desire to remain in power and escape prosecution. The international community believes in democratic states overseen by the legal standards they agreed upon, and it should reinforce the efforts made by Burundian, Kenyan, and South African citizens to pressure their leaders. With strengthened domestic courts, the continent can become a model for a new era of international legal responsibility. •

The Criminalization of Homosexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa

America's Role in Promoting Global Social Equality

- Maeve O'Brien

In February 2014, Gambian president Yahya Jammeh delivered a speech to celebrate his country's 49th anniversary of independence from Britain. However, proceedings took on a darker tone when he brought up the issue of homosexuality. Jammeh proclaimed: "We will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitoes, if not more aggressively."

This brutal threat towards homosexuals is indicative of the harsh anti-gay rhetoric that has been pervasive throughout Jammeh's presidency. Many nations throughout Africa possess leaders who openly advocate harm against homosexuals and thus contribute to the anti-gay sentiment that is rife in many countries. In fact, many of these anti-LGBT nations have extensive economic or diplomatic ties to the United States, including Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda. Both Kenya and Nigeria impose fourteen-year prison sentences on anyone convicted of sodomy, while in Uganda this act is punishable by a life sentence. These human rights violations are committed by countries that the United States has a great deal of political and economic influence over, which raises questions about the American government's ability to encourage greater acceptance of LGBT individuals. However, the United States should refrain from using financial or economic incentives to entice these countries to adopt more LGBT-friendly legislation. This would incite anger towards the US and backlash against Western social ideals, in particular the pro-LGBT movement. Rather, the US should actively advocate for the progression of gay rights in Africa on a purely rhetorical level so as to encourage the gradual adoption of more friendly sentiments towards homosexuals and transgender peoples.

Numerous political leaders, including the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, suggest that the West use its economic clout to induce a paradigm shift in how homosexuality is received and tolerated in African nations. They believe that offering economic incentives to countries that agree to decriminalize homosexuality, or threatening to withdraw financial aid from countries that don't comply, is the best way to encourage more pro-LGBT legislation. However, when proposing that the



Pride Parade in South Africa
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

EU cut off aid to African countries with anti-LGBT laws in a summit with the Pan-African Parliament in the spring of 2014, Schulz was met with fierce resistance.

One African parliamentarian reiterated to Schulz how the stark cultural differences would prevent any smooth transition into decriminalization of homosexuality. "Homosexuality, while it's part of your culture is in most of our countries – if not all – abominable," the MP advised. Thus, Schulz learned the lesson that forcefully imposing your values on those with vastly different values risks entering into dangerous territory.

A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center supports this African parliamentarian's statement, reporting that 80 percent of the population in Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda believes that homosexuality is morally unacceptable. Amidst such sentiment, leaders like former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni have backed anti-LGBT legislation in order to garner popular support. Homophobic sentiment is so deeply ingrained in the cultural value systems of these sub-Saharan African countries that the US cannot instantly erase it via financial and economic incentives.

Prior to United States President Barack Obama's trip to Kenya and Ethiopia in July of 2015, many African religious leaders and politicians warned him not even to address the topic of gay rights in Kenya. They feared that by mentioning gay rights, he would heighten existing tensions over the topic, which could incite violence towards LGBT individuals. However, the Obama administration reiterated that the President would not downplay or ignore any important human rights issues. At a press

conference with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Obama spoke about the oppression of the LGBT community. Kenyatta quickly dismissed gay rights as a "non-issue" in Kenya, claiming it wasn't even on his political agenda at all. President Obama successfully addressed the topic of homosexuality by verbally advocating for the acceptance of LGBT peoples, but not forcefully imposing a social ideology through use of financial and economic incentives. By publicly supporting the progression of LGBT rights in Kenya, but refraining from employing financial or economic maneuvers, Obama exemplified the best and most effective way for the US to encourage pro-LGBT legislation across the continent of Africa.

While this brand of anti-LGBT sentiment is not just confined to Africa, as seventy-four nations throughout the world possess some form of anti-LGBT legislation, the United States must not shy away from addressing the criminalization of homosexuality in African nations. However, this does not mean the United States should turn Africa into a testing ground to see how coercive economic power can bring about more favorable laws and feelings towards homosexuals and transgender peoples. Rather, the United States must use its international voice to condemn human rights violations and advocate for acceptance of racial, sexual, and gender minorities by prodding at the issue on a rhetorical level, as opposed to forcefully imposing western social ideologies. Over time, attitudes towards the issue will evolve, just as they did in America. Even now, there are pro-LGBT advocacy groups scattered throughout Africa, such as the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Africa and Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, seeding hope for the African LGBT movement. There is no quick fix to deeply rooted prejudice and discrimination, only the slow but effective passage of time. •

Human Development is the Only Viable Economic Development

- Moustafa El-Kashlan

In early October, the World Bank released its semi-annual report on economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa titled “The Pulse of Africa.” In this report, the Bank announced a projected economic growth rate of 1.6 percent for the region during 2016. This is a tick down from the low rate of 2.5 percent in 2015 and is outpaced by the region’s population growth rate for 2016 of 2.53 percent. These figures signal a worrying trend that economic growth rates are declining after a period of high growth in the initial stages after the 2008 financial crisis. Development economics has traditionally operated under the assumption that increasing the size of a country’s economy will lead to decreased poverty, less inequality, and higher incomes for all citizens. However, decades of failed development policies have led many to realize that this assumption is flawed.

Most successful development projects have been the result of concerted policy and economic efforts to improve the status of the poorest members of respective countries. Many are beginning to realize that successful development does not focus on the economics of land, labor, and capital; but rather on people. Investment in human development and capital means spending money directly on and for the benefit of individuals rather than institutions. This means focusing on policies that directly improve the lives of citizens rather than those that attempt to foster conditions in which market forces should improve their lives. For development to be successful it should include heavy community involvement with a focus on improving quality of life for everyone, especially the poorest members of society. Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, and Rwanda all followed similar paths on their roads to increased economic growth by respectively increasing medical and education access, increasing the human capital of its workforce, and by electrifying the nation and increasing the participation of women in the public sphere.

Ethiopia focused its public spending on efforts to improve access to public goods for its citizens. This model has also been successful in Botswana, where growth has averaged five percent annually for the past decade, a higher rate than anywhere else in the world. In Ethiopia, primary school enrollment has increased by

“Successful development does not focus on the economics of land, labor, and capital; it focuses on people.”

over 300 percent as the result of increased education spending. Furthermore, the Ethiopian government has shown great foresight by devoting significant resources towards improving public health infrastructure within the country, which is chronically underfunded because the benefits associated with it are abstract and only materialize in the future. Moreover, HIV and malaria rates are down, child mortality has been halved, and Ethiopians are now twice as likely to have access to clean water. A healthier population is a more productive population, which in turn allows the East African nation to experience sustained economic growth.

Côte d’Ivoire has benefitted greatly from recent social and political stability, enabling it to focus its efforts on improving the lives of its citizens. Similar to Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire has dedicated much of its resources to expanding access to education, health, and social services for Ivorians. Côte d’Ivoire has also made youth employment a priority. These policies have led to healthier and better educated people in Côte d’Ivoire, which has increased the quality and quantity of workers, allows firms to operate more productively and efficiently, and increases the size of the economy. As a result, traditional industries like agriculture have experienced growth because of Ivorians’ ability to produce crops more efficiently, leading to increased revenue from exports of agricultural products such as cocoa. Furthermore, the manufacturing and construction industries have grown by 10 percent and 23 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, both retail turnover and telecom subscribers have increased in the service sector. Increased investment in the people of Côte d’Ivoire led directly to decreased poverty, but it also created the necessary conditions to foster inclusive economic growth.

Rwanda has made the electrification of the nation a central tenet of its human development and economic growth strategy, while also improving social protections. The benefits of increased electricity are plentiful, as it

allows Rwandans to enjoy a higher quality of life while also being more productive workers. Electricity in the workplace makes employees more efficient by giving them increased access to technology and the ability to work longer hours. Increased access to electricity has also led to less spoiled food due to refrigeration. The manufacturing industry has also seen growth in Rwanda since more Rwandans are able to open small businesses such as coffee shops and hair salons as a result of their newly found access to electricity. The Rwandan government has also made gender equality in education, labor, and politics a major part of its plan to improve the nation. Women make up the majority of primary school teachers and fill over 60 percent of seats in Parliament, a rate that is three times the global average. Increasing gender equality leads to a more complete and inclusive society while also helping women to unlock their massive potential. The societal and economic gains of prioritizing increased educational attainment in girls have been confirmed several times over and Rwanda’s success presents further evidence.

However, none of these models for human development are perfect. Ethiopia still has considerable room for improvements in gender equality, Côte d’Ivoire has struggled to provide its rural citizens with the same benefits as those living in urban settings, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame has been accused of suppressing political opposition. However, all of these countries have enacted policies and growth models that focus at least partially on individual citizens, leading to inclusive economic growth and reduced poverty, which is ultimately the goal of development. Conversely, much of the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa has focused more on trade, agriculture, and increasing income from natural resources like oil. While these policies can lead to growth, they will be ineffective in doing so unless paired with policies aimed at eliminating poverty through targeted investment in the population. •

Why Algeria is Destined to Dominate African Soccer

- Tyler D. Coady

In the late 1950s, at the height of the Algerian War of Independence between France and its restless colony Algeria, the French police were killing and arresting hundreds of persons of Algerian descent in Paris. Algiers had become a war zone marked by explosions and gunfire, and Charles de Gaulle was reasserting his power over France. While the most violent and marked battles of the war were fought in the banlieues of Paris and the Casbah of Algiers, the soccer pitch soon became a major point of conflict.

In 1958, the National Liberation Front (FLN) of Algeria organized a cadre of French Algerian soccer players to leave their French soccer clubs and represent the FLN at the international level. The FLN team soon became an Algerian propaganda tool wielded worldwide to curry favor with other nations and discredit France's claim to sovereignty. They played about eighty matches up until Algeria's independence and the creation of the Algerian Football Federation in 1962. Success has been hard to come by for Algerian soccer, with a famous win over West Germany at the 1982 World Cup—the crowning moment of the 20th century. However, a golden era is beginning for the Algerian national team. With a generation of French-born players deciding to play for Algeria, a core group of veterans entering their prime years, and a domestic professional league growing in quality, Algeria has the talent to win the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations and advance to the 2018 World Cup knockout rounds.

Historically, FIFA mandated that anyone who played for France, for instance at a youth level, was ineligible to play for Algeria's senior team, even if they had ancestral claims to Algeria. The revoking of this rule benefitted Algeria more than any other soccer-playing nation, as there are an estimated two million people of Algerian origin in France. The Desert Foxes, as the Algerian national team is known, are now able to recruit from the plentiful French pool of talented players with Algerian ancestry. Not only does this widen the pool of available players to choose from, but players growing up in France also have access to some of the world's finest soccer clubs, youth academies, coaching staffs, and facilities. Players like Nabil Bentaleb and Adam Ounas are products of France's



The Algerian National Football Team's Logo
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youth development football system and are thus prime targets for Algeria to add to its national team. While playing for tradition-laden France seems like an irresistible proposition, the higher chance of making the Algerian team and the strong feelings of pride associated with their Algerian ancestry have made the decision an easy one for many French-Algerian players. This unique situation, in which a former colony's relationship with its colonial master is proving beneficial years after independence in such an unusual sector, gives Algeria a massive edge over other African nations struggling to find and develop top talent.

In Leicester City's improbable run to the 2016 English Premier League championship, Riyad Mahrez, an explosive winger, scored seventeen goals and won the PFA Player of the Year award. A product of France's youth academies, Mahrez is one of the many young and talented Algerians succeeding at the highest levels of European soccer. His club teammate, Islam Slimani, who scored 27 goals for Sporting CP in Portugal last year, is a physical striker off to a fast start in England. One of the most talented creative midfielders in Europe, Yacine Brahimi is a gem of a player thriving in the starting lineup at Portugal's most successful club, Porto. At a time when historical power Egypt fails to produce top talent, Ghana's top players struggle to assert themselves in European teams, and the Ivory Coast's Didier Drogba and Yaya Touré near the end of their careers, Algeria possesses the highest concentration of talented players entering their prime of any

team on the continent.

In 2014, the Algerian club team ES Setif beat AS Vita Club of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the final of the Confederation of African Football Champions League. It was the first Champions League title for any Algerian club since 1990 and broke the stranglehold that Egyptian, Tunisian, and Congolese clubs have had on the tournament. For a league that only became fully professional in 2010, it was a profound victory that served as a symbol of the growing quality of play to be found in Algeria's Ligue Professionnelle 1. Clubs like ES Setif and USM Alger, a 2015 Champions League runner-up, possess greater financial resources than ever before, allowing them to build the soccer infrastructure necessary for nurturing young talent, compete with Africa's most famous clubs, and thus develop Algerian players who will be ready to compete at the international level. In the last eighteen months, eight players competing for Algerian clubs have appeared for the Desert Foxes. While it is true that countries like Ghana and the Ivory Coast attained great success in the 2000s without the presence of top-quality domestic leagues, to achieve not just fleeting success, but long-term achievement in international soccer is dependent on the presence of a strong domestic league. In 2013, researchers at Umeå University in Sweden found that sustained national team success directly correlates with a strong domestic league. As the Algerian Ligue 1 continues its maturation into one of Africa's finest domestic leagues, the Algerian national team only stands to benefit.

At the 2014 World Cup, Algeria was the lone African nation to make it to the knockout rounds. In the Round of 16, Algeria was defeated 2-1 by Germany, but the loss during extra time to the eventual champion heightened expectations for the Desert Foxes and made the team a point of pride for Algerians. Success at World Cups has been difficult to achieve for African nations, but rarely has a nation possessed such a combination of young talent, decorated European-based players, and strong domestic competition as Algeria does right now. •

Niger and Western Intervention

- Kieran Byrne

In October of 2016, Germany made a small break from its tradition of pacifism when it announced plans to build an air base in Niamey, the capital of the West African nation of Niger. The announcement came immediately before Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Niger, the first by a German leader. There, she announced a 27 million Euro aid package that included ten million Euros worth of military equipment. Germany's interest in Niger comes on the heels of the United States announcing that it would build a second drone base in the Nigerien town of Agadez, and France announcing the continuation of its counterterrorism operation in Niger and the surrounding region.

Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, is rarely the recipient of such attention from developed nations. Yet, due to the proximity of Boko Haram on its southern and eastern borders and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb on its northern and western borders, this fledgling democracy has become a strategic nation to support for Western counterterrorism policy. In addition, Niger possesses considerable reserves of oil, gold, coal, and especially uranium. Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou must take advantage of the country's strategic importance, increased Western aid, and natural resource wealth in order to lift his people from poverty and put Niger on a path to prosperity.

As nations like France, Germany, and the United States aim to combat terrorism in West Africa, Niger's resistance to terrorist movements, greater political stability compared to Libya and Mali, vast natural resource wealth, and more central geographic location than Chad make it an ideal nation for Western nations to support. Thus, Niger's newfound usefulness in the eyes of Western governments gives it unique leverage that is unprecedented in its postcolonial history. If Niger is able to parlay this leverage into investments in infrastructure, defense, and education, the Nigerien economy will then be able to utilize its stores of mineral wealth to alleviate poverty and further strengthen the notion that it is a bulwark against terrorism. This cycle has the potential to be self-reinforcing, leading to Niger becoming a valuable ally against terrorism for the West and a serious economic player in Africa.

President Issoufou has called for massive infusions of Western aid in order to help the Ni-

“Niger's newfound usefulness in the eyes of Western governments gives it a unique set of leverage that is unprecedented in its postcolonial history.”

gerien government further the interests of its people. The \$766 million Niger received in aid in 2013 is roughly comparable to that received by other African countries with similar populations, but it is miniscule compared to the aid sent to other nations Western countries are helping to fight terrorism, such as Afghanistan. Although Niger is a democracy, its institutions are corrupt enough that there is no guarantee the money will go anywhere but into the pockets of government officials. The only way forward is for the Issoufou administration to allow countries to build military bases in Niger in return for considerable aid. The Nigerien government, however, must prove its effectiveness and commitment to fighting corruption so as to reassure the West that Niger is committed to good governance and creating strong institutions. Western nations must focus on building up Niger's infrastructure and human capital, as well as military capabilities, so that the nation is not at risk for extremist movements. If the West is to provide Niger with only military aid, they risk creating a situation akin to the one in Mali, in which a US-trained military commander seized power from the president in a coup d'état.

Additionally, Niger needs to improve the quality of its transportation and mining infrastructure so that the government is able to harness its vast natural resource wealth. Niger has the fifth largest uranium reserves in the world and Nigerien uranium provides one third of France's domestic energy needs. Niger only began producing oil in 2011 and its sources of gold and rare earth minerals are mostly untapped. However, President Issoufou needs to ensure that his government is better able to collect tax revenue on its mineral exports so that money can be reinvested in the people of Niger. Then, the government of Niger can use the greater revenue streams to focus on shifting the economy away from raw materials and environmentally destructive subsistence agriculture. States reliant only on their natural resources are subject to market fluctuations that can be highly dam-

aging to their economy, as evidenced by what happened in Niger when uranium prices began dropping in 2005.

Niger faces formidable challenges to development; the country is last out of 188 on the Human Development Index, which ranks factors such as education and infrastructure. As many as 870,000 people, or eight percent of the population, were enslaved in 2003. Literacy was under 30 percent in 2005, the nation does not possess the infrastructure required for exporting its minerals and strengthening its economy, and governmental corruption is rampant. The government struggles to collect taxes, exemplified by the French mining company Areva, which receives sweetheart deals allowing it to avoid paying its fair share towards the Nigerian government's coffers. As a result, uranium accounts for 70 percent of Niger's exports, but only 5.8 percent of its GDP, according to the Business Anti-Corruption Portal. Niger's economic troubles are in part a result of its turbulent post-colonial independence, as Niger has never experienced a peaceful transition of power between opposition parties.

However, since 1991, every military regime has governed for less than a year before implementing civilian rule. The will of the Nigerien people and government is clearly inclined towards democracy, as shown through popular protests. Combined with the fact that public faith in governmental institutions remains high and that the mining sector has the ability to be an engine for sustained economic growth, Niger has the potential to be a multi-party democracy that provides for the basic welfare of its people.

In order for the Niger to see a stable future as a Western ally and lift Nigeriens from poverty, the Nigerien government must increase its ability to provide for its people and to harness Western aid to ensure positive gains. By using Niger's strategic position and mineral resources, the government can create sustainable economic growth that will further discourage terrorism and improve living conditions in the poorest country in the world. •

The Progression of Women's Rights in Senegal

- Kim Ira

In May of 2010, the Senegalese Parliament implemented a law that requires all political parties to adhere to absolute gender parity in election lists at both the local and national level. This means that all political parties must have an equal number of men and women on their candidate lists. Senegal is taking visible strides towards achieving gender equality in its political assembly and now has one of the highest percentages of women holding office in a national assembly in the world. In Africa, Senegal is rivaled only by Rwanda in terms of the number of women holding office in the national assembly, as it is now 43 percent comprised of women.

Yet, opposition to the gender parity law remains strong, as evidenced by the remarks of Senegalese male parliament member El Hadji Diouf in which he said that it is important “we put the right woman, or the right man, in the job, and not automatically, mechanically, foolishly, idiotically, say ‘one man, one woman.’” The years of work it took on the part of feminist activists in light of the vast stigmas and prejudices they faced on their march towards political gender equality are indicative of the widespread remaining obstacles to female equality in greater Senegalese society. Going forward, if Senegal wants to see a more visible progression in women's rights, there needs to be a shift away from more traditional mindsets regarding a woman's place towards a progressive view that allows women to hold greater sway in Senegalese politics and society. This can be accomplished by continually challenging the male-dominated place in traditional Senegalese society by supporting legislation such as the gender parity law, but also by legitimizing federal government support for women's rights and leadership training.

Male opposition to the gender parity law is not, however, the main barrier to the progression of women's rights in Senegal, but rather a manifestation of cultural beliefs that are deeply rooted in a patriarchal society. “I think that the obstacle for female politicians is first and foremost culture,” says Ndèye Lucie Cissé, a member of the Senegalese Parliament. This is especially prominent in rural areas of Senegal. While urban areas often display a much more progressive attitude towards women's rights,

“The disparity in support of women's rights between different areas of Senegal indicates that effective legislation in urbanized sections of the country is not enough to advance gender equality.”

rural areas are still largely dominated by cultural thinking and tribal traditions. Even the word “parity,” or “parité” in French, has completely separate connotations in different areas of the country. Urbanized areas tend to accept gender parity in political life, and understand the word as a synonym for gender equality. In small villages and rural areas, on the other hand, the connotations of the word “parity” indicate a woman's disobedience toward her husband, or a dismissal of traditional views on a woman's place in society. The disparity in support of women's rights between different areas of Senegal indicates that effective legislation in urbanized sections of the country is not enough to advance gender equality.

In a 2015 report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Emna Aouij, Chairperson of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, is quoted as saying, “It is time to break socio-cultural barriers that prevent Senegalese women to fully realise their rights. It is unacceptable that under the guise of tradition, customs or poverty, girls and women have their basic rights violated, are assaulted, abused and live in unworthy conditions.” Thus, legislation that protects women's rights is not enough, as areas of Senegal are still very much ruled by tribal customs and cultural beliefs. Transforming ingrained cultural beliefs seems like an abstract task, but certain programs have arisen in Senegal that have made progress in challenging the great influence of patriarchal beliefs in this West African nation.

Leadership conferences for women in rural Senegal have become increasingly popular, as a PBS NewsHour report highlighted. A conference in which women from neighboring tribes and villages attend leadership workshops, where they learn how to promote themselves as political candidates through social media and talk with other women about how they want to give women an equal stake in family planning, helps

build grassroots connections between female political leaders. As women come to feel more empowered and their ranks grow in the legislature, activism on the part of women is bound to increase and hence increase the desire for future leadership conferences. As women in rural communities take a greater stake in the future of their nation, issues such as girls' education, the practice of polygamy, marital power dynamics, female genital mutilation, and child marriage will be discussed in ways in which women hold greater influence and more positive change can come about.

Simply having gender parity in the national assembly cannot solve the challenges that lie ahead for proponents of gender equality in Senegal. Rather, if women's rights are really to improve, feminist activists and government policy makers must work in tandem to continue to provide opportunities for women to grow as leaders and take control of their lives, especially by supporting efforts in rural communities to challenge traditional patriarchal ways of thought. Only then can real change come about for current and future generations of Senegalese women. •

Moral Self-Licensing, Women, and the 2017 Liberian Elections

- Emma Stout

On October 10, 2017, Liberia will elect a new leader, as President Ellen Sirleaf's second and final term comes to an end. Sirleaf was not only the first elected woman leader in Africa, but also the first black, female president in the world. Her list of accomplishments includes winning a Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, while in office, for her "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." However, Liberia has one of the worst levels of gender parity in government in the world and has recently struggled to pass laws that would improve gender equality in the nation. Thus, the upcoming election will be a moment of tremendous importance for creating a government that advocates for gender parity. Liberia must focus on improving the current inequalities and dismal percentage of women participating in politics in order to make progressive choices in the upcoming election and not fall further into what psychologists call 'moral-self licensing.'

Moral self-licensing, which has been studied by experts at Stanford University and Northwestern University, occurs when people perform immoral or problematic deeds because of their past performance of good deeds. The previous good deed or behavior thus justifies future bad deeds or behaviors. The trend of moral self-licensing applies to politics; according to a 2009 Stanford study, American voters were more likely to participate in racist behavior if they had voted for Barack Obama, the first African-American President of the United States. Only 44 percent of countries have had women leaders, and of those, only three - Bangladesh, Ireland and New Zealand - have ever elected two successive women leaders. This is not to say that Liberia must elect a second woman president in order to create equality. Rather, Liberia needs to increase the percentage of women in the national legislature, currently at only 11 percent.

It is likely that Liberia has already found itself a victim of moral self-licensing. At the end of the nation's civil war in 2003, much of the success of the agreement that ended the conflict can be attributed to a movement known as the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. Despite their low position in society and lim-



Current Liberian President, Ellen Sirleaf
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ited set of rights, the group brought women together via sit-ins, building coalitions between Christians and Muslims, and even staged "sex-strikes" in which women withheld sex from their husbands in order to pressure them into supporting peace. Considering their success in effecting political change and using their influence to help end the war, it appeared to be a sign that women were becoming a significant political force in Liberia. Since then, however, the percentages of women in the legislature have decreased and two bills with provisions to aid women were stripped of their most important parts. Despite women's demonstrated ability and political interest in leading their country, Liberia has not created a welcoming space for women in politics.

In 2015, a domestic violence bill that came to the Senate, which originally included a provision to ban female genital mutilation (FGM), was stripped of its mention of the practice in order to pass. Despite Sirleaf's statements against FGM, Liberia is one of only three countries in West Africa that has not banned the practice. More recently, Liberia failed to pass a strong affirmative action bill that would have guaranteed fifteen seats for women in the legislature. However, it was watered down in its final form to only guarantee women five seats.

Popular opinion does not favor affirmative action policies in legislature. Critics claim these policies are selfish and nonsensical, and some even consider the Samuel Doe administration,

which overthrew the Liberian government in 1980 and suspended their Constitution until 1984, to be preferable to these policies. Even though women have made significant strides in Liberia, it is clear women continue to struggle to make significant and permanent gains towards achieving equality. With more women in office, Liberia can fight the growing tide against anti-parity measures.

It can be argued that there are factors other than the presence of moral self-licensing that stop women from holding office in Liberia. For example, women worldwide have a harder time accessing quality education, and face setbacks if they want to, or are expected to, start a family. However, these factors were present before the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, before Liberia elected a record number of women to the legislature, and before Ellen Sirleaf was elected the first woman President. Now that the glass ceiling has been broken, more women should theoretically be able to get through. This has not been the case. Liberia must recognize their backsliding and fight to get past the trap of moral self-licensing to elect more women leaders in 2017.

Though there are still several months before the list of presidential candidates becomes official, there is currently only one woman who has announced her candidacy. The candidate, MacDella Cooper, has never held political office and is representing the Union of Liberian Democrats, a political party that garnered only 0.2 percent of the vote in 2011 presidential elections. Neither of these facts speaks favorably towards her ability to be a strong candidate, let alone win. One can only hope that in the upcoming months Cooper is able to legitimize her campaign and is joined by more women. Perhaps then, Liberia could become the fourth country ever to elect consecutive women leaders. While that may be a lofty goal, hopefully regaining at least the 12.5 percent of seats previously held by women in the legislature will not be. Liberia, now more than ever, needs to elect women to create legislative protection and to ensure bills such as the domestic violence bill and the affirmative action bill are able to be passed and offer protection and empowerment opportunities for the women of Liberia. •

The Film Industries of Sub-Saharan Africa

The Silver Screen's Profound Impact on African Culture

- Chris Young

Film production has become one of the largest industries across sub-Saharan Africa. The African film industry is led by Nigeria's \$3.3 billion sector, commonly known as "Nollywood," in homage to its counterpart in Hollywood, producing over 1,800 films annually - a figure second only to India's Bollywood. However, the economic benefit of this industry is not the most significant contribution film has made on the continent. The evolving movie industry is an important medium of cultural expression and artistic revision for millions of Africans. On a continent whose story has long been told by foreigners that have an incomplete and distorted view of the true nature of the continent, Africa's film industries show the true identities of hundreds of millions to a global audience in their most unadulterated form to date. Film gives Africans an opportunity to write their own history without the stereotypes and racism found in Western portrayals that have plagued the African image for centuries.

The image of Africa and its people as trumpeted by Western film has long been subject to racist stereotypes. Western films like the Jungle Jim series produced by Americans in the 1950s paint an image of Africa where savage tribes of cannibals kidnap, hunt, and attempt to sacrifice Caucasians, only to have their plans thwarted by a heroic, white protagonist. Titles such as *Cannibal Attack*, *Savage Mutiny*, and *Valley of the Head Hunters* are just some of the sixteen movies in the Jungle Jim series and exemplify the African stereotypes innate in many Western films. However, by reducing Africans to caricatures, Western producers of the "Jungle Epics" failed to capture the real lives of Africans. At the same time as the production of the Jungle Jim series, many African nations were gaining their independence as new democracies sprouted out of the ashes of colonialism. However, none of the films produced at the time captured these monumental events or the political activists that paved the way for independence. Instead, they simplified Africa to an underdeveloped frontier of chaos - a "wild west" for the cinematic cowboys of the United States to set their scene in. With the rise of African film industries, the stage is set for Africans to tell stories that are indicative of the reality of the continent. The savage depiction of Africans in films like the

“Instead, they simplified Africa to an underdeveloped frontier of chaos--a “wild west” for the cinematic cowboys of the United States to set their scene in. With the rise of African film industries, the stage is set for Africans to tell stories that are indicative of the reality of the continent.”

ones in the Jungle Jim series are being replaced with narratives like the one found in the film *93 Days* by Nigerian director Steve Gukas, whose film tells the story of the Nigerian physicians on the frontlines of the Ebola epidemic. As hundreds of other films detail the lives of millions of Africans, the stereotypes found in too many Western films are being challenged and dismantled.

Years of colonialism left an indelible mark on African culture. The European powers that colonized the continent in the 19th century stripped Africans of their traditional beliefs and attempted to assimilate them into a European way of life. Even after most states received their independence, reclaiming a uniquely African identity proved to be a challenge as nations remained under varying degrees of foreign influence. In the early 1900s, liberated French colonies like Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire received funding from the French to produce films for the French film industry. These countries' film industries produced works that mimicked that of their former mother country with plots that were often regurgitations of French culture, twisted and forced into an unnatural setting. However, Nigeria, once a colonial possession of Great Britain, did not develop a film industry under the tutelage of the British, as Britain lacked a substantial film industry of its own. Thus Nigerian filmmakers created work that told the stories of Nigerian people, stories they could relate to. With the rise in popularity of Nigerian films over the past two decades, this style of storytelling has found audiences across the continent and around the world.

The films created and produced in Africa today are tackling issues that many Africans face in their daily lives, such as finding a balance between traditional identities and modern conceptions of self. For example, the Nigerian

film *Green White Green* details the lives of three young men preparing for college. The context for this coming-of-age film is found in Nigeria's deep tribal history and the more modern phenomenon of migration from these rural areas to major cities like Lagos. Showing the traditional beliefs that are strong in these cultures, director and producer Abba Makama explores the challenges for people in balancing their traditional backgrounds with the pressures of taking on a more modern identity. Films like *Green White Green* bring the many African narratives to the mainstream, as the stories of millions are no longer silenced.

While the growth of Africa's film industry stands to contribute a great deal economically, its greatest impact will lie in the cultural realm. As stories come to be told more and more by Africans, African culture will become increasingly understood by Western observers who have for too long relegated it to outside the cultural mainstream. This will inject in Africans a new-found sense of pride in their continent and their culture. Thus, film is a vehicle through which cultures that were stripped of so much of their essence by colonialism can regenerate themselves and share the true nature of Africa. •

How Nigeria's Government Caused Its Own Recession

- Sebastian Leder Macek

In June 2014, the price of a barrel of oil traded on international oil markets peaked at \$105. Eighteen months later, it was \$28. This sudden and unexpected decline in oil prices has hurt all major oil producers, but especially those in Africa. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and producer of oil, was one of those most impacted. Despite a more diverse economy than other large, petroleum-producing African nations—oil forms only 14 percent of the country's GDP—Nigeria was nonetheless greatly affected, as oil revenues make up 70 percent of government revenues. While it is easy to blame the drop in oil prices as the main reason for Nigeria's recent economic troubles, the more significant reason for the recent Nigerian recession is the government's poor macroeconomic policies. By prioritizing austerity, Nigeria has used an ineffective economic policy and has seen its economy slip into recession. Rather, it should focus on shoring up the productive base of the economy, which would ensure continued economic growth.

As oil's value waned, the government under former President Goodluck Jonathan fell deeper and deeper into debt, as sources of revenue shrank. Oil producers received much lower prices for their product, and as a result workers were laid off, leading to a vicious cycle of economic contraction. As more people lost their jobs, there was less disposable income in the economy, which lowered the revenues of businesses in other industries and saw even more people lose their sources of income. Yet, despite this initial decline in fortunes, the economy continued to grow in 2014 as GDP growth remained at six percent in the final months of the year. Although a barrel of crude oil had dropped to \$50 in late 2014, Nigeria's economy was in relatively good shape, considering the great shock of such a drastic decline in oil prices.

Despite this fact, Jonathan's government reacted to their growing debt by pegging the Nigerian naira, the national currency, to the US dollar. Thus, as the value of the naira fell relative to the dollar, the government used its foreign reserves to buy naira from the market with the hope of propping it up. Also, using debt payments that ate up as much as a quarter of the 2015 federal budget, the Nigerian government scaled back expenditures and increased



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taxes. This was a major mistake, as the government sacrificed future economic growth for the short-term goal of addressing inflation, which would increase its debt payments. In addressing the debt issue solely, the government sacrificed the productive base of the economy. Limiting spending and increasing taxation during a time of great economic uncertainty took money out of the hands of consumers, which lowered consumption, investment, and furthered the cycle of contraction.

The government's policies proved ineffective: though inflation began to decrease, GDP growth dropped by four percent in 2015. Fed up with Jonathan's policies, Nigerians elected Muhammadu Buhari as their new president, marking the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history. However, by the time Buhari took office, his options for combatting the recession were severely limited, as the 2015 budget had already been approved. Left with few immediate tools with which to combat the economic downturn, Buhari saw his nation's GDP contract and inflation approach double digits at the beginning of 2016. After spending more than 20 percent of its foreign currency reserves on trying to maintain the value of the naira, the government was forced to give up the currency peg in 2016. The naira plummeted more than 40 percent in value in two years as Nigerian businesses had to cope with the drastic inflation by raising prices. Yet, Nigerian consumers did not see corresponding increases in income that could account for the inflation, as consumption and GDP fell further.

Many of Jonathan's supporters argue that, without a solvent government, they couldn't have done anything to help the economy. They claim that they had to deal with debt in order

to avoid a default. Yet, governments should spend heavily during a recession because, by injecting money into the economy, they can keep the productive base in good order and pay back the debts in the future. Sustaining the conditions for long-term growth outweighs short-term debt issues.

Had the government spent on infrastructure, worker assistance programs, and other public works projects, the money injected into the economy would have likely increased investment and consumption. This spending would have encouraged firms to expand production, hire more workers, and thus stave off a cycle of severe economic contraction. While more conservative economists argue that increased government spending would have resulted in runaway inflation, this was not a concern in this case, as Nigeria was experiencing inflation not as a result of increased demand, but rather as a result of the devaluation of the naira on foreign currency markets. Thus, increasing demand domestically would not have contributed as much to inflation as it would in other economies.

Other major African oil producers demonstrate this to a degree. Angola, the second largest oil producer in Africa, also cut its budget, but by much less than Nigeria. Consequently, they saw their growth decrease, but presently still enjoy three percent growth. Algeria, another large producer, has followed a similar track, slightly cutting spending while maintaining a good level of growth, from three percent to four percent.

As many European countries have come to learn in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, austerity measures and a preoccupation with debt payments distracts governments from the fact that this type of monetary policy will not lead to long-run economic growth. While the fall in the price of oil no doubt jolted Nigerian leadership, increased—not decreased—government spending was the appropriate antidote. Going forward, the Nigerian government must learn from the mistakes it made in 2014 and 2015 and return to investing in the Nigerian economy. They have a responsibility to their people, who have suffered so much from their short-term priorities, to lift their country up at their own expense. •

Fair Trials for Immigrants and Refugees

- Max Goldman

Canada is internationally recognized for its support of refugees and displaced peoples, as well as for its long history of prioritizing and respecting human rights. For instance, Canadians have the ability to privately sponsor refugees. This program has been extremely successful, with the number of available sponsors exceeding that of incoming refugees. In addition, from November 2015 to February 2016, the Canadian government resettled 25,000 refugees. However, due to a controversial law passed by Stephen Harper's conservative government in 2014, this reputation could soon be in jeopardy. Justin Trudeau's liberal government vowed to repeal the law, but it has not followed through. The "Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act" (Bill C-24) states that any misrepresentation on an immigration or asylum form is punishable by a stripping of citizenship and subsequent deportation. Revelations about the Minister of Democratic Institutions misrepresenting her place of birth have thrust this issue into the mainstream political debate. The Canadian government should avoid enforcing this law until it is amended to allow for a fair trial process for resettled individuals.

The bill states that one's citizenship can be revoked for obtaining citizenship 'fraudulently.' While this may seem just and in the public interest, the provision has sparked significant controversy, highlighted by the case of Maryam Monsef, who was the poster child for refugee resettlement. After fleeing Afghanistan with her mother at age 11, she became a Canadian citizen and graduated from university. Currently, she holds a seat in Parliament and serves in the federal Cabinet. However, in September, Minister Monsef revealed she was born in Iran, not Afghanistan as stated on her asylum documents. Thus, according to the Act, her citizenship can be revoked.

Just a year and a half ago, the Conservative party had control over enforcing Bill C-24. The bill gives the power of revoking citizenship to an immigration and citizenship minister, rather than an impartial judge. The asylum and immigration process should not be politicized in this way; enforcing the law should be the responsibility of the court system. Minister Monsef's situation is not exclusive to her; many other Canadians are at risk of being deported with-



Maryam Monsef, Canadian Minister of Democratic Institutions.
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out a proper trial. This process is also arguably a violation of Section 11 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states that all Canadian citizens charged with a crime are entitled to a trial by jury.

Critics, especially those who passed the law in the previous conservative government, say that changing Bill C-24 would encourage more asylum seekers to lie on their forms in order to get into Canada. However, fraud is inevitable and amending C-24 would ensure all people are treated fairly and given due process of the law. It will also guarantee that people who actually committed fraud are deported while those who did not knowingly deceive the government are allowed to stay.

Maryam Monsef's case has brought this very important issue to light. To send a respected Canadian politician back to Afghanistan for falsely reporting her birthplace when she was young would be unfair to her and her constituents. In addition, allowing a fellow Member of Parliament to preside over the case presents the opportunity for extreme bias. Yet, amending such a law so that it is properly enforced by the court system could eliminate bias and ensure due process of the law.

The Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act has, in fact, weakened Canadian citizenship more than it has strengthened it. Allowing the Ministry of Immigration, and any individual

minister, to decide who gets deported presents a conflict of interest. The Liberals should keep their campaign promise and amend C-24. Stripping Canadians of their citizenship and deporting them without trial is not only un-Canadian, but arguably in violation of their Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Countries around the world look to Canada as a leader in human rights, and in this case, Canada must live up to its reputation. •

A Clear Mandate

Canadian Electoral Reform is Safer in the Government's Hands

- Jalen Zeman

It has been a year since the Liberal Party formed a government in Ottawa on a platform of replacing the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system, joining three of the other four parties in campaigning for a more proportional electoral system. The Conservatives, the only party not supporting electoral reform, have demanded that any change be put to a referendum, citing a poll that 65 percent of Canadians favor such a measure. Four previous Canadian provincial electoral reform referendums—marked by poor voter education and a lack of public understanding—have raised serious doubts about the viability of such referendums. In order to equitably represent Canadian voters' preferences in government and defeat the uphill conditions for a successful public conversation, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Liberals must follow up on their campaign promise by legislating electoral reforms.

Canada elects its representatives through an unrepresentative plurality system, known as FPTP. In FPTP, a candidate wins the seat by receiving the most votes among all candidates; a candidate does not need the majority of votes to win. Studies show that these electoral systems consistently marginalize and discourage minority parties because voters feel obligated to vote for the two or three parties that stand a chance at winning. The influence of the plurality system on voting behavior leads to suboptimal strategic voting – voting for a candidate most likely to win that is closest to a voter's views, but not the voter's optimal choice. This low political efficacy is prominent in Quebec, where the regional Bloc Quebecois contests seats only in the province against all national parties.

In comparison, proportional systems encourage broader partisan representation because voters are able to reward parties that closely satisfy their preferences and punish parties that alienate their supporters. Electoral systems like Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) allow voters to feel confident that their votes meaningfully influence political representation, affecting voter and political party behavior. In more proportional systems, voters are more likely to vote for parties aligning with their interests, rather than settle for a less than optimal alternative.

Holding a referendum to decide electoral

reform is the least optimal method to have a conversation on changing the rules for electing members of Parliament. Past Canadian electoral reform referendums have proved both ineffective and inefficient in selecting a new system of electoral reform. In Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and twice in British Columbia (BC), the provinces held referendums suggesting varying replacements to FPTP. All four referendums failed, largely due to the inability to effectively communicate complex information and the difficulty voters had in understanding an unfamiliar issue.

Most political scientists agree that the greater the complexity of a referendum question, the more it impedes the implementation of public education campaigns. In the 2007 Ontario referendum, analysts attributed its failure to the severe lack of information. The Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended and allocated money for a strong education campaign to inform Ontarians of the benefits and consequences of FPTP and the proposed MMP through mail, resource officers, and advertisements; however, strict logistical and time constraints meant that the education campaign largely underutilized these resources, which analysts deemed as symptomatic of complex referendum questions.

Expanding this to the whole Canadian electorate, a national referendum on electoral reform seems impractical if not frivolous. The problem is not the government's ability to craft an adequate question and allocate the necessary funds; on a national scale, past experiences strongly indicate that governments are not capable of providing the necessary education so that voters can make informed choices.

A significant consequence of the inability of governments to properly educate voters on complicated issues is that many voters are either unaware or uninformed about the proposed replacement. In each of the four provincial referendums, voters misunderstood the issue, profoundly impacting the results. In the 2005 BC referendum, a post-referendum survey found that more than 50 percent of voters that rejected STV did so because of their unfamiliarity with the concept. In the 2005 Ontario referendum, 47 percent of voters polled just weeks before the election said they had zero understanding

of the new system. In both instances, had the voters unfamiliar with both systems had proper information, it is probable that the results would have been different. Translating the issue to a national scale emphasizes the pedagogical challenges. These challenges negate the theoretical foundations of a referendum—informed citizens directly making informed choices—and instead suggest legislation of reforms would be more optimal.

Contrary to claims by Conservatives, legislating electoral reform is not a Liberal power move; it is a clear mandate by the voters. In fact, 63 percent of Canadians voted for parties in 2015 that clearly campaigned on federal electoral reform, beating the required threshold for approving electoral reform in each of the provincial referendums.

Despite this overwhelming majority, the Minister of Democratic Institutions Maryam Monsef acknowledged the potential fears of one party rigging the system and has firmly stated that the Liberals “will not move forward with any reforms without the broad support of Canadians.” To achieve this, the multi-partisan Special Committee on Electoral Reform held a month-long national tour to affirm support. Additionally, she promised that the Liberals would not push through the legislation if the special committee cannot come to a consensus. The Liberals received a mandate when the voters went to the polls in 2015; a further mandate by the consultations and the Special Committee adds overwhelming clarity into justifying the legislation of electoral reforms.

While it would be ideal for voters to have a direct influence on complicated legislation, it is not practical. The difficulties of holding a successful national discussion on the complex issue of electoral reform and the unintentional ignorance of the voters bolsters the idea that legislating reforms under a clear and affirmative electoral mandate is not only politically legitimate, but also efficient and effective. Should they be recognized as generally popular among Canadians, the Liberals reserve the right to legislate these important reforms for the betterment of Canada. •

Bullfighting in Baja California

- Maggie Johnson

In 2016, the congress in the Mexican state of Baja California postponed a verdict on a bullfighting ban three times. Each time, the lack of decisions was met with frustration from community members protesting the sport, who see it as a form of animal cruelty. Legislators justify the inaction by citing both cultural and economic reasons for allowing the practice to continue. Although objecting to a centuries-long practice on the basis of animal welfare alone is legitimate, bullfighting should continue in Baja California to provide economic stability and preserve cultural heritage.

Three Mexican states, Sonora, Guerrero and Coahuila, have already banned the sport, and animal rights activists see Baja California as a battleground state that could strike a severe blow to bullfighting in Mexico. Tijuana, a town in Baja California, has one of the most vibrant bullfighting cultures outside of Mexico City and attracts visitors globally. A 2015 ban in Mexico on animals performing in circuses has encouraged animal rights activists to further press animal welfare issues. Support for the sport has been waning nationwide; in 2015, a national poll estimated that 73 percent of Mexicans supported a nationwide ban. In response, the government cut funding for bullfighting, leaving it vulnerable to recession. Weakened further by dwindling attendance, arenas rarely sell out for bullfights. Even the Mexico City bullring sells out only five times a year. The uncertain future is worrying for those whose livelihoods depend on the sport either directly or indirectly.

Bans on bullfighting across Latin America are often a game of give-and-take played out on the local level. In 2014, a court overturned a bullfighting ban in Colombia's capital Bogotá, despite petitions of protestors and the city's mayor. Two years earlier, Ecuadorians voted for or against "shows where animals are killed" on a county-by-county basis. This wording resulted in a ban on killing the bulls during the fight in Quito but not an outright ban on bullfighting in general. Despite national disapproval, many governments do not challenge the practice in part due to strong regional feelings that could challenge rulings. In the absence of a total ban on bullfighting, the states and localities choosing to ban bullfighting suffer economic consequences.



A matador takes on a bull in Mexico.
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Pro-bullfighting organizations estimate that bullfighting in Baja California brings in eleven billion dollars in revenue a year and maintains hundreds of jobs as citizens and tourists alike visit the city to watch the fights. While this figure is likely inflated, it still demonstrates the economic value bullfighting can provide. Tijuana, for example, caters events to American tourists who can return to their homes by the evening or stay for a weekend at a local vineyard. The Plaza Monumental in Tijuana is only sixty meters from the United States' border. A ban in Baja California would push these valuable visitors to other border states like Chihuahua where the sport is not prohibited. Not only would tourists react to the ban, bullfighters will likely react as well. While bullfighters feel attached to their home, a ban on their lifestyle would drive them and their practice to other states. Without a national ban on bullfighting, which is unlikely, a ban in Baja California would result in a loss of jobs and revenue to neighboring states.

The central protest of the sport is animal cruelty. Activists contend that the bulls—traditionally killed in front of the spectators—suffer needlessly and their public slaughter is a violation of the animals' rights. Matadors and bullfighting enthusiasts maintain that this oversimplifies bullfighting's relationship with the bulls. Breeding estates which raise bulls often treat the animals with care as only healthy bulls are suitable for bullfights, ensuring the animals' comfort preceding the fight as *conocedores*, or ranchers, train them for the ring. The breeding estates allow the bulls to roam and have as natural of a life as possible to maintain the fighting temperament desired in the ring. *Conocedores* encourage bulls to grow up in herds so family

dynamics can inspire fighting among the bulls as would happen in the wild. A bull raised in this environment is around four years or older when sent to fight in the ring; if slaughtered for meat, bulls only live to be eighteen months old. The bull's death in the ring, while violent, represents a final stage in the relationship between bull and matador and carries more significance for the healthy life the bull has before entering the ring.

Another concern that gives lawmakers pause is the hypocrisy of banning bullfighting but not similar activities. Cockfighting—also widely popular in Mexico—claims both cultural heritage and economic value, but no state has banned cockfighting in Mexico. While some pressure groups have raised the issue, they have had little success and little attention while the sport continues to flourish. Unlike bullfighting, cockfighting has a stronger association with the middle and lower class while the bullfight is seen as elitist. Condemning one while allowing the other with only the primary difference of class creates a double standard.

After this bullfighting season ends in the spring of 2017, the state legislature should take no further action against the tradition of bullfighting in Baja California. The concerns of animal rights activists, while valid, do not convey the complex moral aspects of bullfighting. A moral argument should not end a tradition that part of the population feels is vital to their cultural heritage and economic welfare. Lawmakers in Baja California are right for preserving both the economic and cultural lives of a minority population. •

A Basic Solution

How Cuba Can Revive Its Collapsing Science Industry

- Noah Kerwin

Often posited as a country of social, political, and technological backwardness, Cuba's scientific innovations have largely gone unnoticed. In particular, Cuba's highly advanced biotechnology sector stands out as an enigma, showing great success in spite of the nation's serious economic woes. Cuba's unique political, economic, and geographic condition has enabled scientific research to flourish. Realizing that the US embargo would block Cuba from accessing foreign medical innovations, Fidel Castro put scientific modernization at the forefront of his domestic policy. Since 1960, Castro challenged trade sanctions through the enforcement of universal literacy and the prioritization of education, science, and health. While Cuba's economic isolation and tight governmental regulations were once the linchpins of its success, the Cuban science industry is on the brink of collapse. In order to remedy the situation, Cuba must be willing to open its markets to foreign investment and increase its efforts to negotiate with the US on relaxing the embargo.

Despite a miniscule research budget and aging equipment, Cuba's progress in biomedicine is astounding. Scientists have made significant strides in developing vaccines for lung cancer, techniques for screening infants for disorders, eliminating mother-to-child HIV transmission, and creating low-cost generic versions of prescription drugs. Cuba's science sector is not only very advanced, but also cost-efficient. Faced with meager funding, scientists have been forced to find creative ways to conduct experiments, such as through resource substitution and equipment recycling. In addition, keen focus is directed towards creating low-cost medical treatments, as affordability is crucial in the low-income society.

While the world has much to benefit from the spread of Cuba's biomedical industry, its innovations and techniques are virtually trapped inside the small country due to deteriorating economic conditions and pervasive sanctions by the United States. Cuban efforts to negotiate a relaxation in sanctions and a willingness to open their markets, combined with a promise by the US not to enforce secondary sanctions, presents the best short-term solution to this issue.

Economic analysts argue that Cuba is mov-

“Although the situation currently seems dire, Cuba has the tools necessary to revitalize its science industry and its economy as a whole.”

ing towards a period of austerity, reminiscent of the harsh economic climate of the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Fueling this decline are two key events: First, Venezuela, Cuba's main oil supplier, has implemented a 40 percent reduction of its exports to Cuba due to production struggles. Second, Cuba is experiencing the collapse of global prices of its key commodities. As a result, measures have been put in place by the Castro government to restrict imports and foreign business ventures. In addition, Cuba has begun to restrict electricity and fuel consumption in certain public and business sectors. Consequently, Cuban workers, amid declining pay wages, have found difficulty commuting to work as most public transportation has been shut down.

Scientific research is an area in which this downturn has had a significant impact. Aside from being deprived of necessities such as electricity needed to run labs and transportation to bring scientists to their facilities, Cuba's weak economy starves scientists of the money it needs to sustain its research and continue on a path of progress. These realities, along with low wages in the biotechnology sector, have created a sort of brain drain where many of the brightest scientists and doctors are now leaving the island to seek employment elsewhere. Also stemming from the continually decreasing pay for scientists is the stagnation in the number of PhDs granted in science. Furthermore, without a collaborative funding agency, Cuban scientists do not receive the proper funding that would enable them to publish their studies nor the means to share their work with foreign scientists for the purpose of evaluating, replicating, and advancing their findings.

Compounding the detrimental effects to Cuban science is the persistence of the US trade embargo on Cuba. Even with Obama's announced intention to restore diplomatic relations and lift travel restrictions, progress on US collaboration with Cuban scientists and the adoption of their innovations has been minimal, as many barriers still exist to successful

cooperation. The embargo not only impedes the US-Cuban relationship; it impedes Cuba's ability to connect with every other country. The embargo imposes secondary sanctions on those who would like to conduct business in Cuba, as well as preventing those businesses from stopping at US ports. The US also pressures the international community to halt trade by threatening legal action for business involvement with Cuba.

The solution to these issues is two-fold: first, Cuba must make a bigger effort to negotiate a relaxation in the embargo imposed on it, which will likely lead to greater freedom from restrictions down the line. Second, Cuba needs to get the US to commit to end secondary sanctions, allowing Cuba to have a greater opportunity to collaborate with foreign countries independent of US desires. Although the situation currently seems dire, Cuba has the tools necessary to revitalize its science industry and its economy as a whole. •

The Crawl Towards a New Cuba

- Adam Udovich

Cuba's relations with the U.S are normalizing quickly, but its economy is stagnating. The United States reopened its embassy in Havana, travel to Cuba is at its most unrestricted point since the 1960s, and some US companies are starting to open trade negotiations with the Cuban government. Signs of openness with the United States make Cuba seem more inclined to follow other communist countries' paths to a market economy than in the past 50 years. However, Cuba's economy is strained under mismanagement and a lack of innovation. To combat its many problems, Cuba must integrate aspects of capitalism into their current structure, and cut back their burdensome bureaucracy to allow business to flourish.

Currently, 78 percent of Cubans are employed by the state in some capacity, and the few private options for employment are heavily curtailed by official government policy or bureaucratic slow down. Where small businesses have grown, the government easily shuts them down. Additionally, Cuba lacks the resources for any large scale, modern enterprise to take off. Many farmers, for example, still plow fields with mules and steel plows. Many Cubans hope for change, and the practice of leaving their native country for the technological and monetary resources of the United States and elsewhere is still prevalent, as most of Cuba lacks Internet and the developed infrastructure found in Europe, the United States and Canada.

To many, it may seem that Cuba should fully embrace capitalism. However, the island nation is weary of US capitalist influence. The 1959 revolution was specifically aimed against the corruption, vice, and inequality that Cuba suffered from under the economic domination of the United States. But the drive for independence from colonialism that propelled a communist Cuba initially will not improve Cuba's economic situation, a concept President Raúl Castro understands. Instead, Cuba should update its socialist system to a mixed market, which will allow it to take advantage of the benefits of private industry while maintaining its identity.

President Raúl Castro, the younger brother of the famous Fidel Castro, became Cuba's president in 2008 and First Secretary of the Communist Party in 2011. While by no means

“If the Cuban government can cast off the weights of its bureaucracy and government inefficiency, it will follow China and Vietnam into successful 21st century brand of socialism.”

a moderate or reformer, President Castro helped initiate 313 guidelines to implement necessary free market practices into the Cuban economy in 2011. The party may have fallen short, with only about 67 guidelines implemented by the seventh Communist Party Congress in 2016, but the push for change is still present.

In 2012, President Castro traveled to Vietnam. He strongly supports the idea of a mixed market, state-controlled economy as emulated by Vietnam and China, and sees it as the key to Cuba's success. President Castro's support for the two Asian economic powers is warranted; steady GDP growth and rising global influence from both countries is something Cuba can envy, but currently cannot obtain. Cuba has the geographic location, natural resources, and workforce to become an economic success. The major drawback is that the nation also supports a lumbering, Soviet-style bureaucracy and party machine that prevents any real economic success. Cuba must rid itself of its outdated government structure and substitute it with a leaner, more efficient replacement to allow for the proliferation of private business and the growth of an economic model similar to that of Vietnam or China.

Changes to the political establishment are necessary not only due to the cost of a party machine, but also for cultural reasons. As mentioned, few Cubans are self-employed. Most industries tend to flourish in the black market or shut down all together due to government regulators. The Cuban tattoo industry is a famous example of this. Reported by Vice Media in 2015, the Cuban government shutdown many famous tattoo parlors, threatening their owners with detainment if they continued their businesses. The government gave little reason. Ultimately the issue was rooted to the lack of proper licensing for the tattoo artists, yet the artists were unable to actually obtain the proper license. This almost comical example shows the impossible situation any entrepreneurial Cu-

bans face: unable to navigate the bureaucracy, many businesses close.

The idea of opening even portions of the socialist system to free market principles may seem like defeat to Cubans. To hold out under the ideas of liberation and equality may seem appealing to party officials, but they are not grounded in economic logic. After more than 50 years of the Communist Experiment across the USSR, China, Vietnam, and Cuba, the world should understand what results from a nationalist, socialist, centrally planned system. The empirical data suggests that Cuba should move on, but fortunately, they have the freedom to do so in their own way. Slowly implementing market changes, like the special economic zones of China, in specific parts of Cuba will help Cubans maintain their identity. With this approach, Cuba could hold onto the benefits of socialism as well as quality, universal education and healthcare.

These changes will not happen overnight, and there currently seems to be little motivation for the party to do so. Steady cash supplements to Cuba from socialist Venezuela and the growing tourism industry from the United States give the Communist Party time. As President Castro said, Cuba should be updated “without haste, but without pause.” Without haste is certainly evident since the Seventh Party Congress in 2011 appointed hardline party members to fill spots in Politburo, crushing the hope of quick reforms. As President Castro plans to step down in 2018, passing the leadership of Cuba to a new generation, the Communist Party and regular Cubans will need to reflect on the future of their country. Cuba sits on the cusp between an idealistic yet faulty past, and a bright, prosperous future. If the Cuban government can cast off the weights of its bureaucracy and government inefficiency, it will follow China and Vietnam into a successful, 21st century brand of socialism. If not, it will continue to sink, drowning under a system that fails its people. •

Wrestling Back Haiti

Setbacks from Hurricane Matthew

- *Jamie Lai*

In a history of natural disasters and social inequality, Hurricane Matthew is only the most recent catastrophe that has come Haiti's way. The economy already faced corruption, extreme poverty, and reliance on international agencies, while human trafficking and political gridlock ran rampant. Furthermore, a 7.0 earthquake leveled the country in early 2010, killing 220,000 people and displacing over a million. Gone was permanent housing, instead replaced by "temporary" shacks, slums, and destroyed morale. Six years later, many NGOs have started pulling out, human trafficking has increased, and the political gridlock has blocked further legislation. The recent category four hurricane, with winds wailing at 170 mph, destroyed 90 percent of the south of Haiti, with deaths quickly climbing to the thousands in under a week. Entire communities have been demolished, leaving thousands of Haitians susceptible to the natural forces of this disaster. Hurricane Matthew has only further destabilized the already-struggling Haitian economy and political landscape. In addressing these challenges, foreign governments and NGOs have unsuccessfully tried to fill the gap and 'fix' Haiti's development struggles while allowing corruption to proliferate the country. In order to reduce corruption and adequately address local problems, the Haitian government must take back control of the country and have more input into their own domestic affairs.

Haiti's economy already held a bleak outlook before Hurricane Matthew devastated the country. As the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, with 80 percent of all citizens living below the poverty line, Haiti held a GDP per capita of \$731.23 and was predicted to undergo a meager growth of 0.8 percent this year, down from the 2.1 percent of 2014. Haiti relies mainly on the humanitarian aid of several NGOs to maintain their subsistence economy, often borrowing from the US and the IMF to make ends meet. While neighboring countries have expanded - Puerto Rico thrives on its manufacturing-based economy and the Dominican Republic boosts its economy from tourism and agriculture - Haiti maintains a small agricultural sector that suffers after every natural disaster. Following the 2010 earthquake, many Haitian citizens fell victim to higher unemployment

with the destruction of textile factories and non-arable land. Damages often cost up to 7.8 billion USD, and revenue thus proved insufficient for Haitian economic growth.

Owing to its poor economic state, Haiti does not invest well in human capital. With one of the most privatized education sectors in the hemisphere, 85 percent of primary schools have been funded and run by nongovernmental for-profit and non-profit companies. The lack of a secure public school system has contributed to the majority of citizens having only five years of education - among the lowest in the world. This lack of proper education contributes to the standard low-wage, low-income life for Haitian citizens. With the overwhelming majority living below the poverty line, this provides little hope for the prospect of a stronger middle class.

To make matters worse, Haiti's rocky and corrupt political system provided a valid reason for NGOs and other governments to distrust the Haitian government in handling disasters correctly. As of February 2016, Haiti has been without a president after former President Martelly stepped down due to allegations of corruption, voter suppression, and bribery. During the 2011 elections, when Martelly first came to power, his spot on the second ballot was one of ambiguous origins; he would not have received the chance had his supporters not taken to the streets to demand a recount, and the US had not gotten involved. After his election, Martelly promised a sturdy reconstruction of the earthquake-torn country. This claim, however, was undermined by his increasingly voracious attempts to buy up land for his own personal leisure, terrorize his people through a new parliamentary unit called the Brigade of Operation and of Departmental Intervention (BOID), and suppress voter rights by destroying voter tallies and closing multiple voting centers in 2015. The violence and rallies in the streets in early 2016 finally forced Martelly to step down, but this only left a power vacuum in need of filling.

As corrupt as Haiti's government is, NGOs and other foreign countries fare no better at creating national stability. Despite the \$13.7 billion that poured into Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, about 150,000 people still live in the remaining camps. The camps catalyzed a cholera epidemic - one of the largest in the West - kill-

ing thousands of Haitians, while an ongoing, three-year drought has brought starvation to the country. Many factors contributed to this apparent failure, including the lack of a long-term plan to rebuild the country's infrastructure and economy, as well as corruption from NGOs sent to aid the country. In 2015 for example, of the \$488 million the Red Cross was given by charities and governments - \$170 million in which was supposedly distributed for rebuilding and repairing shelters - only six permanent houses were actually constructed by the organization. Despite claiming they used their donations efficiently, the Red Cross has refused to release specific details regarding their expenditures. This scandal reflects only a fraction of the corruption occurring in the aftermath of the earthquake. While NGOs are defined as "non-governmental," the majority of their funding come from countries like the US, Canada, Brazil, and multiple European countries. Moreover, of the \$13.7 billion accumulated, the Haitian government only received one percent of the funds, leaving organizations with no accountability and no connection to the Haitian citizens to decide the direction and formation of reconstruction. Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive expressed his concern over this lack of autonomy and the way the government cannot "do any coordination or have any coherent policies for giving to the population." Without transparency and without including the government in economic and structural dealings, Haiti will not be able to hold up independently in the long run.

Despite the current political turmoil in Haiti, the government must regain greater control over the distribution of NGO aid from relief funds. The reaction to the 2010 earthquake unearthed the carpet bagging and corruption that arose when several different nonprofits attempted to 'fix' Haiti without the government's cooperation. Humanitarian aid and economic revival will only occur if international agencies have more faith in the Haitian government. Nonprofits and other countries cannot continue to bail out the nation, as they have been doing for decades. It is in everyone's best interest to engage in cooperatively distributing humanitarian aid and promoting economic growth. •

A Regional Coalition for the Central American Refugee Crisis

- Andrew Mitchel

The continual flight of thousands of refugees from Central America has created a serious crisis in the region. These refugees are predominantly from the three 'Northern Triangle' nations of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras and are fleeing to Mexico and then, for the most part, into the United States. The Northern Triangle nations have many internal issues, which caused the flight of approximately 110,000 refugees in 2015 alone. A regional coalition should be created to assuage this crisis, as it would allow the region to collaborate for the purpose of formulating comprehensive solutions to end this crisis.

These Central American refugees fleeing from the Northern Triangle are typically unaccompanied children or families seeking harbor from the widespread violence brought about by omnipresent rival drug gangs. They also seek refuge from threats to family and livelihood from these gangs, and economic despair due to limited work opportunities. Internal violence in these nations is at an all-time high; the murder rate in Honduras peaked in 2015 at 104 murders per 100,000 people. This is one of the highest rates in the world, and is directly attributed to a recent breakdown in relations between the two major warring gangs in Honduras, MS-13 and Barrio 18. This low quality of life in the Northern Triangle causes refugees to leave home, with most hoping to find sanctuary in the United States. Refugees are subjected to coyotaje, a process controlled by local drug cartels, which siphons them through Mexico and across the United States border. In October 2016, Doctors Without Borders released reports revealing the impact of the torture, extortion and kidnapping refugees face from these smugglers: 90 percent of refugees from Central America treated in southern Mexico showed symptoms of anxiety, depression, or both. Despite the illegality and difficulty of passage into the United States, along with the 2014 creation of the Southern Border Patrol, which polices Mexico's southern border, the flow of refugees continues.

A regional coalition should be created to combat this refugee crisis. The coalition members would be from all countries impacted by the refugee crisis, both from the Northern Triangle nations and their regional neighbors. Such a coalition would allow the organizations

“A regional coalition...would allow the region to collaborate for the purpose of formulating comprehensive solutions to end this crisis.”

and agencies in these countries that deal with refugees to pool their resources and work together. In the present moment, it would first focus on the safety of those leaving the Northern Triangle and seeking asylum in other countries. This coalition's long-term goal should be the reduction of the numbers of refugees fleeing by addressing the social conditions that force their relocation. Remedying the domestic issues in the Northern Triangle nations that cause refugees to leave could accomplish this, including reducing violence and increasing economic opportunity in the Northern Triangle.

A model of a regional coalition has already taken shape in Costa Rica. In July 2016, the Costa Rican government spearheaded a regional initiative to assist and resettle Central American refugees. Costa Rica partnered with the United States Department of State, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization of Migration (IOM) to allow for a protection transfer arrangement, or PTA, which will allow for approximately 200 people every six months to be prescreened in their home country. If eligible for asylum and refugee status, these people will be sent to Costa Rica to undergo full refugee processing, and will then be resettled in the United States or elsewhere. Costa Rica has a long history of accepting migrants and refugees, and as of the 2011 census, immigrants of all nationalities constituted nine percent of the population. The Costa Rican program is a step towards a regional coalition. It is also especially intriguing because it forms a partnership with not only the United States, but also the United Nations and non-governmental organizations like IOM, all of whom strive to help refugees worldwide. This program is a model for how to process and move asylum-seekers through the region. Governments that have policies like Mexico's Southern Border Patrol, which seeks to keep refugees out by policing borders, should change their motives and instead aim to assist and resettle refugees from the Northern Tri-

angle. The Costa Rican program should also be seen as only a temporary solution to this grave regional issue, and its existence shows a clear need for a regional coalition between all countries in the region to help refugees in more comprehensive ways.

The Central American refugee crisis' impact is felt both in the Northern Triangle nations from which refugees are fleeing due to economic despair and gang violence that permeates society, and also those countries taking in refugees, namely Mexico and the United States. All nations involved in this crisis should seek to create a regional coalition, and a present model is the PTA program in Costa Rica. Such a coalition should prioritize the human rights of refugees and look to always ensure that they are treated with dignity and humanity. •

Maduro's Mess to Persist Until Term Ends

- Margaret D'Antonio

Venezuela is in a state of crisis. With unprecedented political unrest, skyrocketing inflation, and massive shortages of basic supplies such as food, medicine, and toilet paper, people are calling for the removal of incumbent president Nicolás Maduro. Maduro, the socialist successor of late President Hugo Chávez, leads a strict, authoritarian rule that has approached dictatorship. The opposition party, Democratic Unity Roundtable, has attempted to overthrow Maduro and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) through Venezuela's recall referendum process, but Maduro has thwarted this attempt by suspending the recall. Reestablishing peace now relies on mediated talks, in which Maduro and his people will meet with members of the opposition. The talks aim at restoring economic balance and addressing human rights and electoral problems, as well as reinstating constitutional rule. Despite hopes that these talks will ease tensions within Venezuela, Maduro is likely to use them as a way to both stall any more referendum recalls and further divide the opposition, effectively weakening calls for reform while making no valuable compromises.

Maduro has proven himself to be unconcerned with the rights of his people and upholding the constitutional and democratic principles of Venezuela. Since 2014, Venezuelans have endured not only food and basic necessity shortages, but also electrical shortages that cause extended blackouts, resulting in a two-day workweek for government employees designed to save electricity. There has also been anti-democratic imprisonment of up to 100 opposition leaders. These include Leopoldo López, who has been in jail since 2014 for instigating major riots, and a further eight have been forbidden to leave the country. Conditions worsened to such a degree that people called for a recall referendum, a Venezuelan constitutional process in which there can be a recall of the ruling president if certain requirements are met. This endeavor is no small feat—the opposition would ultimately need to collect as many as or more signatures in favor of recall than the number of people who voted for Maduro originally, which is 7,587,579 votes. Led by the opposition, the first step of the three-step referendum process was successfully completed

on June 24; the opposition movement collected the signatures of at least one percent of voters in all of Venezuela's 24 states.

Much to the dismay of his opponents, Maduro's party suspended the referendum process on October 20, claiming there were forged signatures and falsified names in the petition. To many, this seemed less like an adherence to the recall process and more like an attempt to eliminate the people's democratic right to remove a dictatorial leader. Furthermore, the fact that the recall is a time-sensitive issue only raises suspicions that Maduro has delayed the process so the PSUV can remain in power. Specifically, if a referendum recall is held in the first four years of the president's six-year term, a special election will allow Venezuelans to vote for a new president. If the recall is held in the last two years of the presidency, the presidency goes to the Vice President. Maduro came to power in 2013, and his term will end in 2019. If this referendum recall is successful before January 24, 2017, new elections will be held. If it is completed after that, the power transitions to his second in command, Jorge Arreaza.

Taking the suspension of the recall referendum to court seems logical in response to a blatant violation of the constitution. However, Venezuela's Supreme Court is filled with Maduro's loyal supporters. In October, Maduro proposed his federal budget for 2017. The National Assembly, which is controlled by the opposition, authorizes the budget. Maduro, to get around the National Assembly, allowed the Supreme Court to rule that for the first time in history, the court itself could pass the budget without the National Assembly reviewing it, effectively removing the National Assembly's power. Therefore, history suggests the opposition would not be able to take the suspension of the recall referendum to court because the Supreme Court has proven itself to be unconcerned with honoring constitutional values, and will act in Maduro's interest.

Maduro is buying time; he is trying to stall any more recalls, or at least delay them until 2017. This demonstrates his disregard for the rights of his people, and lack of concern for constitutional principles. By participating in talks with the opposition, Maduro has the ability to both give the illusion of compromise and

attention to the concerns of Venezuelans, while also delaying any progress the opposition might make in a recall referendum.

These talks, which began October 31st in Caracas, also divide the opposition. The Democratic Unity Roundtable consists of 16 national parties, and a further 34 regional ones. Already a fragmented group, the opposition has had trouble agreeing on how to combat the PSUV in the past. With these talks, the divide is magnifying. One of the opposition's major parties, Popular Will, has said it will not participate in the talks until the ruling party has both improved conditions for the people and released its political prisoners. Other opposition groups such as Justice First and Democratic Action favor moving forward with the talks regardless, adding to the discord within the group.

Many argue that the talks could lead to progress. An envoy of the Pope and delegates from many countries such as Spain, Panama, and the Dominican Republic are attending the talks, giving the impression of civility and willingness to compromise. Taking into account Venezuela's deteriorating economy, many believe Maduro will have to compromise heavily with the opposition, because of his lack of a bargaining position. With the national debt of Venezuela at a staggering \$170 billion and increasing, proponents of the talks believe that Maduro might be more vulnerable than previously thought.

However, Maduro will not let anything jeopardize his rule. To do so would put an end to 17 years of Venezuelan socialism, a cause he has devoted his life to. While dealing with Venezuela's issues, he will stop at nothing to stall and further divide the opposition in any way he can, disrupting and destroying their unity and movement. With the recall referendum suspended, and no recourse to the courts in hopes of justice, Maduro's control will not be cut short. These talks will likely continue for the duration of his presidential term until new elections are held on schedule in 2019. Maduro has cornered the opposition by eliminating their only real shot at ousting him, and unfortunately, Venezuela will have to endure for the rest of his term. •

Sticky Fingers

Eliminating “Mermelada” from Colombia’s Political System

- Daniel Medendorp

A key part of electoral democracy consists of the election of executives and legislators who, in theory, win the right of serving a population through the assent of the electorate. Colombia, a country with a long history of free elections despite often horrifying levels of violence, faces a threat to electoral democracy in the form of a practice known colloquially as *mermelada*—or marmalade. *Mermelada* allows the Colombian government to assign large amounts of money to regional leaders who then decide where the funds are allocated. In a society where multiple people in a single family often hold various political offices, this not only enables conflicts of interest and corruption, but can also sway vital elections. In order for electoral democracy to continue to thrive in Colombia, *mermelada* must be eliminated from the political process.

Mermelada, although not clientelism per se, works well within the traditional patronage system that characterizes Latin American politics. Generally, clientelism—found in different forms throughout the world—consists of taking advantage of hierarchical social relationships for a political purpose. Clientelism takes a leading role in many parts of Colombia, especially in poorer areas with few resources. Colombia has a long history with respect to exchanging votes for resources, and *mermelada* is a widespread, government-sanctioned practice. Government agencies negotiate funds to members of congress in exchange for their backing on key legislation. The bigger the allocation, the more fervent the support expected in return. The member of congress—with complete autonomy—then gives the funds to supportive local politicians (often family) for various projects, often related to infrastructure. Many of these projects, frequently unnecessary and quoted at over twice their actual value, allow politicians and contractors alike to profit, using the remainder to fund campaigns or strengthen their support base through “passing out the tamales”, a practice which in Colombia has come to define the general exchange of material incentives for votes. *Mermelada* also opens the door for conflict of interest, due to many members of

congress’ familial ties with local politicians.

Although *mermelada* often trickles down to fund local election campaigns, this practice can heavily influence national elections as well. Musa Besaile and Bernardo Elías, two senators from influential local families hailing from the town of Sahagún on Colombia’s Caribbean coast, have mastered the use of *mermelada* to their advantage. Although neither Senator proposed a single piece of legislation during the 2010-2014 Congress, Besaile and Elías received the second and third highest vote counts of anybody running for Senate in the 2014 congressional elections. Given that all Colombians vote for the same senators, their overwhelming victory raises questions. Despite low voter turnout across Colombia, Besaile, Elías, and other Senators that received large amounts of *mermelada*, won majorities in municipalities with voter turnout that far outperformed the national average—a figure not replicated in the same municipalities two months later during the first round of presidential elections. During the second round, however, turnout increased significantly as incumbent president Juan Manuel Santos won reelection. Although part of this increase could be attributed to backlash against Santos’ opponent, Colombian political blog La Silla Vacía reported increased activity between the first and second rounds of the election among the *mermelada*-laden political machinery of members of congress like Besaile and Elías to assure co-partisan Santos of a second-round victory. The lessened influence of *mermelada* in a national election can be seen in the 2016 referendum on the Colombian peace deal with the country’s largest rebel group. Turnout in many municipalities almost halved that of the 2014 congressional elections, amidst reports of low enthusiasm among *mermelada* recipients and their associated local leaders.

With the 2018 Colombian elections fast approaching, and potential candidates for the presidency making their voices heard throughout the country, *mermelada* puts fair elections at risk. The upcoming elections will determine the executor of the contentious peace process with the country’s largest

rebel group, in addition to having to address increasing polarization, a collapsing health system, and inheriting an education system that ranks among the lowest of 65 middle to high-income countries surveyed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The issue of electing a victorious candidate on the basis of allocation of *mermelada* and the accompanying consequences, rather than a candidate politically-minded Colombians believe is best to tackle the widespread dissatisfaction with government has come to a head. Many believe the inheritor of Santos’ extensive political machinery to be his vice president Germán Vargas Lleras, who is known to have supported controversial local politicians in the past, many of them recipients of *mermelada*. Endorsements from certain senators would increase the likelihood of his victory immensely, and prevent Colombia from electing a leader based on policy.

Congressional beneficiaries of *mermelada* have washed their hands of the practice by stating that they only “govern” and oversee projects, but do not participate in contracting individuals for the projects, effectively eliminating their culpability in any scandal that may emerge. Additionally, supporters of *mermelada* argue that only people from the region they are representing can truly know the needs of the population, and assign funds accordingly. La Silla Vacía reports otherwise, stating that residents in Sahagún found many infrastructure projects unnecessary, citing the construction of a new bus terminal despite the existence of one, in addition to the re-paving of roads in good condition, all of which had banners thanking Bernardo Elías for his attention to the region.

With so much at stake in the upcoming Colombian elections, *mermelada* must be ended in order to ensure a fair vote for the next president. Although it is unlikely that clientelism in Colombia will cease with the elimination of *mermelada*, ridding congress of the government-sponsored catalyst for clientelism would signal the government’s desire to safeguard the democratic principles that has made Colombia one of Latin America’s longest-running democracies. •

Avoiding Impunity

Petrobras and the Car Wash

- Grace Bristol

Petróleo Brasileiro (Petrobras) is one of South America's largest state-run oil companies, and has been subject to ongoing scrutiny over the past two years. Brazil's investigation into the oil giant's corruption scandal has created enormous ripple effects throughout the country's political landscape. After being privatized for a short period of time, the company was placed back under state control by the leftist Workers' Party, even though the state only owns about 51 percent of the company, and the rest is publicly traded. Petrobras hit the jackpot in 2007 when they discovered a huge quantity of oil, known as the "pre-salt" oilfields, due to the massive amount of salt found above the oil reserves. While still a state-run company, Petrobras declared themselves the main business in charge of managing and reaping the lucrative profits from pre-salt discoveries. However, Petrobras soon began racking up staggering amounts of debt and in early 2014 information was released alleging widespread corruption within the company. The Petrobras scandal continues today as lawmakers currently seek to pass legislation through Congress that would excuse many of the corrupt executives and politicians involved. However, Congress and the Supreme Court should not allow any of these bills to pass, as they would ultimately pardon the felons for numerous criminal offenses and set an example for the Brazilian people that, as long as one has money and power, they are exempt from prosecution.

The Petrobras scandal, commonly referred to as *Lava Jato*, or Car Wash, stemmed from the Worker's Party and other partners selecting their own people to occupy powerful positions at the company. This led to millions and eventually billions of dollars being siphoned off into the Worker's Party and into the pockets of their partners. This would not have been feasible without the assistance of numerous Petrobras contractors, many construction companies, and several black market money dealers. The underlying assumption is that the Worker's Party and their partners used some of these stolen funds to fuel their election campaigns and keep them in power, a claim which party members strongly deny.

One of the biggest players in the corruption scandal was infamous money launderer Alberto Youssef, who revealed many names of partici-



A Petrobras refinery in Cochabamba, Brazil.
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pants in the Petrobras scandal in exchange for a plea deal. However, Youssef's reveal was only the tip of the iceberg. In a 61-20 vote, the Brazilian senate chose to impeach former president Dilma Rousseff on August 31, 2016. The charges against Ms. Rousseff included mishandling the government budget and illegally moving funds in order to make the economy seem more robust than it actually was. Brazil's current president, Michel Temer, replaced her. Though her impeachment was not publicly declared in relation to the Petrobras scandal, there seemed to be an indirect connection. Ms. Rousseff was on Petrobras' board of directors during the time when the crimes were committed. She then appointed former President of Brazil Lula da Silva as her chief of staff, presumably in order to protect him from his role in the scandal, indicating her extensive knowledge of the fraud. Currently, da Silva is facing two trials in connection to the corruption.

Though Ms. Rousseff is now out of office, a new conflict is arising. Politicians and other participants in the Petrobras scandal are pushing legislation that would let them get off clean. In the past month, Congress has been presented with several bills that would shelter those involved in the scandal from prosecution. Such bills include measures to criminalize so-called "slush-funds," which would enforce the ban on illegal campaign donations. However, it would by-proxy benefit those involved in the Petrobras scandal by applying exclusively to future funds, not applicable to any past events. Another suggested bill would aim to cut prosecutors out of the equation when negotiating with companies charged with corruption. In addition, it would protect powerful executives from prosecution after a deal has been made.

These bills are a death sentence for justice in Brazil. On a larger scale, if these bills were implemented, it would send a message to the world that there will always be loopholes for powerful corporations and politicians involved in any sort of corruption. Pressuring prosecutors to let crooked politicians and businessmen involved in this scandal off scot-free would only result in freeing those currently imprisoned. It would also return a plethora of seized assets, most of which was purchased with dirty money laundered over the course of several years.

Brazil's prosecutors should not back down from pursuing the investigations of those involved in the scandal. The bills proposed by lawmakers only aim to preserve whatever is left of the politicians' and executives' integrity. If passed, these bills would also set a precedent that new laws can always be passed excusing current corruption charges with the promise of pursuing them in the future. It would erase much of the progress already made in the Petrobras case. One of the lead prosecutors in the investigation, Deltan Dallagnol, stated that these bills "...would bury Operation Car Wash." These bills are likely in defensive preparation for the plea bargain statements expected from over 70 employees in an implicated business, which in turn will reveal many more politicians involved in the scandal. At this stage in the painfully long investigation, these bills are merely sad, yet potentially dangerous, attempts at excusing rich and powerful criminals.

Brazil now needs to look to their Supreme Court, which many are hopeful will strike down any attempts at excusing the acts of these criminals. The Petrobras scandal has brought to light the vast, intertwined corruption between companies and the government. It has contributed to Brazil's increasingly precarious economy and the people's loss of faith in their leaders. The confidence the Brazilian people have in their economy and the changes promised by their leaders is severely diluted. If justice is to be served and the Petrobras case put to rest in the near future, these bills should not be allowed to pass. Even if justice is served, and systematic corruption is temporarily illuminated and diminished, the effects of this scandal will undoubtedly be long-lasting and certainly not end corruption in Brazil. •

Peru & the New Gold Rush

- Connor VanDenBosch

Nestled beneath the canopy trees of the Amazon Rainforest lies the most diverse plant and animal environment in the discovered world. It includes tens of thousands of species of birds, reptiles, and mammals, with many of these creatures – such as the two-toed Hoffman sloth – existing exclusively in the Amazon. In the past 40 years, however, a far more populous and invasive species has been destroying this Wonder of the World: humans. Aside from rapid deforestation by large multinational corporations, which has been curbed in the past five years, a new group of resource harvesters has appeared to be taking over large tracts of the Amazon, primarily in the Tambopata National Reserve located in Peru. Unlike previous infiltrators, which mainly contributed to deforestation in the pursuit of logging mahogany and other hardwoods, the new driving force is gold. Following the financial crisis of 2008, the price of gold increased rapidly, leading many poor South Americans to search for and gather gold. Even though the Peruvian economy is performing very well compared to its South American neighbors, thousands of Peruvians opt for illegal gold mining in the Tambopata. Before Peru loses its most important natural resource, the government needs to strengthen its deforestation deterrents in the Tambopata National Reserve and implement more policies to alleviate poverty.

Puerto Maldonado, a city located less than 30 miles from Tambopata, accounts for 70 percent of the illegal gold production in Peru. An estimated 30 thousand miners live in or near Puerto Maldonado, most of who are part of the 22 percent of Peruvians who live beneath the poverty line. Although World Bank figures estimate the nation's unemployment hovers around 6 percent, the average income is so low that illegal endeavors such as mining in nature reserves are tempting. Coupling that with the surge in the price of gold following the 2008 financial crisis – from around 900 USD per ounce in 2008 to 1621 USD in 2013 – has proved attractive to impoverished Peruvians. According to an economist at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, illegal mining, based on quantity of exports, increased by 540 percent from 2006 to 2015.

This jump in illegal mining is proving to be



A controlled burn clears a section of the Peruvian rainforest.
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troublesome to the environment and the people surrounding the Tambopata National Reserve. The most visible damage is seen in the toxic wastelands that have replaced the lush, green, lively ecosystem of the Amazon. According to Global Forest Watch, Peru's Amazon deforestation rate has increased from approximately 130,000 hectares (one hectare equals 2.47 acres) in 2008, to 250,000 hectares in 2012. This destruction has displaced millions of animals, including thousands of endangered two-toed Hoffman sloths. In addition to chopping down trees, the miners use mercury to refine the gold. Lacking properly trained oversight, mercury seeps into rivers, streams, and other waterways. As a result, mercury poisoning has become an epidemic in the areas surrounding Tambopata, with "41 percent of the population [having] been exposed to mercury contamination," according to Manuel Pulgar Vidal, the environment minister of Peru. Without immediate action by the Peruvian government, millions of other people will be put in jeopardy of mercury poisoning.

To stop the deforestation in Tambopata and halt the mercury contamination of waterways surrounding it, the Peruvian government wants to increase the military presence in the National Reserve. The problem with this is that there are already groups of marines raiding these illegal mining operations, but apparently it is not enough. According to Suzanne Daley of the New York Times, "the marines and rangers are outmanned and under equipped." If the government really wants to attack this problem effectively at the local level, it should focus its recruiting to places such as Puerto Maldonado, which have populations highly susceptible to illegal gold mining operations. That would decrease the supply of illegal miners as well as

crackdown on those already involved with it.

However, that plan fails to address the real issue: poverty. The 22 percent of Peruvians living in poverty would only be partially helped by increased military operations. A more effective strategy includes alleviating poverty in at-risk areas of the country. By implementing more welfare programs and making Peru more business-friendly through tax holidays and other incentives, unemployment would decrease and standards of living would increase. These two alleviations would reduce the susceptibility of Peruvians to illegal gold mining in areas of the Amazon such as the Tambopata National Reserve.

Some would argue that this plan would be too costly for the South American country. The incredible cost required for such a policy would either require international borrowing or large tax burdens, the latter of which would reduce disposable income and thus work against the proposal to raise living standards. Though it would require international borrowing, at least in the short run, eventually increased tax revenue stemming from increased rates of employment would supplant the government's foreign debt. Also, the increased taxes to fund the plan would reduce disposable income, but not necessarily decrease the Peruvian standard of living. As with all developing nations, increased taxation is required to improve public infrastructure. After enough development, investment in infrastructure will boost Peruvian productivity and thus output, leading to a fall in taxes relative to income.

The Tambopata National Reserve and the millions of Peruvians surrounding it need to be protected. The continuation of illegal gold mining practices will result in more deforestation, more extinction of plants and animals, and more mercury poisoning for the people of Peru. Military force has proven to be an insufficient deterrent that disregards poverty as the central catalyst of illegal gold mining. By implementing business-friendly policies while simultaneously increasing welfare spending in the immediate future, the long-term safety of the region will improve. •

The True Trade

How the TPP Exchanges Public Health for Economic Growth and Security

- Maria Fabrizio

Though the future of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) hangs in limbo under President-elect Donald Trump, it is still important to look carefully at the implications of the TPP in case any vestige of the deal remains in place. Indeed, notwithstanding its current ambiguous status, the TPP remains a relevant trade deal that has the potential to be felt in a variety of ways across the 12 participating countries along the Pacific. The three Latin American countries in the TPP – Mexico, Peru, and Chile – are no exception, and are among the countries most likely to experience lasting consequences as a result of their participation in the Partnership.

One major and often overlooked aspect of the trade deal is its lack of concern for the price and accessibility of nutritious food. This is especially important for the three Latin American member-countries who are already suffering from poor nutrition. For example, Mexico and Chile are among the top four countries with the highest levels of obesity according to the World Bank. This means that nutrition is not just valuable, but rather essential to the well being of the state as a whole. Historically, free trade agreements like NAFTA have compromised the nutritional security of countries like Mexico in favor of lenient regulatory laws, which favor corporate interests over citizen health. Vague clauses in the TPP regarding food safety and regulation suggest that not much has changed. Indeed, it seems inevitable that the high levels of poor nutrition and obesity in Latin American countries will only be exacerbated by the trade deal.

Notably, the Trans-Pacific Partnership makes almost no mention of food acquisition and nutrition in its 2,000+ pages. Instead, the deal focuses on maximizing economic gains and fortifying ties for member countries. Like other trade deals before it, the goals of the TPP are focused on economic growth and strengthened socio-political ties. These goals by themselves are not problematic, since strengthened intergovernmental relations and economic growth can increase the quality of

life for many citizens and foster economic prosperity. The problem with focusing almost exclusively on economics and socio-political ties is that these approaches often fail to account for the more nuanced, non-monetary externalities of economic growth. In the case of nutritious food, the Trans-Pacific Partnership sacrifices national health and cultural ties to traditional foods in order to achieve economic growth and international security. Though this formula works for some people, the trade-off disproportionately impacts the people who cannot afford to purchase more expensive, healthy alternatives to the often times less healthy, processed international products.

One particularly salient example of this is quinoa. Quinoa is a grain cultivated in the Andean region, including Peru, known for its high concentration of protein, essential amino acids, and nutrients. The grain is considered a staple food among Andean groups because of its historical significance and dense nutritional value. For centuries, people in the Andean region have relied on quinoa as a major source of energy and sustenance because of the grain's relative accessibility and nutritional utility. After the United Nations declared 2013 the "International Year of Quinoa," demand for the grain skyrocketed, and it has retained popularity in Western countries ever since. This heightened demand abroad has caused the price of quinoa to climb within Andean countries making the grain too expensive especially for many of the less affluent areas who have relied on the grain for centuries. In short, these inflated prices from abroad ultimately have made quinoa inaccessible to the native peoples who rely on it for sustenance.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership only exacerbates this trend by continuing to make nutritious, local foods inaccessible by making those goods cheaper abroad through lowering trade barriers and neglecting to include provisions protecting consumer health. In simple terms, the trade deal all but ensures that trendy "super foods" foods like quinoa will be exported in exchange for less healthy, processed alternatives. For

example, according to Public Citizen, a nonprofit think tank focused on national regulation, "food labels could be challenged as 'trade barriers.'" Under NAFTA, this meant that Mexico's tax on high fructose corn syrup needed to be overturned in order to stop blocking the import of mostly US goods that included the product. This was good for US exporters, but harmful for Mexican citizens whose levels of obesity continued to rise under NAFTA in part due to curbed consumer protections like the tax on high fructose corn syrup. The Trans-Pacific Partnership looks like it will follow a similar path. In short, the climbing prices of nutritional, local foods force consumers in Mexico, Peru, and Chile to choose between a strained pocketbook and a compromised diet.

Ultimately, the Trans-Pacific Partnership only focuses on two dimensions of growth and development – economics and security. The TPP fails to recognize that public health represents an equally important dimension of growth and development. In fact, economics, security, and public health development are inextricably linked. Indeed, how can a country strengthen its economy if its people are suffering from obesity, diabetes, or related health problems? Similarly, how can a country expect to protect itself from external security threats if it cannot manage the wellness of its citizens at home? Eric Holt-Giménez, executive director of Food First, a national food and development nonprofit, perhaps put it best when he said, "They're not expanding businesses to improve diets, they're doing that to meet the bottom line." Even in an era where globalization and international trade deals are facing backlash from leaders like President-elect Trump, it is still important to recognize that growth and development is multi-dimensional. This means that in deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership, issues like public health should not be neglected in the name of economic growth and security fortification. Rather, they should be considered an essential part of the conversation in the first place. •

An Important Favor to Ask

How Malaysia's NDF Restrictions Will Propel Its Economy Forward

- Akash Ramanujam

On November 16th, the Malaysian government tried an unorthodox strategy to control capital outflows: it requested that banks operating in Malaysia sign an agreement declaring they would not engage in trading of Non-Deliverable Forwards (NDFs) with the Malaysian ringgit. An NDF is a financial instrument used to speculate on the value of a currency; by restricting the use of NDFs, the Malaysian government aims to minimize the ringgit's recent volatility. While the move has raised concerns with investors and Malaysian free-marketeers, the NDF-restriction is a wise move, considering Malaysia's dwindling foreign reserves, disheartening export outlook, and the potential of an increase in world oil prices.

Although Malaysia has developed a laudable manufacturing base, its economy still heavily relies on raw materials exports, and has been hit hard by the recent slump in commodity prices. This is bad news for a country as dependent on exports as Malaysia; according to the Asian Development Bank, "the narrowing current account surplus has resulted in currency volatility, slowdown in investments, and growing fiscal deficit." In April of 2015, the Malaysian government introduced a Goods and Services Tax (GST) in an effort to replenish government coffers that had been depleted due to lower commodity prices and a slowdown in petroleum exports. Yet the government still found it necessary to slash subsidies on fuel and cooking oil, claiming that they were necessary to maintain government reserves. This desperation for funds would be concerning enough, without the added stress of massive capital outflows and currency depreciation. In the aftermath of Donald Trump's election, many yield-chasing investors have been dumping Malaysian bonds to put funds into the US bond and stock markets. This has taken a toll on the government's foreign reserves and put it in a tough position, as the ringgit slides against the dollar and the government's foreign exchange reserves dry up.

The government can ill-afford a dearth of foreign currency: if the government's slashing of subsidies and implementation of a GST is any indication of the health of government finances, the government will have trouble fulfilling fiscal obligations. This is in light of Prime

“The NDF-restriction is a wise move, considering Malaysia's dwindling foreign reserves, disheartening export outlook, and the potential of an increase in world oil prices.”

Minister Najib Razak's new budget, which proposed increased assistance to economically disadvantaged households and small to medium sized businesses. Because the government is facing severe fiscal constraints, the central bank may need to pull the ringgit from foreign exchange markets to pay for Razak's proposals, which it will find impossible without reserves of foreign currency. NDF trading pushes the value of the ringgit down, making it difficult for the government to maintain its target exchange rate. Maintaining the exchange rate is vital to preventing runaway inflation and thus protect consumer spending, without running out of foreign currency. This is where the NDF restriction comes in handy: if firms stop entering NDF contracts using ringgit, then less ringgit will be demanded on the foreign exchange market. This will allow the ringgit to appreciate against the dollar without forcing the government to burn through its reserves, which is key if the government is to attain its budget goals.

Malaysia's concerns may have been less aggravated than they are, were it not for the country's discouraging export outlook. Malaysia's economy is still firmly tied to its exports, and Malaysia's export prospects have taken big hits in the past year. China's slowdown has been a difficult pill to swallow for Malaysian exporters dependent on China's enormous market. Additionally, Malaysian hopes for TPP gains are unlikely to materialize under a Trump administration, which has repeatedly attacked the deal. It is therefore especially important for the Malaysian government to encourage domestic spending. Fortunately for the Malaysian government, domestic spending has been strong so far this year. However, if depreciation continues, imported inflation may push consumers to save rather than spend, dealing a deadly blow to the nation's economy. The NDF restriction could thus be a boon to the economy by sheltering consumer spending and allowing the economy to stay afloat while exports flounder.

It is natural to wonder whether such a restriction would jeopardize Malaysia as an investment destination, with potential investors concerned over capital controls. This is a valid concern, yet the Malaysian government need not be concerned. Malaysia may soon find its economic situation assisted by rising oil prices; OPEC is charted to increase prices soon and Russia may even cut production in an effort to lift prices. A hike in oil prices would be extremely beneficial to Malaysian coffers, boosting petroleum exports and foreign reserves and propelling the nation's economy forward. As a price increase materializes, the increase in petroleum revenue would relieve fiscal pressures, allowing the government to free up the currency and roll back NDF restrictions.

Regardless, the Malaysian central bank desperately needs to control the ringgit's slide. Given it is already short on foreign currency, the NDF restriction is a smart policy, allowing the government to nurture domestic consumption while saving what little reserves it has. Malaysia will come out stronger and more stable because of it. •

Educating China's Migrant Children

A Social and Economic Necessity

- Aoife Coady

In addition to addressing issues of economic growth, green development, and international trade, China's 13th five-year plan, adopted in March 2016, touches on providing more equal access to urban public services for Chinese citizens over the next five years. The goal is primarily intended to extend public services such as healthcare, social welfare, and education to the increasing number of Chinese workers who, driven by the forces of urbanization, are leaving their rural hometowns for cities in search of jobs. The government plans to achieve the expanded access largely through reform of the country's *hukou* household registration system and the creation of new cities. However, while the blueprint outlines general objectives regarding the livelihoods of migrant workers and their families, there must be a stronger and more directed focus on the critical issue of improving migrant workers' children's access to public education if China is to achieve the societal equality and sustainable economic growth for which it strives. Specifically, *hukou* restrictions regarding access to public education have to be eliminated, and the government needs to invest in expanding the country's public education system.

China's *hukou* system, introduced in the 1950s, ties citizens' access to public services to their residential status. The original intent was to limit the movement of people from rural to urban areas, thus preventing overcrowding and allowing cities to effectively modernize. However, as rapid urbanization has increasingly become a government-endorsed reality, this long-standing system is making it difficult for many migrants to receive basic public services in their new cities. As a result, the children who follow their job-seeking parents into cities face limited access to the urban public schools, the only schools their parents can afford.

In response, modest 'migrant schools' have sprung up, sometimes unauthorized, on the outskirts of big cities. Most of these schools are privately funded and aim to provide education specifically for the children of migrant workers. While these schools have been invaluable to many migrant families, they are often of poor-quality, unstable, and contribute significantly to the harmful segregation of urban residents and migrants within cities. Most detrimentally, the certification obtained upon graduating a mi-

grant middle school is insufficient for entrance into public high schools, the only schools allowed to offer China's national college entrance exam. In this way, students are effectively barred from the opportunity to obtain further education. Threatening the very existence of migrant schools, in early November 2016 the Chinese government enacted a restriction on for-profit schools, which most migrant schools are, making it difficult for new schools to be created and even prompting those existing to shut down. The policy stems from the government's belief that the provision of education is its responsibility alone, even though it is failing to provide education for everyone. Although migrant schools have helped to temporarily ameliorate the education gap, they are clearly not a viable long-term solution.

Ensuring education for migrant children is essential to not only creating a more just society, but also to achieving and sustaining the very economic growth that the government has targeted in their five-year plan. The plan proposes ambitious economic goals, but its lack of attention to migrant children's access to education presents a serious contradiction. At the forefront, the plan has set an annual economic (GDP) growth target of 6.5-7 percent for the next five years, and it aims to achieve this in part by shifting to an innovation-driven economy. An innovation-driven economy emphasizes the need for human capital and skilled workers, requiring a more highly educated generation, of which migrant children will constitute an increasingly large proportion. Migrants are not only crucial to the labor supply, but also to consumption demand and the property market, both of which can positively affect the economy. Consequently, efforts to stimulate economic growth must be complemented by addressing the needs of migrant workers and their children, specifically their access to education, if they are to be effective and sustainable. In addition to economic concerns, by making it difficult for migrant children to receive a formal education, the system forces them down the same low-skilled path as their parents, propagating the intergenerational transmission of poverty and undermining social mobility, another key goal of the five-year plan.

While the 13th five-year plan both recognizes the need to expand coverage of public services

to migrant workers and mentions improving the overall quality of the country's education, it contains no explicit nor substantive discussion regarding efforts to ensure the provision of quality education for the children of migrant workers, indicating non-prioritization of the issue. The Chinese government needs to take more direct and immediate action to address this detrimental barrier. Considering the inability of private migrant schools to be a long-term solution to the problem, the link between one's *hukou* residential status and one's ability to attend public school has to be broken completely before the Chinese government can truly create a fairer society and achieve the economic growth it envisions.

To address the ramifications of such an action, the government should, wherever possible, invest in expanding the urban public school system to accommodate the increasing number of migrant children. This entails expanding its capacity, resources, and reach. To prevent overcrowding in the bigger cities, which has been the main barrier to complete eradication of the *hukou* system, the five-year plan has predicted the sprouting of smaller cities that will present new job opportunities for migrants. In these cities, the migrants will be granted local *hukou* status and therefore access to public services. The government must make substantive efforts, however, to ensure that high-quality public schools are created in these new, migrant-dominated cities and systematically maintained at the local level. In the meantime, it would be beneficial for private migrant schools to be given temporary governmental support, rather than threats of being shut down, while long-term developments take place. Investing in expanding public education is certainly no quick or easy task, so the role of privately funded schools, run by staff who are incredibly devoted to ameliorating the challenges facing migrant families, cannot be underestimated.

While China's 13th five-year plan addresses the need to improve the livelihoods of urban migrant workers, the critical issue of educating migrant children is not receiving the attention it deserves. If the government does not act swiftly, another generation of Chinese children may be forced to abandon their ambitions, putting the growth of the Chinese economy at risk. •

Light at the End of the Tunnel

A Trump Presidency's Impact in China

- Casey Dwyer

With Donald Trump taking office in just a few weeks, many questions remain as to how his presidency could impact China's economy and politics over the next four years. The United States' President-elect has already proposed numerous anti-China initiatives, which include immediately labeling China as a currency manipulator and enacting strict tariffs on all Chinese imports. While Trump may seem like a nightmare for an already slowing Chinese economy, he has expressed concerns over the American military presence in Asia- something Beijing will be eager to exploit vis-a-vis its activities in the South China Sea. Chinese leaders should ultimately take a blow to the economy with a grain of salt, as diminishing US alliances in East Asia could eventually provide China far more prosperous opportunities in the South China Sea and beyond.

In late October, the Trump campaign released an early draft of his 100-day plan, which reaffirmed his commitment to challenging China on trade. One of the President-elect's most notable proposals is to label China as a currency manipulator, as China has come under increasing international pressure for intentionally devaluing the yuan to remain competitive in global manufacturing. While China has already taken steps to strengthen its currency, many have speculated that this concession is a big reason for China's recent declines in GDP growth. With the cost of labor increasing due to rising standards of living, an even stronger yuan could serve as another blow to China's ability to compete against cheaper labor in nearby countries like India and Vietnam.

Trump has also suggested imposing a notably high 45 percent tariff on all Chinese imports. It seems that a trade war is a strong possibility, as Trump has frequently expressed his disdain for US-China trade relations, even going as far as to claim that China consistently "rapes" the US in negotiations. The move would threaten to dramatically cut foreign demand for many Chinese exports, and coupled with likely revenge tariffs on American goods by the Communist Party of China (CPC), it would likely raise prices for producers and consumers in both countries. CPC officials have already fired back that they would block auto-

“China may walk away from the 2016 US election with the biggest prize of all: The South China Sea.”

motive and even iPhone exports in the event of a trade war, but they will likely have to concede to some US demands given that China, a primarily exporting country, is at a disadvantage in negotiating tariffs. With GDP growth rates at their lowest level since 1990, the CPC is eager to quell domestic fears of instability, which ultimately serve as threats to the party's legitimacy and future as the sole political power in China. Over the next four years, strict tariffs and strong pressure to end currency devaluation are likely to serve as obstacles to the CPC's desire to quickly restore its previous economic success.

While President-elect Trump presents a dim outlook for the Chinese economy in the near future, he offers an unprecedented opportunity for China's foreign policy to expand in both influence and area for generations to come. With mounting tensions in the South China Sea, which included frequent American military patrols under the Obama administration, the President-elect's plan to move troops out of Asia will present an intriguing opportunity for Chinese expansion. Due to monitoring by both the US and other East Asian countries, the CPC has been unable to tap into the immense and prosperous resources under the ocean floor. According to some estimates, the sea could contain as many as 130 billion barrels of oil, making it the second most oil-rich place on the planet behind Saudi Arabia. Despite China's competing claims with multiple Southeast Asian countries, the U.S holds the strongest military presence and has served as one of the chief forces limiting 'island-seizing' by the CPC. Some countries, such as the Philippines, have even recently pivoted away from the US toward Beijing in return for lucrative investment and financing. Combined with little-enforced rulings by the International Court of Justice, diminishing US influence in East Asia will inch China one step closer to beginning exploration for the coveted oil and gas resources. While Trump has expressed his interests in oil reserves abroad, he still remains hesitant to commit American

forces to policing in East Asia due to spending concerns, which will likely cause the US to miss out on the profitable opportunities in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping and the CPC will be eager to continue putting pressure on other Asian countries in a conflict that looks to be losing importance on the American agenda.

For now, the CPC will remain cautious about US-China trade policies while staying hopeful for a weakened US military presence in East Asia. If Trump follows through with the latter, China may walk away from the 2016 US election with the biggest prize of all: The South China Sea. While Trump is likely to further destabilize the already slowing economy, CPC officials should ultimately remain patient in the upcoming four years, as a shot at the South China Sea and its resources seems more likely than ever. •

ASEAN

It's Time to Choose China over the US

- Chris Pang

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) explosive growth over the past several decades is directly attributed to US political and economic diplomacy. An advocate of free trade and democracy, the US steadfastly continues to pressure ASEAN countries to transition to democracy and capitalism, and all to good effect: by 2020, their middle class is poised to be more populous than that of the US. Now, however, American diplomacy has overstayed its welcome. The strict, overarching enforcement of American diplomacy has chilled the ability of these governments to make better decisions for their respective countries, as most recently shown in the Philippines and Thailand. The rapid rise of China, therefore, presents a fresh opportunity for ASEAN to choose a better partner to further its development.

Ten member nations comprise ASEAN: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Association's goal is to further the economic, cultural, and social integration of Southeast Asia, and is in many ways similar to the European Union. Today, a growing cohort of Southeast Asian countries is realizing that strict adherence to the copy-and-paste version of American democracy no longer suits each country's individual needs. In a region with many underdeveloped countries, it does not help that when nations try to chart their own path and slightly deviate from American dogma, the US government threatens them with sanctions.

Much to the dismay of the US government and Western media, China is a prime example of an extremely successful nation that is decidedly not defined by the American definition of democracy. Soon to be the world's biggest economy, China is now expanding its global influence, and other developed nations are taking notice. China's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), for example, rivals the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Proposed in 2009 and beginning in 2016, the Bank has signed on almost all of the United States' closest allies, including Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, along with all ten ASEAN member states. A nation that shares much closer ties - both culturally

and geographically - with ASEAN and whose foreign policy generally is to avoid intervention in other states' internal affairs, China now presents ASEAN the opportunity to choose a less restrictive development partner.

Within ASEAN, history has shown that a representative democracy is rarely successful when implemented in a developing country. Thailand is a prime example. Thailand's electorate is largely polarized, with the majority of poor farmers in the North favoring generous policies that are staunchly opposed by the minority middle and upper class in the South. Thailand's elected officials, under pressure to remain in power, have instituted economically inefficient policies such as the infamous 2014 rice subsidy scheme, in which rice was bought below the market price for farmers. In effect, the Western system of a representative democracy allowed the scheme to throw Thailand into chaos. The Thai military suspended democracy, much to the displeasure of the American government, which threatened the withdrawal of US aid and assistance to the nation.

Democracy has not worked for Thailand, and it would thus be foolish for the nation to try democracy again as it develops. Several developed countries in Asia, such as South Korea and Taiwan, were only able to fully modernize under an authoritarian regime before transitioning to democracy. It is unsurprising that Thailand, considered an important US ally, has shied away from the US and is currying favor with China. Although still bound by a US defense treaty, Thailand started joint military exercises with China last year and even agreed to purchase Chinese-made submarines, in the midst of the general consensus that the Thai-US military relationship had lost its relevance. Other traditionally close US allies have also displayed overtures to China - Malaysia has even committed to buying Chinese-made patrol ships for its operations.

The Philippines may perhaps be the most noteworthy example of a traditional US stalwart that has also cooled its relationship with the US. Of all the ASEAN nations, the Philippines has taken the largest step towards China, sparked largely by Western criticisms of alleged human rights abuses. President Rodrigo Duterte based his campaign largely on the fight against drugs,

crime, and corruption present in the nation over the past several decades. Western NGOs and governments, most notably the Obama administration, have accused Duterte of not following due process and authorizing harsh security measures. Rather than kowtowing to the US, Duterte has lashed back, citing US hypocrisy and colonial legacy in the Philippines. The Philippine public largely approves of him; he won the election in a landslide victory, and a September 2016 poll showed an approval rating exceeding 75 percent. In his October 2016 trip to Beijing, Duterte signaled his intent to potentially sever US ties and realign to China, which has increased tensions with Washington and called years of security cooperation into question.

Tired of being pawns on the US foreign policy chessboard, the Philippines' neighbors are also taking notice of the benefits of a closer China relationship. The South China Sea issue, one that has pitted many ASEAN members and the US against China, is now largely resolved with respect to the Philippines. Prior to Duterte, during the pro-US Aquino administration, an international tribunal in The Hague rebuked China for its activity in the contested waters of the South China Sea, to which the Philippines (and many other ASEAN nations) lay claim. This served as justification for the US' increased military presence in the region. Duterte, however, is prioritizing the possible greater benefits of cooperating with China despite challenging territorial claims. Speaking to the New York Times, Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University believes that the peaceful bilateral resolution of the South China Sea issue between China and the Philippines has shown other countries that the South China Sea disputes may be resolved peacefully without relying on the US.

Today, ASEAN is at a crossroads. It can choose to make closer ties with China, develop, and have control over its own affairs, or it can wallow under US influence. Many nations in ASEAN are still vastly underdeveloped, and decades of US diplomacy have done very little to ameliorate this issue. China understands the region's needs and intricacies on a much closer level than lawmakers in Washington ever will. China represents a new door of opportunity for the member states of ASEAN, tired of Western carbon-copy policies, to step through. •

Vices, Virtues, and the Rogun Dam

Why Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Are Treading Dangerous Waters by Not Cooperating on Regional Hydropower

- Jack Ulses

Benjamin Franklin once said, “When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water.” Such a statement could not be truer in Central Asia today. Water is the lifeblood of the largely agrarian economy, but given climate change and the demand for greater hydropower in today’s global market, each regime has taken drastic measures to create and conserve water for their country. Arguably the most controversial project has been the Rogun Dam project in Tajikistan, which has grown to symbolize national tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan that have festered since the fall of communism in 1991. With the passing of Uzbek President Islam Karimov in September, and Tajikistan beginning initial construction on the dam shortly thereafter, it is essential for regional water security that both states foster good relations and find ways to cooperate on the project. Otherwise, the race to securing hydropower has the potential to turn violent.

Following a bloody civil war in 1992, Tajikistan saw its energy infrastructure collapse. Looking to capitalize on water flowing from the Tien Shan mountains in the western boundary of the state, president Emomali Rahmon proposed the Rogun Dam project as early as 1994. Today, Tajikistan imports a significant amount of energy and is almost 100 percent dependent on hydropower, while Central Asia as a whole is over 27.3 percent dependent on hydropower. For President Rahmon, the Rogun Dam is an opportunity to not only supply Tajikistan with energy, but also to generate revenue by exporting energy to neighboring countries like China and Pakistan.

In Uzbekistan, the Rogun Dam is seen as an egregious attempt to bottle up and block the flow of water into the fertile agricultural region known as the Fergana Valley. There has been no greater opponent of the project than the former President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov. Agriculture still accounts for a significant portion (almost 20 percent) of Uzbekistan’s GDP today, and Karimov was concerned that excessive water flow from reservoirs to power the dam in the wintertime would cause depleted water levels for summertime irrigation. His fear was that, once completed, the Rogun Dam would allow Tajikistan to divert naturally flowing water and deplete the Amu and Syr Darya, two large rivers



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that cover a significant portion of Uzbekistan.

Such heavy regional dependence on hydropower would appear to necessitate cooperation between the two leaders. However, the conflict over the Rogun Dam was compounded by personal animosity between Karimov and Rahmon. By all accounts, the men were not on cordial terms for some time, with President Rahmon even admitting to altercations in the past, stating in 2010 that “I’ve argued many times [with Karimov]. We even fought twice. The first time, Nazarbayev [President of Kazakhstan] had to drag us apart; the second time it was Kuchma [Former President of Ukraine].”

This tension has exacerbated regional security issues. Following announcements of a proposal to begin the dam in the late 2000’s, Karimov utilized both economic and transportation sanctions to block imports by train to southern Tajikistan, and there were reports of electricity shortages in Tajikistan as a result of intentional negligence in supplying energy by Uzbekistan. In recent years, however, retaliatory acts by both sides have had direr consequences. Due to fears of terrorist insurrections, and most recently the rise of ISIS and resurgence of the Taliban, Uzbekistan has planted landmines all along their border with Tajikistan. These mines have killed over 75 civilians since 2000 and still present a huge obstacle towards engaging in constructive dialogue with Tajikistan.

Furthermore, in a 2012 public speech in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, Karimov referenced his opposition to the dam in a more serious light, saying “all of this could deteriorate to the point where not just serious confrontation, but even wars could be the result.” The blunt reference to war underscored how seriously he viewed the potential ramifications for Uzbekistan if the Rogun Dam is built.

Nevertheless, it is possible to gauge the tit-

for-tat retaliation and open condemnation as a security dilemma. During the summer, Tajikistan supplies hydropower to Uzbekistan and its industry-heavy Ferghana Valley as water flows down from the Tien Shan Mountains. When energy needs increase in the cold winter months, Uzbekistan increases its energy supply to Tajikistan. When Tajikistan wants to retaliate against Uzbekistan, it lowers diverted water supplies. Similarly, Uzbekistan limits utilities in the wintertime if it has a grievance against Tajikistan. Such policies incentivize both states to cut energy resources to gain a better bargaining position, which weaken industry production in both countries.

Under this paradigm, Tajikistan views the Rogun Dam as the ultimate bargaining chip, while Uzbekistan refuses to allow Tajikistan to gain such an inherent advantage over limited regional hydropower. Given the framework of the security dilemma, Karimov’s successor is likely to oppose the dam. This is a dangerous game, and could incentivize Tajikistan to retaliate further and hamper any hope of regional cooperation.

Yet, with the new elections in Uzbekistan set for December, there is great potential for both sides to thaw relations and resolve their dispute through cooperation tactics that emphasize regional water preservation and security rather than individual state benefits. The dam, once completed, will be the tallest embankment dam in the world under current design estimates. It will have the potential to provide immense upgrades in energy efficiency for Tajikistan, while simultaneously allowing Tajikistan to export energy at low costs to Uzbekistan and other neighboring countries. By supporting the project, Uzbekistan’s next president can not only gain a new regional ally but could also ensure that there will a stable source of hydropower for a country and region that cannot afford anything less. •

The Wukan Village Protest

Exposing the Fallacy of Xi Jinping's Corruption Reform

- Jess Xinyi Liu

It has been five years since the small fishing village of Wukan in Guangdong, China, first shook the world with its 2011 organized protest against massive corruption in land sales by its local officials. The sheer publicity of the event put the Chinese government under global scrutiny; a compromise was reached the same year, and villagers cast their vote for new leaders. In June of 2016, however, protests broke out once more when the villagers' choice for Party Secretary, Lin Zuluan, came under suspicion of accepting bribes. Zuluan is a beloved figure amongst the villagers, working on their behalf to tackle unresolved land seizure disputes. When Zuluan was charged with three years in prison, the villagers were outraged – there was little evidence and the released video confession seemed forced and awkward. On September 16th, protestors took to the street against the arrest, grabbing international attention yet again as the government sent in police forces.

At the heart of Wukan's story looms a larger problem in Chinese bureaucracy: rampant corruption. Wukan's protests stem from land sale extortions by local village officials; as land sales become an ever more lucrative industry, officials whose authority extends over jurisdiction of land use it to their advantage, despite the fact that all sales must be consented to by the villagers. To change this, the incentives at the heart of the system must change.

As many scholars have pointed out, China's corruption is unique because it is bounded by powerful economic incentives that have given China unprecedented economic growth and wealth. Regardless, in recent years, corruption has become a problem for the Communist Party of China's (CCP) stability. In the past decade, the rising visibility of corruption through social media news outlets and extreme cases like the Wukan village election has greatly undermined the Party's legitimacy. When leaders are not elected, but are expected to deliver good governance, corruption destroys the trust and obedience to the regime. The very reason why the Chinese people chose to align their support with the Communist Party in the country's mid-20th century civil war was because of its austerity in comparison to the Nationalists. Due to the increasing profile of corruption cases

“Picking out a few bad seeds does not resolve systemic corruption.”

and access to information, corruption has become a growing issue for the CCP's reputation. Although the reporting of corruption has been twisted in the news to favor the CCP, vibrant discussions occur on platforms like Weibo and WeChat. The CCP often cannot react quickly enough to censor these discussions and thus must take tangible steps to address corruption.

Since the start of Xi Jinping's administration in 2012, he has led a vigorous and extensive campaign to tackle corruption. Since the launch of this campaign, no one has been safe under the new regime, investigating even retired officials of the highest standing committee in China. The party has punished an estimated 414,000 officials for corruption. The words Xi has used to describe the goal and approach of this campaign presents a method of reforming culture, namely “changing the culture” of corruption and hedonism by targeting the moral character of officials. Though this approach is easily digestible by the masses, it is still not as effective as a systematic rooting out of the incentives that foster corruption.

In 2011, compromise allowed the citizens of Wukan to elect their own officials; however, Xi Jinping's vigorous efforts to remove the “bad seeds” from government have proved ineffective. Even after 2011, land usurpation continued to occur where local officials had been replaced because of the lucrative incentives involved with land sales. Picking out a few bad seeds does not resolve systemic corruption. Furthermore, the Wukan village uprising has made it very clear that the party's purge can be interpreted as targeting officials who oppose and question the party, much like party secretary Lin Zuluan. This is hardly a viable solution to address discontent with corruption. A change in the system must occur to combat corruption, rather than a weak-handed approach of reforming a concept as vague as culture.

To call for immediate installation of democratic elections, however, is unrealistic given the current political climate in China. Xi Jinping preferred this weak campaign to address the issue because the CCP elites do not want to lose

power. However, without the instillation of values of civic engagement, the general public may not be fully ready to engage. This was shown by the “I Paid a Bribe” site's failed launch in China, where people used the site for blackmail and personal revenge rather than spotlighting genuine official transgressions. If a reformation of culture is really the goal, there is a need to foster a sense of civil society amongst common citizens. A more practical and realistic reform should loosen rules around the creation of professional NGOs, who can both help monitor corruption in a proficient and systematic manner and also pose less of a threat to the CCP's stability as they lack real political power.

The future of truly addressing corruption in China remains grim under the current campaign championed by Xi Jinping; events like the Wukan protests expose the dire need for addressing corruption as well as the weaknesses of the current anti-corruption campaign. Until civil society grows and the political climate becomes less repressive, democratic institutions remain an unrealistic goal. •

South Korea's THAAD Defense System

Fighting Fire with Firepower

- Megan Cansfield

Despite living under constant threat from its bellicose northern neighbor, South Korea lacked the concrete capability to counter a possible North Korean nuclear attack until this July, when it officially announced its intent to deploy the US-backed Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) mid-range ballistic missile defense system. The decision remains highly controversial, splitting public opinion in South Korea while also drawing intense criticism from abroad for the move's potential to further destabilize the Korean Peninsula and spark militarization across East Asia in response. If implemented, THAAD will undoubtedly heighten regional tensions and threaten to stir up the uneasy status quo between China and the US, the bilateral balance of power on which regional stability rests. Although problematic, this advanced defensive technology nonetheless represents a necessary step for South Korea to ensure its fundamental security in the face of the North's unchecked and increasingly credible nuclear weapons program.

For South Korea, activating THAAD at its approved site in the southeastern Seongju County would offer reliable protection for joint US-Republic of Korea military bases and strategic facilities like ports and power plants across most of the country, all from outside the range of North Korean rocket artillery along the Demilitarized Zone. The capital of Seoul, however, would fall outside of this zone, necessitating a separate short-range defense system to safeguard some 48 percent of the national population residing there, just 35 miles from the DMZ. The public also appears unfazed by the promise of security guarantees, further complicating the implementation decision. A near-majority of citizens opposed THAAD for fear of creating an inviting target for preemptive strikes, health concerns from radar emissions in the site's vicinity, and outrage at a lack of full public or government consultation in a decision approved unilaterally by President Park Geun-Hye's unpopular and scandal-stricken executive branch.

Despite these domestic issues, the South Korean government is not unjustified in prioritizing the national interest in pursuit of self-defense. Seoul is aware that the aggressive rhetoric from Pyongyang remains a bluff for now, but how long it will remain so is uncertain. The North's most recent nuclear test on September 9th is the largest one yet in both scale and magnitude, for which

it once more received little more than empty denunciations, a slap on the wrist, and familiar foot-dragging from the international community. The situation is increasingly dire: dictator Kim Jong-un's regime now claims to have successfully miniaturized its warheads for launch on missiles, and prominent experts on North Korea have come forward in recent weeks expressing concern that it may be altogether too late to prevent North Korea from reaching its capacity as a fully-fledged nuclear state. South Korea's foremost obligation in such circumstances remains to protect its people and preserve its territorial and economic integrity, which must inherently involve establishing its own credible deterrence to the ever-present aggression at its doorstep. Given its traditional approach to maintaining a balance of power on the Peninsula through military deterrence with US assistance, THAAD is a logical extension of South Korean security policy, due to the increasing frequency and technological advancement of North Korea's nuclear device testing in recent years.

The THAAD decision has predictably antagonized North Korea, which responded by broadcasting threats over state media to turn the South into a "sea of fire." However, due to the regional nature of the Korean Peninsula dilemma, the most serious of THAAD's consequences for South Korea is vehement contention from China, with whom its relations are already strained. Keeping favor with the emerging economic and political hegemon in East Asia is not just a diplomatic survival strategy for South Korea, but also an indisputable necessity for any hope of achieving a long-term resolution to the North Korean debacle. As North Korea's primary ally, China's cooperation will be just as essential to the success of coercive negotiations or punitive sanctions as that of the United States, the established peace-keeping power on the Peninsula. However, the Chinese leadership is alarmed by the implications of the THAAD deployment as a guised American attempt to contain Chinese influence or gain a stronger military foothold in East Asia. It has been duly noted, despite the allies' claims of purely defensive intent, that THAAD's radars could be used to locate and counter Chinese missiles, as well as those of North Korea. The THAAD deployment is therefore problematic in that it not only exacerbates the fundamental US-China distrust under-

pinning much of East Asian politics, but also risks triggering further regional proliferation or arms races, especially with the development of nuclear weapons being publicly discussed in South Korea and Japan. Any of these outcomes would inevitably increase the likelihood of conflict, opposite South Korea's intentions, and undermine the basic security THAAD is supposed to guarantee.

History is thus tragically repeating itself as the Korean Peninsula once more becomes a stage for great power feuds, with the fate of South Korea hanging in the balance. Instead of bowing to outside pressure and compromising its national security for the status quo preferred by Beijing, South Korea should do what it must to guard itself against the immediate threat presented by the North Korean nuclear program. Consecutive rounds of ineffectual UN sanctions have convinced Seoul that the international community is too paralyzed by geopolitical disagreements to help rein in the North's provocations, and that South Korea needs to take action for South Korean security with or without unanimous international support. Given the scarcity of less risky alternatives, this means standing by its divisive decision to deploy THAAD as soon as possible. Such a precarious policy will require South Korea to be open with China and throw its weight behind maintaining effective channels of communication and information to minimize damage to bilateral China-ROK relations.

Even more critical to THAAD's success will be the US and China's willingness to step up amidst escalating tensions and adopt more cooperative behavior towards each other regarding North Korea. Instead of leaving their intentions up to speculation and unilaterally pushing only for their own national interests, which could leave dangerous room for misunderstanding, both nations must first acknowledge their mutual interest in a best-case scenario of peacefully demilitarizing the Korean Peninsula and then build bilateral trust to move towards such an outcome by jointly engaging North Korea. While THAAD deployment thus emerges as South Korea's best and only viable option for a successful short-term deterrence policy, it is only through a multilateral approach that the world can move towards a proactive long-term solution to the North Korean nuclear security crisis instead of reactively raising the call to arms as a last resort. •

Hope for Afghanistan's Fragile Democracy

- Najeeb Amini

The fall of the Taliban in 2001 provided the chance for Afghans to establish a democracy that would give power and a voice to long-neglected citizens. An important success of the democratic system is that it provides the opportunity for the state to mend the fragmentation that has long created tension among the major ethnic groups in Afghanistan: the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, and Turkmen. However, it is important to note that Afghanistan's democracy is still fragile. With the resurgence of the Taliban, Afghanistan could plummet back into instability, derailing much of its recent progress. Now, more than ever, is a crucial moment for the current administration to ensure that the hard-earned democratic institutions remain. To do this, the Ghani administration must focus on containing the Taliban resurgence by concentrating on eliminating the extremist group's safe haven in Pakistan, and further ensuring that the roots of democracy take a stronger hold in the country, which requires the government to first build the state's economy.

Recently the Taliban gained territory in rural south and east Afghanistan. On October 7th, the extremist group took the Northern city of Kunduz and established its influence in the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan. The resurgence of the extremist group and the fact that it was capable of defeating the Afghan National Army (ANA) in these two locations has caused Afghans to lose faith in the government's ability to protect them against the Taliban. To reassure the people of the army's capability, the Ghani administration must work strategically and effectively to not only combat the Taliban at home, but also, more importantly, to take the fight to the Taliban's safe haven in northwest Pakistan. Simply fighting the radical group in Afghanistan is ineffective given that they can flee to Pakistan to regroup. The Taliban undermines the government's progress in establishing relative stability and peace in the state, and therefore must be a top priority of the Ghani administration.

This is a hard task to achieve, as eliminating the Taliban's refuge across the border requires Pakistan's cooperation. In 2015, peace talks took place between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Taliban leaders. China played a hand in getting

“Now, more than ever, is a crucial moment for the current administration to ensure that the hard-earned democratic institutions remain.”

Pakistan to pressure the Pakistani Taliban to attend the meeting. However, this meeting was not successful in getting the extremist group to concede to peaceful negotiations; instead, the meeting affirmed to the Ghani administration that the “Pakistani military [had a] hand in the Taliban battlefield gains” in Afghanistan this year. Although Pakistan cannot be trusted, the Afghan government needs its neighboring state in order to eliminate the Taliban's safe haven, and this may be achieved through China's pressure on Pakistan.

China could play another role in helping Afghanistan. Three factors make this possible: China's economic interests, namely its behemoth project of reconstructing the Silk Road; its concerns that extremism in Afghanistan could spread to China's western region of Xinjiang, where a Uighur militant group, known as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, is already inciting instability; and its close ties with Pakistan. President Xi Jinping's ambitious plan of reconstructing the Silk Road runs through Afghanistan, so a stable and secure Afghanistan is imperative for this plan to be successful. This reality, along with fighting to ensure that extremism does not spread to Chinese borders, makes it highly likely that Afghanistan can persuade China to get Pakistan to take more forceful measures to eliminate the Taliban's safe haven. Due to close economic and political ties between the two countries, Pakistan is likely to heed China's request. While this may seem like a long-term goal, it is the most effective course of action and is more likely than the Ghani administration successfully persuading Pakistan to cooperate in eliminating the last refuge of the Taliban.

Along with focusing on establishing security for Afghanistan, the Ghani administration must also focus on economic growth. Building the business sector is necessary for democracy to grow, especially given that the surge of emigration from the state is due to the lack of opportunity in the country. In Brussels, Belgium,

70 countries have agreed to fund 15.2 billion dollars to Afghanistan until 2020. Although this aid can be helpful in improving Afghanistan's infrastructure and economy, the country must find alternative ways to build and strengthen its economy without having to rely on outside assistance.

Iran's nuclear deal could be the biggest opportunity for Afghanistan to build its economy. This landmark agreement between Iran and the UN's five permanent members along with Germany was implemented on January 16, 2016; in return for lifting economic sanctions on Iran, the country had to agree to increased nuclear monitoring and denuclearizing measures. Afghanistan also wins from this deal. With the agreement opening Iran's economy and India's project of “developing the Iranian port in Chabahar,” Afghanistan is estimated to gain billions of dollars through trade. This landmark agreement provides Afghanistan an opening to build closer economic relations with its neighboring countries. The Ghani administration must seize the opportunity that the nuclear deal provides. For Afghanistan, the deal means building its economy, promoting business growth, and most importantly showing Afghan citizens that the government can provide opportunities to build a better life in the state rather than migrating to Europe to create one.

Afghanistan, however, must tread lightly so as not to get again entangled in the proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the late 1990s, Afghanistan was a battleground between the Saudi Kingdom and Iran. Amidst the tumultuous civil war were two main groups: the Taliban- which had the support of Saudi Arabia, and the Northern Alliance- consisting of Afghanistan's minority groups Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks- which was backed by Iran. This civil war left Afghanistan in pieces as tension ran high among the different ethnic groups. However, relations among the major groups have been healing, as democracy has allowed space for dialogues to take place and trust to

grow. Given how the proxy war between the Middle East's two heavyweights left Afghanistan deeply divided, it is crucial for Afghanistan to base its foreign policy on economic growth and avoid any agreements that could divide the country along ethnic lines. The Iran nuclear agreement does present opportunity to grow economically, but the Ghani administration must be cautious not to politically align itself with Iran so as to avoid alienating Saudi Arabia. Neutrality is the best medicine for a country that is recovering from decades of instability and war.

Building a stable democracy is no easy task, especially given how divided Afghanistan was just a little more than a decade ago. The Ghani administration must work to solidify the foundations of democracy that have not only unified the country, but also brought stability and growth. This means eliminating the Taliban stronghold in the northern city of Kunduz and the Helmand province. What is more crucial is eradicating the extremist group's safe haven in Pakistan. Besides assuring the Afghan people that the government can provide security from the Taliban to its citizens, the administration must also show that it can provide economic opportunities for a better life. The latter is as just as crucial for Afghanistan's democracy to grow given the outflow of emigration, most notably of educated groups and young men, from the country. These tasks will not be easy to accomplish. The opportunity to progress as a nation requires hard work and patience, and given the resilience of Afghans throughout its tumultuous history, there is no doubt that this can be achieved. •

Exposing Bangladesh's Enforced Disappearances

- Sanuri Gunawardena

Four years have passed since Bangladeshi street hawker Ruhul Amin began searching for his missing son, Mohammad Imam Hassan, who was kidnapped in 2012. Surprisingly, Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) rescued him the following day, although the paramilitary force has yet to free him. When Amin sought the return of his son, they demanded 100,000 takas (\$1,276). Since this was far more than he could afford, Amin paid RAB 40,000 takas (~\$510). Although they promised to return his son within the next few days, they failed to keep their word, and Amin still has no idea whether his son is alive. He has sought help from security agencies, high courts, and even human rights groups, all to no avail.

Unfortunately, Hassan's case is one of many enforced disappearances that have taken place throughout Bangladesh. According to the Bangladeshi human rights group Odhikar around 298 people have disappeared in the past five years, a marked increase from previous years. Of these victims, 39 were found dead and only 138 returned alive, leaving scores still missing, many of whom have not been seen or heard from since their disappearances. Witnesses claimed that the victims were taken by men who appeared to be from law enforcement agencies, using their authority to take advantage of the rights of the Bangladeshi people. Given the government's systematic oppression of its citizens' most fundamental individual rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should be given permission to intervene on behalf of the Bangladeshi people to ensure a fair and impartial interpretation of justice regarding enforced disappearances. The UNHRC alone has the broad, overarching authority to override the varying claims of the Bangladeshi government and impartially assess the allegations made by the people who have lost loved ones to these tragic circumstances, making intervention the surest way to reduce the occurrence of enforced disappearances.

Initial allegations of such disappearances began arising in Bangladesh following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed and her Awami League's (AL) rise to power in 2009. Although Wazed's administration denies any political motivation or culpability in enforced disappearances, human rights groups have expressed



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concern that the victims have all been leaders and workers who have led the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) opposition alliance. BNP leader AKM Wahiduzzaman exclaimed that these enforced disappearances are taking place in the country "mostly to annihilate the opposition force." The opposition party members are targeted because they are exposing the malpractices of the corrupt government. The families who have lost their loved ones for simply voicing their opinions for the sake of justice deserve retribution for the unnecessary pain they have endured for so many years. Turning a blind eye to such injustices will set a poor precedent of international non-intervention in human rights issues, which is already a problematic area, as shown by the UN's failure to take action in Rwanda and Syria despite situations that clearly fall under the R2P protection criteria. If no action is taken to alleviate the situation, it will only progressively worsen.

Although it will be a monumental task, the United Nations has the institutional capacity and authority to follow through with the complaints procedure on behalf of Bangladesh. Resolution 5/1, adopted in 2007, allows the UNHRC to address consistent patterns of gross and consistently attested violations of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world under any circumstances. The procedure aims to address issues submitted by individuals, groups, or even non-governmental organizations that have direct, reliable knowledge of the human rights violations that they have witnessed. The Bangladeshi people's out-

rage at enforced disappearances and the many testimonies from human rights activists, therefore, clearly legitimize UNHRC involvement in seeking a resolution on the issue.

If the complaints procedure is effectively completed, the UNHRC will be able to approach Bangladesh and set up impartial judicial proceedings ensuring fair outcomes for the affected families. The organization's provision of impartiality is vital in such cases because, were the Bangladeshi government to handle this issue on its own, it would undoubtedly act in its own interest to maintain its facade of innocence, resulting in unjust trial outcomes and an ineffective resolution of the issue of enforced disappearances. At present, officials dressed as average individuals kidnap the Bangladeshi people from their homes and cars without a warrant or production of some form of identification. Then, when families contact the police or RAB, their response is simply that their loved one has not been arrested, according to opposition-backed lawyer Khandaker Mahbub Hossain. The police and government officials outright reject such allegations, leaving the country at an impasse. On one side, the Bangladeshi people are subject to severe human rights violations, while the offending officials on the other hand repeatedly claim to have no part in these alleged abductions. As the country cannot find an effective way to resolve this issue, the UNHRC is the state's best chance of getting to the bottom of party-related injustices.

It is difficult to see an end to these enforced disappearances, especially when the country's judicial system appears designed to protect the status quo, always siding with the political elites. The police and the judiciary complement each other to protect the plans of the government, leading to a bleak future in regard to resolving this issue for the Bangladeshi people. For now, all that people like Ruhul Amin can do is keep searching for their missing loved ones. Without the aid of the UNHRC, an organization with the capacity to bring justice and progress to the worsening circumstances of enforced disappearances, the corruption in the Bangladeshi government will continue to rise unabated with no hope for the oppressed individuals of Bangladesh. •

The Grand Demonetization

Modi's Problem with Policy

- Vineet Chandra

On November 8th, at 8:00 PM Indian Standard Time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that, effective at midnight, all 500 and 1,000 rupee notes would be invalid. These amounts are worth about \$7.50 and \$15, respectively, and make up around 86 percent of all currency in circulation in India. To his strongest supporters, this is yet another initiative to combat corruption, but for many, there is something not quite right about Mr. Modi's governance. Indeed, Narendra Modi is an interesting character. He is more an ideologue than policy wonk; he seems to care about vision and direction rather than the finer details of his plans. Modi has an unfortunate habit of setting off in a somewhat random direction and soon realizing he does not have the faintest idea where he was headed. In this light, this demonetization dust-up is just the latest of several planned policy proposals gone sour. Prime Minister Modi has a long way to go in understanding the true impacts of individual policies on his grand vision for India.

Prime Minister Modi has been a big proponent of Indian manufacturing, rolling out his "Make in India" plan to attract foreign investment and product lines just months after taking office. Yet, in April 2015, Modi's government announced a new Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) that would also apply to foreign investors. Not only had such a tax on foreign investors never been enacted before in India or any other BRICS nation, but Modi's government also decided to investigate the possibility of applying the tax retroactively, taxing investments made in India dating back to at least 2007. Modi's finance minister eventually waived these efforts after the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Sensitive Index showed significant volatility in April and August due to large capital outflows stemming in part from concerns about these tax increases. Still, this about-face under pressure shows clear disorganization and lack of understanding of how to make India more attractive to foreign investors. If Modi is serious about the "Make in India" plan, he should make sure that his entire government pushes a unified message. In this regard, PM Modi has not been successful in mitigating government policies that blemish potentially viable ideas.

In August 2007, well before Modi took of-

fice, India started taking bids from defense and aerospace manufacturers worldwide to modernize its aging air force fleet. The contract was to be for 126 fighter jets, 108 of which were to be made in India. In 2012, Dassault Aviation, a French firm, won the contract, and negotiations began on the contract itself. Although these talks normally last a few months, the negotiations lasted nearly four years. The final contract, negotiated by Modi's government, was scaled down to just 36 jets, none of which would be built in India. This contradicts Modi's stated desire to build up the Indian military; most experts agree that the renegotiated deal is barely a stopgap measure as India's decades-old Sukhoi MiG fleet will be retired in the next few years. This deal also goes against Modi's "Make in India" campaign, bringing in no new technology and creating no jobs, despite the government's \$8 billion investment in the project. In this case, too, Mr. Modi did not get much farther than the simple vision for what India should be.

The demonetization of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 notes is the latest in the line of muddled decisions. These notes account for around 11 percent of GDP, while 68 percent of all transactions in India are conducted in cash. Banks closed for two days following the announcement, and, because the new Rs. 500 notes are different in size from the old ones, it will likely take months to re-calibrate India's 200,000 plus ATMs. Consequently, long lines have grown outside banks and post offices authorized to conduct exchanges of old currency. At least five people have died of exhaustion waiting in line to exchange money, and at least three children have died because hospitals would not accept the old currency. Newly minted Rs. 2000 notes are effectively worthless, because most businesses cannot yet make change for these large bills.

Tragically, India's poorest populations have been hardest hit. Poorer Indians are less likely to have a bank account, and often lack alternatives to debit or credit. They are also more likely to be illiterate, leading to reports of illiterate Indians having to pay fees to fill out the forms necessary for currency exchange by proxy. Furthermore, the very banks that are conducting these exchanges have reported cash-shortfalls. Meanwhile, the seventh largest economy in the world has been reduced to a largest denomi-

nated bill of roughly \$1.50 (Rs. 100).

Modi justified the demonetization measures as an attack on corruption. Indeed, the Rs. 1000 note is the largest currently in circulation, and likely the note of choice for storing large sums of money for nefarious activities or tax evasion. However, many cash businesses are merely sending home stacks of cash with their workers to exchange or deposit for later withdrawal. The new Rs. 2000 denomination will not much help this problem. The Prime Minister reacted to the long lines, claiming new daily withdrawal limits will help move more transactions into the form of bank transfers and credit/debit transactions, but only half of Indian households have bank accounts. Most ironically, the administration's poor implementation of this change does nothing to attract foreign investors, further undermining the "Make in India" plan. Though this policy has just begun, it does not appear it will end well for Mr. Modi.

Despite the Prime Minister's ongoing struggles with concrete policy management, his popularity has not suffered. A 2016 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center showed 81 percent of Indians approved of Narendra Modi's efforts as Prime Minister, down slightly from 87 percent in 2015—a staggering figure for any democratically elected leader anywhere in the world. To his credit, Modi's active management of India has not been entirely bad, but clear disconnects exist between his vision and his policy routes to get there. For some Indians of the liberal persuasion, currency demonetization is just another addition to his long string of nonsense. Many wonder if this latest blunder will put an end to Modi's magical spell over the people of India. However, if history is any indication, the world will have little choice but to sit back and watch, dumbstruck, as Mr. Modi's approval ratings soar in the face of nonsensical policy decisions. •

Hong Kong's Localist Movement

The Umbrella Upstarts

- Warren Yu

After the posters were torn down, the barricades removed, and the protestors forced from their last holdout in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong, a few defiant messages were left behind. "It's just the beginning," one read. "We'll be back!" said another. In 2014, a wave of demonstrations swept through Hong Kong. Discontent with the restrictiveness of Beijing's proposed electoral reform, in which only pre-approved candidates would be eligible to run for Hong Kong's highest office of Chief Executive, spurred thousands to take to the streets—many with umbrellas in hand. The umbrella, initially a source of protection from tear gas and pepper spray, quickly became a rallying symbol for local citizens and even for foreign observers. In the struggle against the monolithic Communist Party of China, the Umbrella Protests seemed to capture the plucky spirit behind the pro-democracy, pro-Hong Kong political movement: localism.

Arguably, the movement's success should not be measured purely in conventional terms, like the number of seats won or the amount of legislation passed. While both are undeniably indicators of political success, in a legislature where pro-Beijing candidates, parties, and measures are heavily favored, alternative means of expression have to be considered. Hence, even when localism "fails" (for instance, during the crackdown and eventual suppression of the Umbrella Protests), it has demonstrated that it can still thrive. While Beijing's unwillingness to tolerate public dissent under the "One Country, Two Systems" policy may appear to pose an existential threat to the localist movement, state condemnation actually serves to strengthen it by bringing its members and message into the limelight. Thus, the backlash against the controversial actions of the Youngspiration localists, Sixtus Leung and Yau Wai-Ching, on October 12, 2016, does not necessarily ring the death knell for the localist movement in Hong Kong.

The main drama surrounding the two legislators revolves around their deliberate butchering and provocative display during an oath-swearing ceremony. Both Leung and Yau protested Mainland China's tightening grip on Hong Kong by altering the words of their oaths so as to mock the Communist Party of China. Leung, while wearing a banner proclaiming, "Hong Kong is



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not China," pledged allegiance to an independent Hong Kong state. Yau chose to leave six second pauses between each word of her oath. Before they had even taken office, the duo had already stirred controversy. While their oaths were quickly deemed invalid by the Legislative Council president, Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen, he was willing to allow the duo to retake the oath. This was not to be the case as Beijing swiftly directed its attention towards the drama unfolding in Hong Kong.

In a move that overruled Hong Kong courts, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) interpreted Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, so as to immediately and effectively ban both Leung and Yau from taking office before the Hong Kong court had even reached a decision. As the NPCSC declared: "Oath-takers who intentionally take an oath that is...insincere or not solemn...will thus be disqualified for assuming the corresponding office." The heavy-handedness of this direct intervention is precisely the kind of action that the localists vehemently oppose and, yet, should begrudgingly welcome from Beijing. This overt attempt to quash a rowdy duo of legislators has strengthened the localist case. After all, the localists argue for a Hong Kong free from Mainland influence and interference. Beijing directly passing over Hong Kong procedures to pass judgment paints a rather callous picture of its attitude towards Hong Kong institutions.

Before the Legislative Council has even begun to formally discuss issues and begin work, the localists have lost two of the eight seats that

they have won on the Council. The situation looks ostensibly dire. Yet, the entire localist platform is contingent on its opposition to Beijing. In a way, the protest and the subsequent failure of Leung and Yau to take office is not entirely a defeat for the localists. In taking their protest to a highly publicized and recorded moment, Leung and Yau took what would have been a stale oath of obedience and turned it into a flashpoint of disobedience. They have successfully commanded the attention of Hong Kong, Mainland China, and even international viewers to their struggle. Beijing can certainly shut these legislators out, but it cannot pursue anything more punitive beyond that, lest it provide further justification to this opposition movement.

The localists continually straddle a thin line with their inflammatory language and actions. They risk condemnation, disruption, and arrest for such outspoken beliefs. Yet, they need to take more risks like these in order to rally their supporters and other like-minded groups to their cause. The localists have certainly tapped into a wellspring of discontent in their constituencies; the question is whether they can continue to capitalize on their momentum to propel localism to the forefront of Hong Kong's political conscience. At the risk of their careers, and perhaps of their party's future in the legislature, the Youngspiration duo managed to pose a threat serious enough for Beijing to personally step in and silence their dissent. This is a fight that they must continue: the localist movement represents Hong Kong's best hope to preserve the degree of political independence that it enjoys today, even in the face of Beijing's attempts at oversight.

These umbrella upstarts certainly have a lot on their plate. From the initial protests in 2014, to the current standoff in the Legislative Council, they have evolved from a mass into a movement. Even with the loss of the Youngspiration party, the localists still hold six seats on the Council. Beijing and pro-Beijing parties in the Hong Kong legislature will have to continue to contend with a non-complacent and vigorous opposition group. Localists will no doubt have to continue to fight an uphill struggle, but they certainly have begun to cement themselves in Hong Kong's political sphere for the days to come. •

'Nobel Prize' of Human Rights and a Life Sentence

How a Uighur Academic Will Shape the Debate on Xinjiang

- Will Feuer

Just two years after being handed a life sentence by Chinese authorities on charges of “promoting separatism and violence” in the special administrative region of Xinjiang, leading Uighur intellectual Ilham Tohti has been awarded the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights, a prominent human rights award, for his efforts to foster dialogue about the mistreatment of the Uighur people. Throughout the last two decades, Tohti has been looked to by the international community as the primary source for moderate and rational critique of the Chinese government’s treatment of the Uighur people in Xinjiang. While the Chinese government has offered overwhelmingly negative representations of the scholar, describing him as a “scholar turned criminal” who preaches “hatred and killing,” the Martin Ennals foundation painted another picture of Tohti. They claim, “He has rejected separatism and violence, and sought reconciliation based on a respect for Uighur culture, which has been subject to religious, cultural and political repression.” Though the award is unlikely to result in Tohti’s early release or any direct action by the Chinese government, it will turn the focus of the international community, which has long ignored the situation in Xinjiang, to the plight of the Uighur people. Furthermore, the Chinese government may face pressure to liberalize their security policies in Xinjiang and end the unjust process of Sinification of the Uighur people. If the Communist Party of China (CPC) does not improve its treatment of the Uighur minority, China could, at worst, face threats of international intervention as authenticated by the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) protocol, of which China is a signatory, or, at best, face precarious political and trade relations with major Western powers.

Today’s conflict in Xinjiang is fueled primarily by the cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences between the Uighur minority and the Han majority of China. The Uighur people are a predominantly Muslim and ethnically Turkic people, who speak the Turkic language Uighur. There are currently about ten million Uighurs living in China, almost all of whom are located in Xinjiang. Xinjiang became the most recently incorporated territory into Mainland China following its annexation

in the mid-18th century, and currently benefits from the highest level of provincial autonomy. Its name directly translated means “new dominion” in Mandarin, reflecting the region’s unique history.

While the CPC’s current policies are well-placed strategic approaches to the pacification of Xinjiang, their policies are also explicitly racist. The Chinese describe the policies as ‘Sinification,’ the process whereby non-Han Chinese societies are influenced and changed by the Han Chinese state and society. These discriminatory policies range from requiring fluency in Mandarin for public jobs, which nearly all jobs in Xinjiang are, to the outlawing of “extremist attire” and Uighur participation in Ramadan, a holy Islamic holiday. All of these policies are a part of the Sinification strategy often used by the Chinese government throughout their long history when faced with the threat of foreign civilization. Sinification was used effectively to topple the Mongol-controlled Yuan Dynasty and the Khitan-controlled Liao Dynasty. In the case of Xinjiang, it has resulted in the widespread and systematic violation of human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and religion, and equality before law, as Tohti experienced. The depravation of these basic human rights ought to be interpreted by the international community as a crime against humanity, especially considering that they are being applied to a specific group because of their ethnicity, and not uniformly throughout China. Thus lays the foundation for the international community’s need for the application of the R2P protocol in Xinjiang to ensure the protection of basic human rights for the persecuted Uighur people.

Pillar one of the R2P as listed in the protocol clearly states, “Every state has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.” China has not only failed to protect its Uighur population from at least one of these crimes, but the government itself has sponsored said crimes.

Pillar two reads, “The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility.” While the international community has been willing to turn a blind eye for the sake of economic relations with China thus far,

the high-profile reception of the Ennals award by Tohti will launch the Uighur situation into the spotlight of international media. However, the likelihood of the international community successfully swaying Beijing into reforming its policies is unlikely to say the least.

Finally, Pillar three reads, in no uncertain terms, “If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter.” Under this Pillar, there exists a responsibility for other states to coordinate an effective intervention on behalf of populations suffering systematic ethnic persecution, as are the Uighurs in Xinjiang. It is particularly important for the international community to intervene in Xinjiang because, not only are crimes against humanity being committed, but they are being committed at the hands of a government considered a major world power. This behavior by the CPC is unacceptable and, moving forward, it is crucial for the international community to establish that the CPC’s human rights abuses will not be tolerated.

As China begins to understand and create precedent for its involvement in the global community as its influence continues to grow, it is paramount that the international community place China’s human rights violations above its economic clout when engaging the nation. The situation in Xinjiang is clearer than ever: The Han-controlled government is systematically discriminating against and abusing the Uighur population and its supporters like Tohti, and it will continue to do so until the ethnicity has assimilated into Han culture. If the Chinese government does not reform their policies soon, international intervention will be the only option as knowledge of the situation becomes more available to the international community. •

Khmer Who?

Cambodia's Botched Trial on the Khmer Rouge's War Crimes

- Marnie A. Ginis

In August of 2016, a woman referred to as 2-TCCP-274 shared her shocking story of forced marriage and rape under the violent Khmer Rouge regime, which ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. Her testimony, including details of her marriage to a stranger and sexual abuse during that marriage, was an experience she had never before discussed, and came as part of a broader trial to hold the Khmer Rouge's leadership accountable for its genocide and other crimes. Despite witness 2-TCCP-274's moving account of her years of silent trauma, the issue of forced marriage and rape under the regime is being mishandled, as are multiple other dimensions of the trial. The tribunal on the Khmer Rouge's crimes against humanity should make the issue of forced marriage and rape one of its central points as just one aspect of the broader reforms they should make to restore the integrity of the trial.

During the Khmer Rouge's years in power, the group murdered nearly two million Cambodians, 21 percent of the population. Many experts believe that this is a conservative estimate. The crimes the regime committed ranged from mass torture and execution, to forced labor on agricultural collectives. Recently, a new horror has been added to the regime's list of crimes: forced marriage. Hundreds of thousands were forced to marry strangers in mass ceremonies, and were then spied on to ensure that the marriages were consummated. Those who refused were raped by Khmer Rouge leadership, and often were then systematically raped by their new spouse. This was only one form of gender-based violence (GBV) that occurred under the regime - other forms of sexual humiliation were widespread. The Khmer Rouge's reign of terror ended only with the invasion of the Vietnamese, who then ruled Cambodia until 1991. During the turbulent 90s, little was done to apprehend Khmer Rouge leaders. In fact, the international community—namely the UN member states—was largely both ignorant and dismissive of the situation, and allowed Khmer Rouge leadership to participate in the transition government that formed in the mid-90s. The Khmer Rouge's leader, known as Pol Pot, died in 1998 without ever facing justice for his extensive crimes against humanity. It was only later that the extent of the atrocities the regime

“The palpable corruption within the trial and decidedly lax handling of the gender-based violence aspect of the regime's crimes... call the legitimacy of the whole affair into question.”

committed became clear to the world at large, which led to the 2006 formation of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) to address the Khmer Rouge's crimes and provide some sense of closure for the deeply traumatized country. However, the ECCC has not delivered.

The lack of commitment to the integrity of the tribunal is nowhere more evident than in the mishandling of the forced marriage and rape issues. Until very recently, this aspect of the Khmer Rouge's crimes was unknown to the international community. In fact, the issue was nearly completely ignored within the country as well, and has only come to the forefront thanks to the extended efforts of advocacy groups like the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization. Even then, it has required heavy activism for the issue to be included in the ECCC trial, and still reads like an afterthought. Further, the defense's main argument is essentially that rape did not occur under the regime and women were more respected during their reign than now, an offensive suggestion that furthers the widely held belief that the Khmer Rouge did not resort to sexual violence, despite copious evidence to the contrary. This dismissal of the issue of forced marriages by the defense has been echoed throughout the trial. As Dr. Theresa de Langis, an expert on GBV under the Khmer Rouge, stated, “today's long-awaited segment on forced marriage falls short... a preoccupied prosecution; a collection of outdated research; a severely limited expert making unsubstantiated claims; questions to actual experts left unasked; a sexist double-standard in questioning and [failing to probe] the full scope of the forced marriage experience for men as well as women” have all made it clear that the ECCC is not taking GBV under the Khmer Rouge seriously. In reformulating the trial, the first step should be making the issue of forced marriage a central part of the prosecution- the ECCC's efforts will not be legitimate in any regard until

the experience of a full half of the Cambodian population is adequately addressed. This can be done by systematically and sensitively gathering statements from survivors of GBV, calling in the appropriate experts, creating stronger community support for survivors, and generally formulating an argument that the defense cannot write off.

The lack of sincere attention paid to the issue of forced marriage is only one troubling aspect of the ECCC tribunal. In the nearly ten years since its formation, only four cases have been brought before the court, which is immeasurably slow compared to other genocide trials. In comparison, the trial for the Rwandan genocide had made 29 convictions in its first four years. The few sentences administered have been much shorter than expected considering the severity of the crimes- for example, Comrade Duch, who headed the state's torture center, was given thirty years in prison, approximately a mere eleven hours for every life he took. Additionally, there have been numerous pauses for bureaucratic and political finagling, with widespread agreement among Cambodians that the trial is a showpiece manipulated by the government to be sure those from the Khmer Rouge who are still in power are not tried. Further, the trial is being held within the country, a questionable choice for a genocide trial that has personally affected millions of Cambodians. It is further delegitimized by the fact that former Khmer Rouge leadership remains in the government, presenting a conflict of interest in the trials. In addition to expanding the scope of the trial to adequately address the totality of crimes committed, namely that of forced marriage and other GBV, the trial should also be moved to a neutral country with unbiased judges and be reformed with an air of urgency and commitment to justice.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has stated that holding the trial in country is necessary for national healing, and other propo-

nents point to UN backing as evidence of the trial's integrity. Further, there have been some convictions and the forced marriage issue is finally being addressed by the ECCC. Despite this, the fact remains that the effort pales in comparison to other recent genocide trials in its rigor and ethics. Additionally, the true test of the trial's legitimacy is the Cambodian people's trust in its process, and that is severely lacking; as one Cambodian human rights lawyer - whose parents were murdered by the Khmer Rouge - succinctly stated, "it's a sham." The palpable corruption within the trial and decidedly lax handling of the gender-based violence aspect of the regime's crimes are shocking considering the gravity of the issue, and call the legitimacy of the whole affair into question.

To adequately address the crimes of the Khmer Rouge, the ECCC should first make the issue of forced marriage and rape one of the central prosecuting points. No other reforms will carry weight until the experience of women under the Khmer Rouge is sufficiently addressed. This should include reforms ranging from methodical interviewing of survivors of GBV to national recognition that the Khmer Rouge committed acts of sexual violence and the subsequent installment of appropriate community support systems. After these steps are taken, other reforms of the trial's structure should take place to ensure a fair and comprehensive handling of a truly horrifying dictatorship. The people of Cambodia, including witness 2-TCCP-274, who so bravely shared her trauma, deserve a trial with integrity so the country can begin to heal from its past and move forward. •

Duterte's Drug Crackdown

Fighting the Unwinnable War

- Gabriel Mann

On June 30th, 2016, Rodrigo “The Punisher” Duterte was sworn in as President of the Philippines after winning the election in a landslide. Since his inauguration, he has vowed to destroy the country’s illegal drug trade, eradicate corruption, and establish law and order by any means necessary, stating that he would “be happy to slaughter” three million Filipino drug users and peddlers while also publicly urging citizens to “go ahead and kill” these individuals. Duterte’s heavy-handed measures have come at a huge cost in human life: he has authorized the Philippine police and vigilante groups to execute criminals and engage in widespread extrajudicial killings of citizens suspected of drug trade involvement, which he claims has led to an overall decrease in crime. Murdering drug suppliers and addicts is not the solution to the Philippines’ problems; it is a blatant abuse of human rights, does not address the causes of chronic crime and drug abuse, and only perpetuates violence. Duterte’s government should halt its bloody crackdown and shift its focus to promoting rehabilitation and civic engagement, which offer a more stable and sustainable solution for the Philippines.

In the four months that Duterte has been president, the Philippine police have killed at least 2,500 suspects in anti-drug operations. Duterte highlighted his time as mayor of the city of Davao, once described as the Philippines’ “murder capital,” as evidence of the effectiveness of his hardline approach. However, data from the Philippine National Police showed that Davao City actually had the highest murder rate in the country from 2010 to 2015, calling his claim into question. The war on drugs has also had a profound financial impact on the country. While Duterte has substantially increased the budget of the police and military, he has hugely reduced funding for agriculture, health services, and foreign affairs, which will negatively affect many Filipino citizens. In the meantime, the president continues to praise the killing of drug addicts. This solution lacks popular support; a nationwide survey showed that more than 70 percent of Filipinos oppose the killing of drug users.

The increased number of drug-related killings under President Duterte’s leadership is no surprise, as he has promised time and again to

eradicate drug violence in the Philippines. He has also said “summary execution of criminals remains the most effective way to crush kidnapping and illegal drugs.” However, it is clear that mindlessly killing drug dealers and addicts is not the solution to the problems associated with crime and the war on drugs. This approach is ineffective, and also has the potential of catching innocents in the crossfire and turning into a much larger bloodbath. Creating strict laws, including the reinstatement of the death penalty and support of vigilantism against drug dealers, does not work for combating drug-related violence because it does nothing to address the base demand driving the drug trade. Drugs are a good that people will always find a way to buy no matter what the cost unless they get help in overcoming their addiction. The fear of violence may even worsen such afflictions and force users to seek out more drugs, making Duterte’s intimidation tactics counterproductive.

What has been shown to be effective in combating drug use is the four pillars approach that was introduced in Europe in the 1990s. This approach is based on harm reduction, prevention, treatment, and enforcement. Implementing this strategy would involve opening drug maintenance centers that would be free to the public. These centers would function as a place for addicts to be treated and stabilized. Here they would have access to showers, beds, and medical supervision. In addition, social workers would help addicts find housing and deal with other problems in their lives. Successfully implemented in cities across Europe, the results of the four pillars approach included a dramatic reduction in the number of drug users and a significant drop in overdose deaths.

It is true that European countries have more highly developed social institutions, infrastructure, and resources that give them the ability to implement such costly programs. The Philippines has a larger population and a much higher poverty rate and lacks many of the social programs available in Europe. However, neighborhood organizations and church-based groups could accomplish these same goals, if mobilized on a national scale. For this to be accomplished, federal and local government and charities must work together in a united effort to open more rehabilitation centers. The Catholic Church,

which has a large presence in the Philippines, can play an important part in this effort. Local parishes have already offered rehabilitation programs such as “healing centers” that take drug users through a process of detoxification and rehabilitation. These centers also provide food in exchange for work in local neighborhoods, which encourage people to avoid dealing drugs as a means of making a living.

The people of the Philippines elected Duterte because they desperately wanted to establish order and stability in their communities. Duterte should take advantage of this strong desire to address the drug epidemic by encouraging constructive civic participation and neighborhood mobilization rather than state-sanctioned violence. Close coordination between social and civic organizations, and their local government and police, is also necessary. This requires that the pervasive corruption be addressed so that the people at the local level will be able to trust their government.

Continuing this hardline approach to the war on drugs will perpetuate human rights abuses, cost vast sums of money, and erode the rule of law, all in pursuit of an impossible goal. When human life is devalued due to drug addiction or drug dealing, the logic of murder can easily be extended to other human failings. In recent months, the president has accused a number of government officials of having links to the illegal drug trade and has threatened to go after them. This sets a dangerous precedent, as it is now clear that anyone who has been associated with the illegal drug trade is a target and faces retribution from vigilante or police forces, regardless of whether such accusations are well founded.

The methods and rhetoric used by President Duterte in fighting crime and curbing problems associated with the drug war are absurd, and the arbitrary taking of human lives in the name of law and order will have serious consequences for the whole country. For Duterte, it is time to realize that he will never be able to eradicate drug use and that rehabilitation, not violence, will best help those suffering from addiction. •

A European Approach to Asylum

- Elisabeth Brennen

In January 2016, the Swedish Interior Ministry announced plans to curb acceptance rates of asylum applications and sharply increase refugee deportations. This announcement was surprising; Sweden has hosted the most refugees per capita throughout Europe's ongoing migrant crisis. Following the announcement, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated that Sweden had done more than its fair share in addressing the crisis, urged other European countries to do more to accept refugees, and called for improvements to the European refugee policy. His call highlights the need for a more cohesive European refugee policy, a bolder approach that turns away from national policies and towards a truly common European asylum system. In a region that presses for pan-European approaches to pan-European problems, the next big step in European integration and addressing the crisis is creating a common European asylum institution.

The European Union's Common European Asylum System has been active since 1999 and has implemented legislation and financial mechanisms aimed at improving the welfare and treatment of refugees in Europe. This system has made strides working within the current legislative framework. However, it has failed to create anything close to a common asylum system, leaving the practical matters of refugee processing – paperwork, relocation, and integration measures – up to the EU's individual members. In addition, the implementation of its agreed-upon standards has varied widely on the national level, and EU solidarity mechanisms have not inspired trust that a European system can work.

A common European asylum process would mean delegating some portion of national sovereignty to the European Union, which would certainly seem unsavory to many member countries. Yet nationalistic reactions to the migrant crisis – prioritizing national sovereignty over the needs of refugees and of Europe – have proved ineffective at solving the continent's crisis. The militarized border regions in Hungary or closed borders in Poland, for example, simply shuffle refugees from one country to the next, deflecting shared responsibility. These measures have simply added to the crisis and exacerbated its effects on the continent. Countries with closed-

“Addressing refugee processing at the European level would give national governments relief from bureaucratic application processes and allow them to funnel their resources into local integration efforts...”

door policies tout the struggles of open-door policies as justification for not accepting refugees, when open-door countries would have far fewer struggles if the weight were born equitably.

A common European asylum institution would process refugee applications at the European level and assist in their national relocation and integration. National and local authorities would handle the process following the European system's assignment. Addressing refugee processing at the European level would give national governments relief from bureaucratic application processes and allow them to funnel their resources into local integration efforts such as language courses and job training. Addressing the crisis by viewing Europe as a whole would mean refugees would be relocated to parts of Europe that have been assessed as having adequate housing, education, and work opportunities for refugees to thrive in the region.

Implementation of this approach would not be met without resistance. Countries such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and several others that have shifted their responsibility to refugees onto other European nations would assuredly push against a system that would require them to carry more of the burden. However, given that these countries, as well as other similarly resistant countries within the EU, are net benefactors of EU funding mechanisms, the EU could increase or decrease funding contingent upon the implementation of this new centralized system. Increasing funding from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund, an existing financial scheme, to countries reluctant or initially unable to foster asylum seekers would incentivize these countries to expand their refugee policies.

A supranational institutional arrangement of this kind would ensure that the responsibility to care for refugees was shared equitably within the EU. The Union already assesses countries down to the regional level, via their Committee of

the Regions, to ascertain which regions require more development funding and in which sectors. These same evaluative mechanisms could be applied to identifying regions ideal for refugee placement and could factor in refugee resettlement as part of their development schemes in less advanced regions. Delegating these aspects of refugee processing to the Union instead of individual national governments would help rectify the implementation disparity that exacerbates the current crisis.

Regional-level assessments for refugees have been implemented in the Nordic region to great success. Such measures ensure that refugees are not segregated from society or relegated only to low-income suburbs. Taking this measure to a European level would increase the amount of refugees that each country is able to take by turning a more critical eye to which regions in particular could handle and even benefit from refugee placement.

The European Union was founded upon the premise that extreme nationalism was counter-productive to the advancement of the region, and European cooperation has expanded to include free movement, a common currency, and European approaches to cross-border issues from transportation to roaming data charges. Still, European nations have reverted to nationalism in the wake of crisis, prioritizing national goals or espousing xenophobic beliefs in the hopes of justifying their lack of refugee assistance. Europe has a moral humanitarian duty and international legal obligation to assist refugees, one that many countries have attempted to shirk. This anti-European approach is failing and runs counter to the European Union's goals of continual integration. Centralizing the asylum system would allow the region to move forward in addressing the refugee crisis effectively by eliminating free-riding and delegating responsibility equitably across European countries. •

No-Brainer

The Case for TTIP

- Jordan Sandman

Recent EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which began in June 2013, have faced European backlash as a part of greater anti-trade sentiment that has burgeoned on both sides of the Atlantic. EU politicians have cautiously proceeded with the talks, as groups opposing free trade have convened a veritable countermovement. Yet this opposition misses the mark on economic terms. Resistance to free-trade agreements results from the esoteric nature of the arguments in support of free trade, leading to misguided conventional wisdom and fear of the necessary political integration essential to expanding economic integration. It is these trade-induced anxieties, rather than sound economic reasoning, that constitute opposition to TTIP. Despite arguments to the contrary, TTIP in fact represents an opportunity to bring economic improvement to both EU and US stakeholders by spurring growth, net wage increases, and job creation.

As political entities committed to economic liberalization, tariff rates for goods and services entering the US and EU have been mostly eliminated through World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral negotiations, currently averaging below three percent. Since the turn of the century, however, WTO talks have stalled during the protracted Doha round, in which ambitious attempts to deepen economic integration on contentious issues such as intellectual property rules, agriculture subsidies, and technical barriers to trade have failed. The inability of the WTO to update global trade architecture multilaterally has led to trade deals like TTIP and the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement, which focus on pursuing these objectives regionally or bilaterally by reducing trade barriers and investment risk.

TTIP's provisions reducing remaining traditional barriers to trade and non-tariff barriers would reduce prices, spur growth, and increase overall wages. Expanding access to food and agriculture markets by reducing subsidies and non-tariff barriers through TTIP will reduce food prices and create jobs. Despite WTO subsidy reductions, both the US and EU continue to maintain farm subsidies to the tune of \$20 and \$60 billion respectively. TTIP negotiations

“TTIP will only be viable... if its supporters can make a compelling argument to the public that the beneficial economic impacts of trade outweigh latent trade-induced anxieties that have recently come to the fore.”

also seek to harmonize EU and US regulatory standards to ensure that regulations are based on scientific merit. Policies such as EU regulations on US genetically modified products and US raw milk cheese bans covertly protect domestic industries under the guise of protecting consumer safety, resulting in higher prices for consumers. If implemented, TTIP is estimated to create a 150 percent increase in agriculture trade flows between the EU and US through subsidy and non-tariff barrier reductions. TTIP will reduce prices faced by EU and US consumers on electrical goods, pharmaceuticals, motor vehicles, chemicals and food, adding an estimated €41 and €122 billion to US and EU GDP, respectively. Economists widely agree that reducing trade barriers will benefit both EU and US consumers and businesses.

Given this consensus, the recent success of politicians and interest groups that oppose trade-liberalizing policies may seem odd. Unfortunately, the “gains from trade” argument has failed to overcome anti-establishment, pro-isolationist movements like Trump's Republican Party and Britain's Leave campaign, which have tapped into broader public anxieties by using trade as a scapegoat. Trade-skepticism can be explained in part by trade's psychological implications. The benefits of trade are often diffuse, and billions of dollars of aggregate savings for Americans are thus likely to go unnoticed by the average consumer, who only saves a few cents on the dollar for cheaper foreign goods. Additionally, jobs resulting from liberalizing policies in export-oriented industries are unlikely to be properly attributed to free trade. Yet the dislocating aspects of trade are concentrated and overt. Trade's benefits are predicated on shipping a portion of the workforce's jobs overseas. For these workers, trade can prove catastrophic by taking away their livelihood and forcing them into unemployment. When trade-

affected workers do regain employment, they often must accept jobs with lower wages. The burden disproportionately suffered by trade-affected workers who have been dislocated by the global economy obfuscates the increases in standard of living that trade brings, and this exacerbates the perceived risks associated with free trade in the public's view.

Rather than foregoing the potential opportunities that trade brings, the EU and US should work to ensure that those who are harmed by trade liberalization are duly compensated through expansions of social welfare programs such as free job training and wage insurance. Similar programs have been implemented in Denmark, a country with low inequality and liberalized trade. The Danish government spends over 17 times the rate per GDP on job training as do the US and UK, ensuring nearly half of their working-age population can access these programs.

Another controversial portion of TTIP, the widely detested investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, would bring economic benefits to the US and EU. ISDS is often excoriated by trade-opposition groups as an undemocratic, corporate welfare provision that allows corporations to sue states for exercising their rights to change laws, but this view ignores the intent and purpose of these agreements: increasing foreign direct investment (FDI). Investment treaties protect corporations from many forms of political risk, including government expropriation and changes in tax and labor policies, which can turn a profitable investment opportunity into a disaster. For international investment between stable, developed countries, corporations fear unforeseen regulations from foreign governments that are implemented with the sole purpose of rendering their investment uncompetitive with local firms. ISDS, which allows firms to arbitrate

cases where they have been unfairly disadvantaged, allows governments to reduce risks associated with FDI by providing an insurance policy for both EU and US corporations. Investment protections encourage firms to make investments overseas by signaling their intent to respect the rule of law and providing a firm an impartial venue in which to litigate expropriation claims. Governments have an incentive to increase FDI inflows because they are associated with higher wages, increased growth and productivity, and spillover effects like increased on-the-job training that leads to greater workforce development. Furthermore, TTIP supporters take solace in the fact that member states are well-protected from frivolous claims and rarely lose ISDS cases: of the 17 brought against the US, none have resulted in a successful claim. EU investors, meanwhile, brought the majority of all new ISDS cases to court worldwide, and EU member states have an 80 percent success rate at defending ISDS cases.

When James Carville coined the phrase “the economy, stupid,” he referred to the notion that political continuity is inextricably connected to delivering a successful economic performance. Trade-skeptical EU and US politicians are challenging this concept. The prospects of the completion of TTIP will hinge on the competing influence of the perceived harm caused to trade-affected workers by trade liberalization and the importance of overall economic performance by traditional metrics in the minds of voters who go to the polls. Economists agree that through agreements like the TTIP, leaders have an opportunity to boost economic welfare. TTIP will only be viable, however, if its supporters can make a compelling argument to the public that the beneficial economic impacts of trade outweigh latent trade-induced anxieties that have recently come to the fore. Without a substantial change in the rhetoric of politicians who support globalism, it seems unlikely that the EU and US will continue economic integration. •

Impact of Trump Victory on Europe's Far Right

- Erin Eusebi

Throughout his campaign, President-elect Donald Trump made several calls for decisive shifts in US foreign policy, ranging from departing from NAFTA and other trade agreements, implementing more aggressive immigration policies, becoming more tolerable toward authoritarian leaders—notably Vladimir Putin, and dismantling the Iran Nuclear Deal. While precisely what Trump is able to achieve remains to be seen, a Trump presidency will likely have a profound global impact. Europe is certainly no exception to this prediction. Donald Trump won the presidency in large part because of his ability to appeal to middle-class, Rust Belt, populist voters who are disillusioned with Washington, but remain steadfast in their nationalism and patriotism. Populism is also growing in Europe, and has been fueling a new form of far right political parties since the mid 1980s, the rise of the Front National in France a notable example.

Trump's rhetoric on the campaign trail fell almost directly within the confines of various "new" far right parties in Europe, which reject traditional ties to European conservative parties. While the exact focus of such parties focus varies across each country, emphasis is largely placed on salient cultural issues. According to Rens Rydgren, a prominent scholar of right wing policies in Europe, these new parties have gained recognition and validation by a combination of the populist's establishment critique, a form of "xenophobic welfare chauvinism" that is often manifested by anti-immigrant policies, and a desire to return to the "good old values of yesterday." Far right parties gained increased momentum on the political landscape with this past year's slew of terror attacks in Europe and the ongoing refugee crisis as a result of continued turbulence in the Middle East. When Brexit was initially announced at the end of June, also taking many pollsters by surprise, the rising popularity of right wing populists was legitimated. However, Donald Trump's most recent election proved that Brexit was not simply a populist anomaly.

Trump's election and forthcoming presidency could have one of two disparate effects on far right political parties in Europe: it could reaffirm the populist plights of the far right, definitively validating their leadership and sup-

“Trump's election and forthcoming presidency could have one of two disparate effects on far right political parties in Europe: it could reaffirm the populist plights of the far right, definitively validating their leadership and support, or it could mobilize the left to prevent the right's continued proliferation.”

port, or it could mobilize the left to prevent the right's continued proliferation. The way these two options pan out will likely depend on and the individual party leadership's ability to capitalize on another populist victory, the frequency of post election of hate crimes, and the proximity of forthcoming individual national elections.

Even before Trump made his official acceptance speech, Marine Le Pen of the French Front National party congratulated Trump on his victory. She went so far as to say that she believed, according to an interview with the BBC, that Trump winning the election improves her chances of winning, and that “he made possible what had previously been presented as impossible.” Le Pen is seeking to directly benefit from the election, and other right wing leaders, such as Geert Wilders of the Party for Freedom on the Netherlands, Frauke Petry of the AfD in Germany, and Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party have issued similar high praise for the outcome of the election.

Comparable to the most recent post-election outbreak of hate-crimes in the United States, Great Britain also experienced similar racist backlash following Brexit. According to the Washington Post, following the Brexit the number of public hate messages and violent incidents against the Polish population grew substantially, which has recently become the dominant immigrant population in Great Britain. If this unrest continues, there is a higher likelihood that the left will mobilize against the racist rhetoric, and those who are attracted to the populist anti-establishment ideal, but may be a bit weary and about the wider social implications of anti-immigrant sentiment will be deterred from voting in support of the right.

Several European countries have forthcoming elections in which right wing populist

movements have the chance to gain power. Notably, Italy and Austria both have elections in December, and parliamentary elections will be happening in the spring of 2017 for the Netherlands, France, and Germany. Because of the nearness of these upcoming elections, right wing party leaders will be more likely to ride the tide of populism than other countries that have their elections later, as popular sentiment will have less time to acquiesce toward the center. That said, the upcoming European elections will offer better insight on whether or not these populist right wing parties are here to stay, or if populism is simply a temporary phenomenon to blow over within the next election cycle. •

Post-Brexit Education Requires Comprehensive Leadership to Address University Doubts

- Liam Beers

The United Kingdom's referendum to leave the European Union was accompanied by fears of change on matters of immigration, the economy, and the government. However, one overlooked consequence of the Brexit concerns new obstacles to education, which include an overflowing elementary school system, a decrease in university aid, and growing fear of what Brexit will mean for overseas university enrollment. In these tumultuous times, the UK needs more comprehensive, calm leadership to combat the situations that have intensified since the Brexit vote.

The major concern for elementary to high school education is the new dearth of teachers that will result when the UK officially leaves the European Union. It is estimated that schools would lose around 400,000 teachers if the free movement of labor stopped. This exodus would cripple a school system that already lacks an adequate number of quality instructors. The UK must seriously consider whether or not their school systems can withstand such a change as they proceed with EU negotiations. Moreover, if these teachers leave, there is a risk that schools will have to accept fewer children, a problem already plaguing UK schools.

To suggest that schools will have fewer student spots available than they currently do as a result of Brexit would surely spark fear in a large number of the population of the UK. Schools have not been able to accept all of the children that apply, especially in cities with limited real estate to build on. This primarily occurs because of the government's poor handling of a population boom, a 22 percent birth rate surge during the past decade and a 16 percent increase in children starting school. Instead of expanding educational infrastructure, new investment was stifled. A privatization agenda, which has sold academies into private ownership, has directly contributed to the lack of room. Spot availability has prompted Prime Minister Theresa May to announce her plan to expand single-faith schools as well as selective grammar schools, but this proposal suggests a fix that is the exact cause for the overcrowded system in the first place.

Supporters of Brexit believe that there will be few negative effects on elementary school education, claiming that education will flourish



Trinity College at Cambridge University.
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ish once all educational control is returned to United Kingdom. Following May's reasoning, they say that an increase in grammar schools will increase spot availability, and that stalled migrant flows will reduce crowding out by foreign youth. However, most of the problem with the education system was caused by government errors that have piled up over subsequent coalitions. The biggest cause of a lack of school seats is actually a result of slow reaction from the Labour Party in 2000. Moreover, EU migrants bring additional funds to the educational system through contribution to public finances. With years of barriers in place to stop local authorities from establishing larger buildings for school systems, it is unlikely similar reforms will help this perpetual problem.

At the college level, when Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty is invoked, the European Union will cut funding for UK universities. The UK currently receives around £1bn (\$1.32bn) of EU grant money because of the international pull of universities like Oxford and Cambridge. This loss of aid will mean a decrease in research funding, as well as new levels of bureaucracy impeding students from attending UK universities. This funding helps create jobs as well as give a slight boost to the United Kingdom's economy; the loss of which would be a real problem for students and staff at campuses across the United Kingdom.

Additionally, Brexit risks esteemed UK universities losing their 'international pull.' If the United Kingdom's withdrawal reflects a sharp break with EU policies, mirroring the rhetoric of Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and David Davis, it could curb applications from foreign students. What many prospective students perceive as hostile backlash could mean a decrease in £3.7 billion of tuition that international EU

students generate for the UK economy. The priority of the United Kingdom's government must be to shore up their stance on international students to make universities appear welcoming. Otherwise there could be large consequences for higher education in the UK, which is as of now the most stable education level in the country. As the date set by the UK to leave the EU approaches, time is of the essence to ensure the future stability of universities.

These fears and the threat of decreased research funding have created a general consensus among university leaders that Brexit was a mistake. However, given the outcome, there must be assurance that the government will come forward with a comprehensive plan to stabilize the predicted loss of foreign-born students, lack of funding, and poor solutions to a growing school-aged population. In addition to this consensus, universities will need to use their strength as civic leaders to help address the fractures and divisions that the referendum campaign revealed within the education community. Also essential are leaders championing diversity and internationalism through promoting the UK as a welcoming destination for talented academics from across the world. All measures are critical to ensuring a bright future for the UK's education system. •

Germany Unnecessarily Increases Intelligence Mandate Amid Growing Terrorist Threats

- Frederik Risse

Germany has thus far been spared a large-scale terrorist attack, but several recent events have raised the terrorist threat level. In Hannover, a 15-year-old Moroccan-German teenager influenced by ISIS propaganda stabbed a federal police officer and wounded him severely. In Bavarian Ansbach, a Syrian refugee with connections to ISIS detonated a bomb at a music festival, killing himself and wounding fifteen. In Würzburg, an underage refugee, who is suspected to have had psychological problems and been influenced by Islamist propaganda, injured five passengers on a local train with an axe. Most recently, German authorities detained a Syrian refugee with a large amount of explosives in his apartment. He is suspected to have been planning an attack on one of Berlin's airports on a similar scale as the attacks in Brussels and Paris.

After each of those incidents, politicians and commentators raised their voices and called for more powers for both German intelligence agencies, the interior Verfassungsschutz, and the exterior Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND). This stimulus response mechanism has been so internalized that usually only an undifferentiated demand for more powers is expressed. Even if concrete proposals are made, they are often unsuited to significantly increase the likelihood of preventing a terror attack. This is why, contrary to the suggestions of many commentators, German intelligence agencies do not need more areas of authority. The necessary tools are already at their disposal and simply have to be used professionally and economically. If anything, the new law for the BND oversight reform shows that more parliamentary control is needed to prevent the agency from developing a parallel structure with unrestricted powers.

The recent case of the would-be suicide attacker, Jaber Al-Bakr, clearly shows that German intelligence agencies are capable of identifying a potential terrorist, observing him to confirm their suspicion, constantly evaluating the threat level, and deciding on the correct moment to intervene. This case also serves as a perfect example of how intelligence agencies should communicate with foreign partners, since the US National Security Agency informed German authorities early on about Al-Bakr and thereby allowed the Verfassungsschutz

to observe him before he could execute his plans. That calls for increased powers arose afterwards was mainly caused by the blatant incompetence of the police. When they tried to detain him in his apartment, he was able to escape the police and was then captured by two other Syrian refugees, who handed him over. For unknown reasons, the head of the local jail then chose not to implement a continuous supervision of the suspect, which gave him the opportunity to commit suicide. This misjudgment deprives us from learning anything about his radicalization or his connection to ISIS members. Many commentators only saw that German authorities mishandled the situation; said commentators did not differentiate between the conduct of the local police and the intelligence agencies, and they thus argued for more powers.

Although most proposals are broad, vague calls for more authority, there are three concrete proposals that come up repeatedly in the debate for expanded authority. Yet none of them are suited to significantly alter the chances of a terrorist attack happening in Germany. First, the idea to preemptively detain all potential terrorists originated in the desire to somehow completely exclude the possibility of threats from people who are sympathetic to extremist Islamist ideology. However, this plan is not only highly impractical, since the government would have to detain a large number of individuals, but also unconstitutional due to the fact that German constitution forbids permanent detention of suspects without reason.

The second common proposal is to centralize the persecution of suspected terrorists with the help of a special anti-terror unit that would operate nation-wide. Although this idea seems logical at first, it actually does not account for the nature of most contemporary terror attacks. Most attacks in recent years have been individually planned, localized, lone wolf assaults. It would only be rational and effective to centralize the efforts of government agencies were the terrorist threat similarly centralized. However, Germany is facing a localized, diffuse threat, which local authorities are clearly better suited to address, and they should therefore be given the necessary resources.

The third major proposal urges tougher vet-

ting of refugees at German borders. Yet, not only is the vetting process already quite elaborate, involving individual questioning - it is also unclear how one could make it more secure. At the same time, it is undesirable to unjustly put all refugees under general suspicion of terrorism.

In addition to ineffective popular proposals, the intelligence agencies already have a vast amount of resources at their disposal. In fact, a recent law to reform BND oversight and capabilities gave them even more authority. It explicitly allowed spying on EU institutions and other member states. The BND was previously limited to espionage in foreign countries due to the experience of the third Reich's omnipotent secret service agencies, but now spying on people inside of Germany is legalized as well. The new law also waters down the criteria needed to surveil a suspect and thereby enables surveillance for basically any reason. Altogether, this means that the BND's powers are significantly increased, but with little supervision. The new mechanism to oversee the BND's activities does not include parliamentary oversight, but instead control by a new board staffed with people close to the intelligence community. Consequently, effective control of the BND's new powers seems very unlikely.

Although calls for more powers for the German intelligence agencies are loud and frequent, they are oversimplified and unjustified. The specific proposals made to enlarge the agencies' powers would not increase the chances of stopping a terrorist attack. The ultimately successful arrest of the would-be terrorist Jaber Al-Bakr shows that the intelligence agencies can already effectively use the vast powers they have. If any further changes to the general set-up of the intelligence agencies should be made, it is not giving them more powers, but establishing more effective parliamentary oversight. •

Intermarium Reborn

Nationalism Promises to Unify Central Europe

- *Jakub Kubas*

The rise of right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland has been the cause of alarm for many. Fears of radical nationalists seizing power in the heart of Europe have reverberated across Western media outlets. This narrative, however, fails to do justice to the greater cultural and political importance of the rise of the right in Central and Eastern Europe in particular, and its potential impact on the continent as a whole. In truth, the rise of the right in the region is not merely a symptom of growing nationalist tendencies across Europe, nor is it nearly so horrifying as described. Rather, the rise of the right signifies an opportunity for Central and Eastern Europe to re-approach old geopolitical concepts and forge a new balance of power on the Old Continent.

Like many of modern Europe's distinctive qualities, the origins of the current European political balance lie in the turmoil of the 20th century, when new nations arose from the battlefields of the First World War only for their aspirations to be cut short by the Second. Not least among these aspirations was the *Międzymorze*, or Intermarium, a concept put forward by Marshal Józef Piłsudski in the interwar period. This idea aimed at the creation of a federation of states between the Baltic and the Black Sea under Polish leadership - an actor capable of protecting the region from the historically aggressive policies of neighboring Germany and Russia. Naturally, Germany and Russia did not (and will not) take kindly to their positions in the European balance of power being disturbed. The key to overcoming their resistance lies in steadfast cooperation.

Today, the Intermarian project is experiencing renewed interest - this time, from more than just the Poles. In 1991, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia formed the Visegrád Group, an alliance between the states of Central Europe meant to coordinate economic and, more recently, foreign policy, in order to give a stronger united voice to the region. The 2015 election of a right-wing government in Poland has not only seen an increase in the Visegrád Group's activity within the structures of the European Union (EU), but also an expansion of the group's cooperation with other predominantly conservative and nationalist govern-

ments in the region, unheard of in the previous twenty-six years of liberal and social democratic rule. Poland's president, Andrzej Duda, has led the way for multilateral conferences between the governments of the Visegrád Group, the Baltic states, as well as representatives of Ukraine and Balkan nations like Croatia and Romania. This format of discussion is referred to as the Trimarium, named after the three seas: the Adriatic, Baltic, and the Black - an obvious allusion to the Intermarian project of the 1920s.

However, the resurgence of the Intermarian concept is not only the domain of governments. The rise of the right wing across Europe has led to greater activity from grassroots organizations, and these, too, have taken up the topic of an Intermarian federation. In July of 2016, the Ukrainian AZOV Movement, a group with neo-Nazi ties, held the Inaugural Conference of the Intermarium Development Assistance Group. The conference served as a congress of nationalist organizations discussing the benefits of the Intermarian concept, committing themselves to its promotion independently of government policy. It signified a change the AZOV Battalion's mentality and a willingness to cooperate between far-right nationalists across the region in order to create a bloc based on historical ties between prospective member-nations to the liberal EU. The bloc could eventually become a preferable alternative to both Russian expansionism and perceived Western ideological and economic soft imperialism.

To the nationalists, a federation of states in the center of Europe opens the doors to a plethora of possibilities. The list of benefits ranges from energy self-sufficiency to increased economic and political leverage in the global arena, as well as reviving a sense of common nationhood. Located at the crossroads of Europe, the Intermarium would have a great influence on European east-west and north-south trade. Thus, a historically problematic geopolitical position for small states may become one of great fortune for a larger political actor uniting smaller entities just as its historic counterpart, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, did four hundred years ago. The newfound alliance would not only secure Central European markets from economic colonization by larger

predatory economies like those of Germany and Russia, but also drastically change the power balance in Europe.

The rise of nationalism could motivate steps towards a federation, only heightening the influence of Central European states. Politically, the federation of small Intermarian states would have the same effect as the development of the Visegrád Group, but to a much larger extent. As it exists, the Visegrád Group's four members - Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia - have managed to significantly impact the European Union's refugee relocation policies, following their diplomatic split from the "big fish" of the EU - France and Germany. A larger and more closely knit organization than the Visegrád Group would have an even greater impact on the course of European politics. This alliance is also coupled with greater military security for its members, especially those bordering an increasingly unpredictable Russia.

Establishing a strong bloc of Central European states between Russia and Western Europe has other, less obvious, security benefits as well. A bloc like this would finally provide liberal Europe with a steadfast buffer zone between themselves and Russia, capable of its own defense, considering that the main actors behind the Intermarian project are equally unwilling to surrender their sovereignty to either the European Union or the Russian Federation. NATO, and particularly the United States, may therefore find the idea of the Intermarium tempting, as it would strengthen the defensive capabilities of the region while lowering the resource burden on NATO itself to secure the region.

Given the rise of the European right, the Intermarian project appears to be firmly on the road to further development, if not realization. For Europe, this means the beginning of a new Central and Eastern European voice soon to be heard on the international stage, with shifts in trade dynamics and military security that have not been felt since the decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. All of this is attainable should the peoples of Central Europe seize the chance, consolidate against the neighboring opposition, and bring the Intermarian concept to fruition. •

Turkish Education Crackdown Exemplifies Post-Coup Censorship

- Meghan Rowley

The failed coup in Turkey last July has resulted in the purges of thousands of public officials. Government representatives are rumored to be investigating suspects' links to Fethullah Gülen, a US-based Muslim cleric who is said to have sparked the uprising. The crackdown has proven excessive in many sectors of society, leading to the suspension of due process and repression of political opposition in the military, legal system, and police force. Yet the worst-off victim of the crackdown by far has been education.

Since the purge began, the government has closed fifteen universities and 1,000 secondary schools, dismissed 27,000 Ministry of Education staff, suspended 4,255 academics and nearly 10,000 teachers, and asked 1,577 University Deans to resign. The government claims these are security measures designed to safeguard against enemies of the state. Yet the extent of the suspensions and the liberal beliefs of the targeted academics instead demonstrate an attempt by President Erdogan to reform Turkey's secular education system based on his religious vision. Such actions only confirm Western fears that the purge is an effort to repress political opposition rather than ensure national security.

This purge is not the first time Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) has tried to reform education. Since rising to power in 2002, the AKP has represented a break from Turkey's urban secular elites, promoting what the Wall Street Journal refers to as "a religious generation" of education by opening 57 new public universities in mostly rural areas. While the new institutions have expanded education for students with historically little to no opportunity, most are molded in the ruling party's interest. Indeed, state funding has shifted away from private, urban universities founded in Atatürk secularism toward new public universities that teach Ottoman history and Islamic studies. More recently, Turkey has canceled the Fulbright and Monnet scholarships that bring in European and American students, replaced older high school principals with those younger and closer to the party, and replaced student activities with those geared towards more religious participation. Recent purge attempts merely indicate the latest, albeit most extreme, attempt to religiously reform public education.



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As the government began targeting liberal educators with only minimal Gülenist connections, many instructors fled the country in anticipation of being arrested, or applied to positions abroad fearing censorship and persecution. Students also protested against the increased Islamization of education, leading to the arrest of 45 Middle East Tech undergraduates this past September. The result has been quiet schoolyards, widespread protests, and 200,000 youth unsure if they will be able to complete their education.

The irony is that until a public falling-out in 2013, Gülenist institutions aided the AKP by taming the influence of the military and secular elite by blending Islamic teachings and science. These schools helped open education to rural students traditionally shut out of exclusive universities, who largely make up Erdogan's base. Yet the Council of Education (YOK) took to closing many of these schools in response to the fallout, indicating what many claim to be censorship.

A large number of these closures have happened in Southeastern Kurdish regions such as Diyarbakir, not only targeting liberal thinkers, but also the ethnic minority. The government claims suspects support the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an extremist Kurdish separatist group listed as terrorists by the United States and European Union. However, most if not all Kurds are unaffiliated with the group, and are instead claiming unjust arrest. Without other universities nearby, the remaining residents, especially poor students and women, are unlikely to continue their education, as they cannot afford to travel far from home.

To be sure, there are many areas in which the Turkish government has a right to oversee its educational institutions. Turkey's is a cen-

tralized education system, and the YOK is constitutionally independent from the President and Parliament (although most members come from a trade union close to the AKP). Turkey's representatives are democratically elected, and its institutions are committed to the rule of law. Some even claim that the purge is moderate, given that the Gülenists movement has proven dangerous to the country in the past and is a widely condemned movement by all of Turkey's main political parties. They argue measures are reasonable, guaranteeing suspended academia two-thirds of their salary and merely asking rather than requiring deans to retire.

However, the sheer size of the purge and the tenuous criteria on which universities are closed and teachers removed represent a movement away from human rights and due process and towards nationalist censorship. In many cases, universities were closed if merely started through Mr. Gülen, teachers and academia were fired if they had an account at Bank Asya (a defunct lender founded by Gülenists), faculty were suspended if they signed a letter in support of ending regional violence with the PKK, and some were removed for just owning a book written by Mr. Gülen. Most were unaware of their personal links, now stating they feel "unwanted" and that their opinions are "under threat."

It is clear that Gülenist sympathizers within the military spurred the coup, whether or not Mr. Gülen himself orchestrated the affair. While this cult-like following has deep connections in Turkish society, the purges make clear that investigations into the education sector have gone beyond those of reasonable suspicion. As Turkey has expanded its state of emergency and suspended the EU Convention on Human Rights, allies are rightly concerned about the postponement of due process and human rights. It is therefore essential that Turkey adhere to the democratic rule of law under its state of emergency. Otherwise, the stability of a key NATO ally, the future of migrant deals with the European Union, and Turkey's role as a successful Islamic democracy near the Middle East will all be in jeopardy. •

Increased EU Engagement Could Restore Hope for Macedonian Minority Rights

- Anna Haynes

Amidst genocide, war crimes, violent police raids, and full-out wars raging across the Balkans, Macedonia has remained remarkably untouched by the devastation experienced by its former Yugoslav counterparts. The country's successful split from Yugoslavia and ensuing years of relative peace can be attributed in large part to Macedonia's bid for European Union membership, which required showing dedication to minority rights and liberal-democratic principles, specifically with respect to the ethnic Albanian population which still comprises a quarter of the population. However, as the EU's promise of membership has worn thin and the tragedies of the past have faded into memory, Macedonian officials have shifted their attention away from the mindset of peace and tolerance. Unless the EU reestablishes their offer of membership, forcing Macedonian officials to prioritize the interests of the Albanian minority again, the country will be positioned to follow the troubling violence of the Balkans.

Upon signing the Ohrid Agreements in 2001, detailing the proper treatment of ethnic minorities, the Macedonian government immediately got to work on integrating Albanian language and culture into schools, businesses, and government. Actions like these gave hope to the ever-marginalized Albanian population, signaling that, unlike most other Balkan states, their homeland was willing to peacefully and speedily mend their ways, bringing about inclusion for all ethnic minorities. This hope was short-lived: complications resulted from a long-time dispute in which Greece demanded Macedonia change its name so as not to conflict with the Greek province of the same name. As it became increasingly apparent that EU membership was more a distant dream than an imminent possibility, the government's push for inclusivity stagnated. Ethnic minority populations began to realize that the reforms, once regarded as revolutionary strides toward inclusivity, were in actuality just tasks on the Macedonian capital Skopje's to-do list, checkpoints on the way to EU accession.

Worsening political and social conditions have plagued the country since that time, propelling Macedonia down the same dangerous path travelled by other Balkan nations and

forcing their attention away from already overlooked minorities. Long before the violence at Kumanovo in May 2015—when members of the long-inactive National Liberation Army engaged in a lethal conflict with Macedonian police forces—accusations of election rigging and manipulation of the political process seriously weakened the government's credibility. The government's leading parties have found themselves entangled in an espionage scandal so unsettling that the entirety of Macedonian parliament was forced to dissolve before the country's elections in an attempt to maintain peace between the two opposing sides.

Amidst mudslinging, confusion, controversy, and instability, Macedonia has completely overlooked the ethnic Albanian population. Without the EU directly pressuring the government to protect Albanian minorities, Macedonian officials have turned their attention elsewhere, reversing recent progress enjoyed by the country's Albanian population. Although a vast majority of this population hopes to peacefully establish a voice in the government, continued neglect by the ruling ethnic Macedonians could very likely push some to violent alternatives. The National Liberation Army, which has not been powerful in the Balkans since the period of grave unrest around 2001, has already regrouped and orchestrated a series of attacks against the government, culminating in the shootings in Kumanovo last year. Even this violence did not capture the government's attention for long. In the year since, few measures have been taken to address ethnic tensions or to end the cycle of disenfranchisement and discrimination toward the Albanian people.

A vague promise of EU accession is not enough to incentivize and secure long-lasting reforms in Macedonia. Instead of intervening in Macedonian affairs by sending delegations and sponsoring peace negotiations, the EU must present Skopje with actionable demands aimed at enhancing political stability and promoting minority rights, backed by the guarantee of accelerated accession negotiations. An official agreement such as this would give Macedonians reason to trust in the EU's promise once more. With hope of accession restored, government officials would have no choice but to focus on aiding the ethnic Albanian minority, once again

upholding their interests and giving them an influential voice in Skopje. To ease this process, the EU should facilitate talks between Macedonia and Greece in an attempt to quell disputes and convince Greece to stop blocking Macedonian accession. Were a deal to prove successful, Macedonia would once again have a strong bid for membership, providing a lasting incentive for the government to address violations of minority rights and encourage peace and equality between ethnic Macedonians and all minorities within the country.

At first glance, believing that the EU might strike such a deal with volatile Macedonia seems hopeful at best, especially when considering how much the EU would need to invest, both in time and political resources, to remedy the Greek title dispute. However, as Greece's relationship with Brussels has worsened in the past few years, EU officials and the leaders of current members have started to speak up for Macedonia. Among its assets to the EU, these leaders list Skopje's impressive border security checks and deft handling of the migration crisis—traits growing increasingly important to European policymakers. They also champion Macedonia's openness to cooperation and reform in the Balkans, a region that many fear is rejecting European principles. Although Greece may be against Macedonian accession, it mostly stands alone. If Brussels were to negotiate with Athens over the name dispute, it seems unlikely that Greece could stand in Macedonia's way much longer.

It is clear that the EU has not lost interest in Macedonia's struggle, evidenced by its dedication to restoring governmental stability through peace talks and special advisors despite the scandal and disorder of the past few years. When considered in conjunction with the albeit short-lived success of the Ohrid agreements, using EU membership to bring about renewed peace in Macedonia is certainly a viable option. If the past decade of Macedonian politics is any indication of the government's priorities, mandating a change in those priorities is the best way of ensuring the protection of ethnic Albanians and all other minorities in Macedonia for years to come. •

As Armenian Protests Intensify, Georgia Offers Model for Police Reform

- Mark Dovich

On July 17, 2016, a group of armed men calling themselves the Daredevils of Sassoun stormed a police station in Yerevan, the Armenian capital, setting off a two-week long hostage crisis that rocked the post-Soviet country. After killing three police officers, the gunmen, who were demanding the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan, surrendered and were arrested. As the hostage crisis unfolded, some of the first anti-regime protests since the collapse of the Soviet Union began in solidarity with the gunmen against Sargsyan's government. However, the government violently suppressed these protests, and by mid-August they were effectively over.

The gunmen's choice to target a police station and the public's apparent support for what could easily be considered a terrorist act are indicative of widespread distrust of the police in Armenia. Like many post-Soviet countries, Armenia has inherited a Soviet-style police force, which is routinely accused of corruption, inefficiency, and human rights violations. Given that Armenia is preparing to transition from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary system of government in 2017, the nation has never been better positioned to reform its police force. In enacting this reform, the Armenian government should look to its next-door neighbor Georgia.

Former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili initiated one of the most successful police reforms in the former Soviet Union states in 2004. These included eliminating its pre-existing police force, retraining officers in Western style law enforcement, and building new facilities, all to increase transparency and decrease corruption. Given the numerous parallels between Georgia and Armenia, it would be realistic to expect that the police reforms that have worked well in Georgia would also work well in Armenia. Besides both being post-Soviet countries, Georgia and Armenia are relatively small in terms of population and geography. They are traditionally Orthodox Christian and culturally conservative, and are ambivalent with regard to their relationship with Russia, their giant neighbor to the north. Furthermore, both countries have expressed some desire to integrate with the West. Therefore, Armenia would be wise to enact similar reforms as Georgia.

As its first step toward a democratic police



Members of the Daredevils of Sassoun group.
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service, Armenia should eliminate its current police force entirely. This may seem like an extreme measure, but post-Soviet countries have had much more success in enacting police reforms with this practice than countries that have not. In an ideal situation, the Armenian government should fire its current officers in such a way as to remain on good terms with them. Saakashvili achieved this in Georgia by giving the officers a severance package and immunity from prosecution for crimes committed while on the job. The number of officers then hired should be significantly smaller, decreasing the chance for corruption among officers and increasing police efficiency. Additionally, Armenia should pay these officers a much higher salary than it paid the previous officers, as this too lowers the incentive for corruption and bribe-taking among the police.

The Armenian government should then train these new officers in Western-style law enforcement. Western policing practices teach officers to respect citizens and their rights, giving the officers a sense of public service. Additionally, Western-style policing values transparency and efficiency, both of which are central to successful police reform. In other words, training officers in Western methods of law enforcement allows for the development of democratic ideals and standards among police officers. Without these, police reform efforts would be ineffective. In Georgia, Western-style police training academies have replaced Soviet-era ones, and police officers' concern for democratic principles, such as citizens' rights and the importance of ensuring the public safety, have increased accordingly.

Finally, the Armenian government should renovate and rebuild police stations throughout the country. Not only would this provide employment and contribute to the struggling

Armenian economy, but it would also increase transparency and efficiency among the police. Smart building designs would improve public access to the police, thereby reducing police inefficiency and corruption. In Georgia, the government has built well-designed and modern police stations, and inefficiency and corruption have decreased significantly. Moreover, these modern police stations, built throughout the country, have been proven to inspire citizens' faith in the government and its badly-needed modernization drive. In a region as volatile and prone to violence as the Caucasus, this type of stability is essential.

Although the public widely supports such police reform, the police and political establishment who benefit from police protection, bribery, and corruption do not. The government-sanctioned suppression of the protests in July clearly points to this fact. It is for this reason that the reform must involve the dismissal of a majority, if not all, of the current police officers. Given the potential resistance of officers and politicians to democratizing the police, this type of top-down reform, which Saakashvili successfully implemented in Georgia, most effectively serves the people.

Within the next year or two, Armenia has a unique opportunity to enact successful police reform. As is clear from the actions of the Daredevils of Sassoun and the protesters this summer, the public desire for such reforms is massive. The Armenian government has a duty to use its transition to parliamentary governance as a springboard for reform—and police reform should be among the most urgent of these. Armenia need only look to its neighbor Georgia for guidance on how to conduct this reform. If Armenia is able to successfully reform its Soviet-style police force, the country would have the opportunity to build a society that is more open and democratic. •

A Second "Orange" Revolution

- Andrew Beddow

Since at least 2013, US-Russian relations have been in persistent and rapid decline. Western governments, from Berlin to Washington, have ignored the dangers of their policies and consistently disregarded Russia's concern for their national interests. This has brought the world to the brink of a great power confrontation. Now, with a Trump administration ascendant, the United States is in a unique position to step back from the precipice and reinvigorate cooperation with the Russian Federation on a host of key policy issues. However, this will require an overhaul of American foreign policy and a grand bargain between the world's two greatest nuclear powers on Syria, Ukraine, and Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD).

Following the end of the Cold War, Russia was in no position to assert itself as a major world power. Its economy in shambles, its military brittle, and its political institutions dysfunctional, Russia was the new sick man of Europe, plagued by chronic instability and international lethargy. The West stripped away the former Soviet republics, pressing the borders of Western institutions ever eastward. All the while, the West developed BMD systems designed to counteract Russia's nuclear capabilities - capabilities, it should be noted, that President Putin regards as essential to Russian security and the balance of power underpinning international peace.

The West, therefore, placed Russia in an untenable position, beleaguered on all sides by threats. Moscow, once twelve hundred miles from a NATO-aligned state, now stands just two hundred miles away, placing NATO forces within striking distance of the heart of the Federation. Against Moscow's protestations, NATO has expanded to include Montenegro, the EU is in negotiations with Serbia, and Sweden and Finland are now considering joint entrance into the Trans-Atlantic alliance. After assisting revolutions and Western expansion in Georgia and Ukraine, the West has only doubled down and raised tensions further. Across the globe, the West has routinely gone against Russia's interests, backing the bear into a corner until a pushback was inevitable.

Russia has established clear guidelines against NATO expansion, Syrian intervention,

and BMD development, but these have gone unheeded at every turn. There is a real prospect that crossing any one of these red lines will lead to a military confrontation that could, in the fog of uncertainty, escalate beyond the original intentions of Western and Russian leaders. President Putin has said as much, warning at the 2016 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum that Westerners "do not feel a sense of the impending danger," and that they do "not understand that the world is being pulled in an irreversible direction." Russia, Putin warns, will do what it must to resist a slide into global irrelevance. In the words of Russian ambassador to the UK, Alexander Yakovenko, "Russia is the only nation that will remain relevant forever. Any other country is dispensable, and that includes the United States. We are at end game now."

Westerners have not understood this fact: Russia believes we are at end game now. Russia's core strategic interests are threatened by Western policies in multiple theaters. Russia is aware of the stakes - in October, Russian media issued instructions to citizens on the proper use of gas masks and procedures for finding the nearest bomb shelters. The Russian military increased deployment of nuclear capable of missiles in Kaliningrad, placing Western capitals within easy striking distance. On October 3rd, Vladimir Putin issued a decree suspending a plutonium disposition agreement with the United States, citing antagonistic American conduct over the last few years.

In reply, the current American and European security apparatus has only pushed greater multilateralism to counter what they perceive to be Russian aggression. Perhaps the best known case was that of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's Syrian "no-fly-zone," a policy which General Joseph Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says "would require [the United States] to go to war against Syria and Russia." The decision - or, more accurately, accidental announcement of war - would not need approval from Washington or Brussels. Instead, any number of uncontrolled variables could prompt miscalculation.

However, the results of the American election have been nothing short of miraculous for US-Russian relations: a true rapprochement is

now a serious possibility. President-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly voiced skepticism about the United States' anti-Russian posture, calling for US-Russian cooperation in combating transnational terrorism and dialing back support for Ukraine's integration into the transatlantic alliance. President Putin has welcomed Trump's ascension to power, calling for a full restoration of diplomatic relations and cooperation with the United States.

Whether or not President-elect Trump can seize on his momentum and pull the world back from a second Cold War is uncertain. What little is known about his cabinet selections and foreign policy advisors - who seem to represent a conventional, neoconservative strain of the Republican Party, such as Newt Gingrich - is not very encouraging. For Trump to be successful, he must take a stand against the Republican Party and the national security establishment. He must take a page from the book of realists such as John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt and clearly define foreign policy goals based on core American interests so as not to jeopardize this window of opportunity for renewed US-Russia relations.

The first move must be to end American involvement in Syria and allow the Russian and Syrian governments to conduct their wars unhindered. Trump has already announced that he will end support for Syrian rebels, and he has denounced the proposed no-fly-zone. Next, a Trump administration must enter into a grand bargain concerning states on Russia's periphery. Ukraine must be partitioned, with Crimea and the Donbass being surrendered to Russia, and the rest marked off as a neutral buffer between East and West, never to enter into NATO or the EU. Finally, a Trump administration must establish clear red lines and procedures for avoiding future conflict in the Baltics, as well as reinvigorate cooperation on a host of other policy concerns, such as fighting transnational organized crime, containing the rise of China, and pursuing joint economic liberalization. The onus is on America - not Russia - to adopt a conciliatory policy, and if President-elect Trump can accomplish that, then a new era in great power cooperation might be achieved. •

9/11 Bill Will Have Far-Reaching Consequences

- Jillian Smith

On September 28, 2016, the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) was officially signed into United States law, even after a congressional veto override. In context, the “9/11 bill” targets Saudi Arabia and potentially allows families of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to sue the Saudi government for its supposed links to the perpetrators. JASTA agitated the geopolitical world by overlooking the globally acknowledged sovereign immunity principle, which previously protected foreign governments from being sued by citizens of another country. Furthermore, as a response to the bill, Saudi Arabia threatened to pull upwards of \$750 billion of US-based assets out of America, as well as interrupt its intelligence sharing with many Western coalition countries. At a time when international cooperation is crucial in attempting to stabilize the Middle East, JASTA is recklessly adding strain to coalition relationships. While it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will react to JASTA with radical moves that completely sever its relationship with the West, the possible long-term consequences of this bill on the conditions of this relationship are worrisome. JASTA threatens key relationships by sidestepping international sovereignty precedents, and, if acted on, will open the doors to increasingly intractable geopolitical proceedings.

JASTA's enactment subsequently revised the US 1976 Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, which protects foreign governments from lawsuits in the American court system unless the country is a recognized state sponsor of terrorism. JASTA adds a condition, which allows lawsuits to be brought against states that are accused of supporting terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland, regardless of their status as a sponsor of terrorism prior to the lawsuit. While Saudi Arabia is not recognized by the US government as a sponsor of terrorism and is not directly addressed in any of the bill's language, a later clause in the bill allows for a lawsuit to be brought against the country because of its ties to multiple 9/11 attackers. Only a few days after JASTA's signing, the bill came to fruition when an American woman widowed by the 9/11 attacks filed the first lawsuit against the government of Saudi Arabia.

Ironically enough, JASTA ties the hands of

the American court systems even if they reach a ruling, which raises questions regarding its costs and benefits. The revised Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act still does not give legal authority to the US court system to seize Saudi assets or forcibly demand restitution, though most supporters of this bill championed that point. The bill is indeed compassionate in nature and satisfies the quest for justice that the international community has sought post-9/11. However, JASTA has too many shortcomings that skew its original purpose. JASTA opens up the floor for other countries to also negate the foreign sovereignty principle and bring lawsuits against each other. Specifically, US politicians have discussed the implications of lawsuits from countries such as Iraq, Japan, and Vietnam, who feel that they are owed restitution for failed and consequential bouts of US intervention. Iraq is the first country to consider seizing the opportunity, as leaders in the country have spoken of suing the US government for its invasion of Iraq in 2003. Security officials from the US and foreign countries add that these semi-legal discussions will distract from the coalition's main focus of confronting issues threatening the region's stability. During these operations, maintaining the ability to cooperate and communicate with other countries is critical to addressing broader issues.

Saudi Arabia's lobbyists worked hard to convince US politicians to drop JASTA in the weeks prior to its signing. As the bill moved through the legal checks and balances, international opposition continued to build not only from Middle Eastern allies, but from Western coalition partners as well. Some of the most ardent opposition came from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which expressed their worries of JASTA's effect on the cooperation of the coalition currently underway to take on the Syrian Civil War and its various proxy wars. The GCC stated that they support Saudi Arabia and view the bill not only as a violation of international law's foreign sovereignty principle, but also as a slap in the face to one of the region's strongest players. Coalition countries outside of the Middle East also rejected the bill, with spokesmen from Russia and the European Union both condemning the act as dangerous to global security interests, which

rely on stable cooperation with various Middle Eastern countries.

As foreign countries continue to reject the principles of JASTA, many of the bill's most zealous congressional supporters also expressed buyer's remorse as they further discussed the possible fallout of the bill. Politicians watered down the bill's strong language and explicit warnings to foreign nations with questionable ties to terrorism after continued discussion on its geopolitical implications. With both the US Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House of Representatives admitting that the bill could have been more thoroughly discussed prior to becoming law, the legitimacy and bipartisan success of JASTA has been called into question. Additionally, US Secretary of State John Kerry recently met with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir to attempt to renegotiate JASTA into a bill that protects, “troops and American partners and American individuals who may be involved in another country [from] the potential of a lawsuit for those activities.” These renegotiations and statements from US politicians could signal the unraveling of the emotional significance of the bill as potential implications are revealed.

JASTA contributes to a slight decline in US-Saudi relations, which could not come at a more complicated time. The links between Saudi Arabia and the attackers responsible for September 11th should not be ignored, but passing JASTA will not effectively address the problem. The bill tugs at the heartstrings of the American people, demonstrates bipartisanship on behalf of the US Congress, and makes a statement about international terrorism, but ultimately lacks a strong enough enforcement mechanism to make a legitimate difference. In the long run, JASTA may fail to accomplish its original goals and is likely to strain an already complicated US-Saudi relationship that is currently focused on Syria and counterterrorism. •

What's in a Name?

The Nusra Rebranding as a Long-Term Threat

- Ali N. Habbab

On July 28th, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, the leader of the Syrian jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra, appeared unmasked in front of a video camera for the first time, announcing the breaking of ties between Nusra and its parent organization, Al-Qaeda. Sporting Bin Laden-esque military fatigues and seated in front of a white satin backdrop, Jolani also declared a name change for the group: Jabhat al-Nusra was to become Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. In the midst of ISIL's bloody summer campaign of international terrorism, however, the Nusra rebrand was regarded as somewhat inconsequential.

Indeed, it was unlikely that a rather innocuous name change would alter perceptions of the group, which, since gaining prominence in the Syrian Civil War during 2012, has been responsible for numerous human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, and subject to terrorist-list designations by the United States and other international bodies. Yet, in the same step, to dismiss Jolani's statement as inconsequential would be to ignore a larger issue. As Syria analyst Charles Lister discusses in his publication *Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra*, the rebrand is part of the group's ongoing effort to entrench itself within the Syrian opposition, a move that will help ensure its long-term sustainability. While global attention mainly focused on the threat of ISIL, Nusra, now JFS, has laid the groundwork for a sustainable presence in Northern Syria: one that could threaten the region and beyond for years to come.

The announced split and rebranding isn't the first time al-Jolani asserted his group's independence. Originally operating under the umbrella of ISIL in the early days of the Syrian conflict, al-Jolani split his Nusra fighters from ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's control in mid-2013. The dissolution was consistent with Nusra's adherence to a pragmatic jihadist vision, which called for a more gradual implementation of Islamic rule. In the months that followed, ISIL and Nusra became open adversaries, with ISIL driving Nusra out of Syria's eastern provinces to its current center of operations, Northern Syria. Although many considered the initial results indicative of a miscalculation by al-Jolani, the split allowed the group to avoid the stigma associated with ISIL among more

mainstream Syrian rebel groups. As a result, Nusra, whose fighters were better trained and equipped than their counterparts, was able to exploit its successes against the Syrian regime to gain valuable political capital among Syrian rebels and civilians alike.

Recent developments also highlight the group's desire to further embed within the Syrian opposition. In recent months, for example, Nusra capitalized on hostility from both the United States and Russia by arguing that their political process abandoned the Syrian people and that the group stands for the real interests of Syrians on the ground. These strategic and political appeals shifted the position of Nusra from outsider to essential player in the opposition bloc. Once viewed with great suspicion, Nusra has established an enduring foothold within the Syrian rebel umbrella.

The results of Nusra's first split and rebranding were a boon to its leadership and long-term viability. It further demonstrated the shrewdness of Nusra's elected political strategy; adopting a policy of gradualism with respect to implementing Salafist ideology over ISIL's more urgent declaration of an Islamic Caliphate allowed Nusra to carve out a place within the Syrian opposition, a status elusive to ISIL to this day. Given this track record, there is reason to believe that Nusra's latest rebranding will confer a similar benefit to the group's long-term sustainability. In many ways, the split with Al-Qaeda bears hallmarks of Nusra's split from ISIL in 2013. In this instance, as in the past, Nusra can forward the claim that it is shrugging off foreign ties, signaling its commitment to a local, inherently Syrian cause. The result is powerful: Exiting Al-Qaeda will allow Nusra to intensify its efforts to build a lasting localized framework in Syria, ensuring Nusra's long-term presence in the region.

Yet at the same time, Nusra's split from Al-Qaeda can hardly be considered a complete disassociation. The Washington Post reported that following the announcement, Al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri even described the dissolution as being for "the good of Islam and Muslims" and al-Jolani has repeatedly stressed that the split should not be seen as a sign of disagreement between the two groups. This apparent disconnect, between expressions of

good faith and actions to the contrary, is critical to understanding the ultimate implication of the split. Nusra's unwillingness to truly shrug off its connections to the global jihadi movement whilst pivoting towards the more local Syrian struggle is not so much a weakness as it is a concerted strategy. At its heart, the group is still very much a part of the radical Islamist movement, in one stroke applauding attacks like those seen in Paris and in another calling ISIL "the dogs of hellfire." By placing one foot firmly in the Syrian revolution and another in the global jihadist movement, Nusra has been able to attract fighters and supporters from different ends of the spectrum.

Nusra's rebranding strategy is ultimately a complement to its broader state-building activities. Following Idlib's capture by opposition forces in 2015, Nusra began constructing a network of social services and Sharia courts to build a pseudo-Islamic state in the void left by the Syrian government. Through such activities, Nusra pacified internal dissent in the areas in which it operates, ultimately allowing the group to gradually apply their Islamist principles to local rule. In effect, Nusra is establishing an Islamic emirate in a manner consistent with their gradualist approach to Sharia implementation, maximizing the potential for a sustainable presence.

The last time a major subsidiary of Al-Qaeda broke ties with the umbrella organization, the Islamic State in Iraq formed in 2006. Now, ten years later, the Islamic State emerged as the world's preeminent security challenge, threatening local and international actors alike. Nusra's rebranding should be viewed with equal and perhaps even greater concern: A sustainable radical Islamist emirate, however small, has the potential to become a safe-haven for the global jihadist movement. The group previously praised foreign terrorism operations and is connected to terrorist attacks in Lebanon, suggesting a desire, but limited capability, to carry out its larger vision. As the Nusra movement continues to grow in Northern Syria, its threat to the international community will only become more and more urgent. •

Chemical Warfare in the Syrian Civil War

- Tara Ballouz

A United Nations report released after a yearlong investigation found the Syrian government responsible for several chemical attacks on its civilians, in direct violation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) agreement. Although the Assad regime and Russian government denied the report's findings and questioned the legitimacy of the investigation, many Western countries are calling for the Syrian government to be punished. Syria's use of chemical warfare and the resulting global tensions will only set back global humanitarian progress and undermine the authority held by international peace organizations.

The UN-led joint investigative mechanism (JIM) began its investigation into the use of chemical warfare over a year ago after nine chemical attacks killed nearly 1,500 Syrians. Eight of the attacks utilized chlorine, while one used sulfur mustard. The investigation found evidence that the Syrian government deployed chlorine barrel bombs from helicopters over three villages. It also found the Islamic State of the Levant, or ISIL, responsible for the mustard gas attack.

The Syrian government agreed to join the OPCW and destroy its chemical stockpile in 2013 after allegations that it killed hundreds in a Damascus suburb with sarin gas. The deal was brokered by both Russia and the US, partially as an alternative to taking military action in Syria. However, UN investigators were unable to verify that the stockpile was actually eliminated. Chlorine's common use in practical applications creates difficulty in regulating its usage, and makes it nearly impossible to destroy the source completely.

Since the report's release in August of 2016, President Assad has denied that his government had anything to do with the attacks. Likewise, his Russian allies claim that the JIM investigation lacked credibility, and that it should not be used as cause for legal action. Western nations, on the other hand, called for punishment of the Syrian government for the OPCW violation. For instance, the French and British governments urged UN intervention while the US suggested the implementation of a no-fly zone over Syria.

These attacks are the first significant use of

“These attacks are the first significant use of chemical weaponry since the late 1980s.”

chemical weaponry since the late 1980s. The use of this type of weaponry encourages barbaric warfare and undermines the purpose of many humanitarian organizations like the OPCW. Signing an international treaty and then blatantly violating it delegitimizes the agreement as a whole, and sends a message that the humanitarian cause itself is near futile. This is made clear by the fact that both the Russian and Syrian governments deny the findings of the UN-led investigation. Additionally, the Russians repeatedly block UN's Security Council resolutions reprimanding the Syrian government. This indicates a lack of respect for the United Nations, which itself is intended to effectively apply human rights treaties.

Some international leaders support Russian criticism of the UN for taking a total of 18 months to release any sort of information about the chemical attacks. This raises concerns for how well global law enforcement can effectively keep the peace and administer treaties. However, evidence shows that it is in fact the fault of these accusers, the involved countries, and the peace organizations for negatively impacting the humanitarian effort of eradicating chemical warfare. For one, more chlorine attacks took place just weeks after the JIM report was released, indicating that the publication of such an investigation and attempts to blame Assad and Russia are truly futile and do not halt the usage of such weapons on the battlefield.

The UN's disregard and its influence over the rest of the world stems from the absence of punishment for violating the OPCW. The agreement that Assad signed requires that any violation of said agreement would have to be investigated by the Syrian government, which would then have to work to eliminate the issue. However, this would require that Assad investigate his own government for a crime he claims he never committed. This arbitrary mandate allows the Syrian government to avoid taking responsibility for illegal forms of warfare. The lack of penalty for using such a heinous form of warfare may encourage other countries

to follow suit. Seeing that a country currently under so much scrutiny is allowed a free pass to violate an international treaty delegitimizes the UN and OPCW even more so, and gives reason for other corrupt governments to use chemical weapons.

There must be a more concrete punishment and enforcement mechanism for violating such a treaty in order to minimize and eliminate chemical warfare. The threat of military retaliation, for example, could push the Assad regime to refrain from using chlorine gas against its civilians. Effective sanctions also give international organizations more authority, and provide legitimate reasons for other countries to follow through on signed treaties. UN sanctions have proved successful in eliminating some of the world's most violent weaponry held by another war-torn country, Iran. The UN froze Iranian banks in 2007 when the government pursued a nuclear weapons program in direct violation of a previously signed peace treaty. In January of 2016, these sanctions were removed as a result of Iran resolving their nuclear issue and complying with UN mandates. This is direct evidence that UN sanctions can effectively limit violent weaponry held by historically war-torn countries. Thus, by making international agreements and their enforcement organizations more dependable and definite, there will be a greater chance of eliminating chemical warfare. •

As Russia Adds New Military Base in Syria, Many Suspect Ulterior Motives

- Ayah Kutmah

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Nikolai Pankov recently announced the government's intention of expanding an existing navy facility into a permanent naval base in Tartous, Syria. The addition of this naval base to the two existing Russian airbases in Syria, along with the increased severity of Russian airstrikes on rebel-held areas, widens Russia's encroachment in Syria. Russia continues to take actions that surpass what is necessary in its alleged war against ISIS, also known as Daesh. This indicates that the Russians strive not only to prop up Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad and lengthen the Syrian civil war, but also to become a new influential military power in the Middle East.

Russian military bases in Syria are nothing new; the first was established in 1971, when then-president Hafez Al-Assad and the Soviet Union agreed on an arms deal that would allow the Soviet Union to build a resupply station in Tartous, a vital coastal city in Syria that borders the Mediterranean Sea. Russia inherited this naval facility when the Soviet Union disintegrated, and it became Russia's only military facility in the region.

The Syrian civil war has turned a subtle bilateral relationship between the Russian government and the Assad regime into an active alliance. What began as a political alliance, with Russia backing Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and vetoing unfavorable resolutions in the United Nations, soon led to military cooperation. Arms sales between the two increased, and, in 2015, Russia launched airstrikes against strategic targets in Syria. While Russia claims their fight is against Daesh and "terrorists," many Syrian opposition groups, neighboring states, and the United States point to the fact that Russian airstrikes target strategic rebel-held areas deemed important to the reassertion of Assad's government.

In addition to airstrikes and arms agreements, the most visible fingerprint of Russian encroachment is the expansion and addition of military bases in Syria. Russia already has two air bases in Palmyra and Latakia, strategically critical cities for the Syrian civil war. Both were established in 2015 to serve as coordination points for Russian airstrikes and Syrian government troops. The strongest, the



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Khmeimim Air Base, is located in the coastal city of Latakia. More importantly, it is the home city and Alawite stronghold of Bashar al-Assad and his family. The second airbase is located in Palmyra, a historical city once controlled by Daesh, and liberated by joint Syrian and Russian forces. The recent plan to expand the existing naval facility into a permanent naval base in Tartous is another firm sign that Russia's fight against terror is a front, not only for propping up President Bashar Al-Assad, but also for increasing Russia's military power in the Middle East.

Many critics of Western characterizations of Russian actions in Syria argue that Russian bases serve only to increase Russia's capabilities and coordination with the Syrian military against Daesh and, by extension, growing terrorism in the region. The same voices will often highlight the liberation of Palmyra from Daesh as a prime example of its desire to fight the group with a coalition of the Syrian and Russian forces rivaling that of the US. Thus, the subsequent establishment of the Palmyra Air Base is framed as a line of battle against Daesh. Critics also point towards Putin's willingness to enter into a ceasefire agreement as indicative of Russian desire for military coordination, not expansion.

While the withdrawal of some Russian forces in March 2016 and the limited success of Russian and Syrian forces against Daesh surprised many, this line of argument does not take recent Russian actions in Syria into account. The breakdown of the ceasefire deal due to the

Syrian regime's failure to adhere to the deal's terms, along with the increased severity of renewed Russian airstrikes on Aleppo and Idlib, reveal Russia's expansionist motives. According to The Institute for the Study of War, Russia exploited the collapse of the nationwide ceasefire in order to move additional military assets into Syria and prepare for the establishment of the Tartous naval base. This planned establishment is yet another show of strategic Russian military expansion in Syria.

Russia's naval base in Tartous is not intended to fight Daesh, but rather to advance Russia's long-term interests. Daesh is a ground force with no naval warfare capabilities and Tartous is a government stronghold that is far from Daesh-controlled territories. While Russia does ship supplies and equipment to Syria via this resupply station, it does not need to expand the station into a permanent naval base to achieve that purpose. Russia's establishment of a naval base could be an attempt to assert its military support in Syria, and by default stabilize Bashar al-Assad. However, while Assad does rely on Russia for stability, the 2015 Russian airstrikes have already done enough to stabilize the Assad regime. A naval base, besides providing further military equipment, does not give Assad anything he desperately needs. Rather, it is likely that Assad granted Putin permission to turn the old resupplying facility into a base as gratitude for Russia's intervention. Recent Russian actions in the Syrian conflict and the prospective establishment of the Tartous naval base clearly indicate Russia's long-term desire to more firmly strategically establish themselves as an influential growing power in the Middle East. •

The Islamic State's Healthcare Bureaucracy

A Perversion of the Hippocratic Oath

- *Jalal H. Taleb*

As war continues to rage across Iraq and Syria, health disparities in the region have increased significantly. The paradoxical actions of the Islamic State (IS), also known as Daesh, are exemplified in its administration of public healthcare and other social services. In building its healthcare system, Daesh neglects to provide equal and adequate care to the local population, contradicting essential principles of the Islamic faith. Ultimately, the vulnerabilities of Daesh's healthcare bureaucracy contribute to the internal degradation of Daesh. The contradictory manner in which Daesh governs its healthcare bureaucracy and provides social welfare programs inhibit the Islamic State's long-term stability.

Daesh's adaption to the challenges of governance and disease growth is perplexing. After capturing major cities in Iraq and Syria, IS attempted to administer a plethora of services like electricity, gas, food, and water. To complement these social services, the organization's Diwan al-Siha – Health Department – opens free hospitals, which often prioritize patients by their ranking in the terrorist organization. IS attempts to operate like a state government, although it does so very poorly.

The destruction of existing health infrastructure, persistent hijacking of foreign aid delivery for civilians by Daesh, and inadequate access to care for wounded civilians have all increased the suffering in the conflict. Over the last five years, IS has systemically targeted health facilities and personnel as a means for eliminating the opposing factions' resources. According to the World Health Organization and Syrian American Medical Society, roughly 60 percent of hospitals and 90 percent of the pharmaceutical industry have been destroyed in Syria.

Since its rise in 2014, Daesh has supplemented the Syrian government's destruction with its own. Daesh is responsible for attacking various civilian hospitals, as well as abducting



Abu Marwan, interviewed in May, tells the author about his experience in the IS healthcare system.
PHOTO: JALAL H. TALEB

and killing patients and foreign health providers. IS militants have killed physicians who refused to provide care to injured militants. Furthermore, female patients are forced to wear the veil against their will, and female practitioners refusing to observe the religious practice are barred from entering IS-governed hospitals.

Hospitals also suffer from power shortages and resources are consistently undersupplied. When civilians are in need of medicine unavailable in even the largest stronghold cities such as Raqqa, they are forced to smuggle them by special corridors, often paying triple the price. Daesh continues to charge civilians for allegedly free basic healthcare services. The system's efficacy is dwindling because of its segregationist policies.

One man who sought refuge in Zahlé, Lebanon, Abu Marwan from Raqqa, experienced the bureaucratic manner in which IS operates its medical clinics. (Translated from Arabic) "One [IS] doctor in Raqqa and I argued about the treatment of my broken arm. The following day, militants brought me to the hospi-

tal lobby, where a group of men from IS whipped me and forced me to apologize to the physician. We lived in fear." He went on to explain "health services were better when the city was still under control of President Bashar al-Assad. For one, Assad's administration would cover the majority of medical expenses, whereas now the national hospital in Raqqa, operated by Daesh, does not. And Daesh-governed hospitals cannot carry out more complex surgeries and procedures, or cope with cancer patients."

Abu Marwan's story highlights the humanitarian crisis in the region, which continues to worsen as IS desecrates healthcare infrastructure. Daesh's convoluted nature seeks to coddle civilians under theocratic rule and social welfare programs while simultaneously destroying health services entirely. This ultimately limits the organization's ability to effectively administer its policies. As a result, the long-term future of the Salafist group is bleaker than that of other Islamist organizations.

Islamist groups with local support and more coherent, hierarchical structures such as Hamas and Hezbollah are far more stable, due largely to their ability to provide adequate social services. Daesh's poor organizational structure contributes to its vulnerability long-term. Contrastingly, the organizational structures of Hezbollah and Hamas provide a foundation for the long-term influence that the groups have on Lebanon and Palestine, respectively. Hamas and Hezbollah's coherence and hierarchical structure facilitate the dissemination and standardization of practices and foster the stability of these organizations in their respective countries.

The political influence and long-term stability Hezbollah has in Lebanon is robust, especially in comparison to that of IS. Hezbollah's service system is organized into three divisions: the Social Unit, the Education Unit, and the Islamic Health Unit. Many of Hezbollah's social services are registered as non-governmental or-

ganizations, ensuring legal protections.

Hezbollah's health-service unit provides healthcare to low-income Shiites and other low-income populations at little cost. The Islamic Health unit is involved in a number of initiatives, such as offering free health insurance and prescription-drug coverage through a network of local pharmacies. Hezbollah's Islamic Health Unit also has a vital function in meeting health needs; it operates three hospitals, 12 health centers, 20 infirmaries, 20 dental clinics, and ten defense departments. The Islamic Health unit has been so effective that it was asked to assume the operation of several government hospitals across Lebanon.

Furthermore, Hamas has established itself as a viable alternative for key social programs needed in Gaza. Hamas intervened when the combination of Israeli blockades and inadequate support from the Palestinian Authority left Palestinian social welfare programs in shambles. The organization provides education, medical centers, orphanages, and even food banks, similar to Hezbollah.

Because of Hamas and Hezbollah's roles as health service providers, those they serve demonstrate their loyalty to the party, whether heartfelt or not. These social services continue to stabilize the standard of living of many poor in both Lebanon and Palestine. This positive effect generates genuine allegiance and continuing political support. When human needs are high and there is one party to go to for services, recipients are subtly coerced to show their loyalty to Hezbollah and Hamas beyond voting on election day – this long-term support is far more uncertain for IS.

Daesh's poor bureaucracy presents a complex system of healthcare disparities, segregation, and structural vulnerabilities. These inadequacies, especially when compared with other Islamist groups in the Levant, present an unsustainable future for the Islamic State. •

A Weakening Saudi Position Poses a Threat to Syria's Stability

- Daniel Karr

Major powers are fiercely divided on how to resolve the Syrian Civil War and create lasting peace. The United States, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey seek to replace Assad, while Russia and Iran support Assad's continued rule. Egypt recently upended this dynamic by aligning its Syria policy with that of Iran and Russia and away from that of the US and Saudi Arabia. Egypt's changing policy priorities will weaken the relative strength of the anti-Assad negotiating position. Consequently, as Saudi Arabia finds itself with fewer regional allies on the Syria issue, it will likely look to non-state actors, including Salafist groups, to gain more leverage. Such a move would bolster the rise of extremism in Syria and ultimately destabilize governance in post-Assad Syria.

In October, Egypt demonstrated its support for the Iran-Russia campaign in Syria by backing a Russian UN Security Council resolution that did not include Western demands to end the siege of Aleppo. Although the Egyptian government has gradually amended its priorities in Syria since 2013, when Abdel Fatah al-Sisi seized power, Egypt's latest move reveals that its Syria policy is aligned with that of Iran and Russia and not that of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Sisi views the conflict from a counterterrorism perspective, and his focus on destroying the Islamic State and countering al-Qaeda's presence in Syria parallels Iran and Russia's stated goals.

Additionally, Egypt's increased cooperation with Russia and Iran on several economic fronts highlights their improving relations. Saudi Arabia recently terminated a \$23.5 billion oil deal with Egypt, who responded by sending its Oil Minister to Iran to seek a new agreement. Earlier this year, Egypt agreed to purchase military helicopters from Russia, and the two countries are currently negotiating a tourism agreement. With the support of Egypt, the most populous Arab nation, Iran and Russia's negotiating position in Syria, and in the Middle East at large, will improve. Riyadh, which fears an Iranian-dominated settlement in Syria, will likely interpret Egypt's shift as a signal that it needs to enhance its own bargaining position.

Although Egypt's support for Assad represents a diplomatic victory for Iran and Rus-

“Changing relationships between Middle Eastern powers could encourage Saudi Arabia to rely on extremist, sectarian actors to improve its bargaining position.”

sia, in Syria leverage at the negotiating table is dictated by strength on the battlefield. Most notably, Russia's intervention in Syria has bolstered its influence over negotiations. Russia's presence in Syria has deterred military action against Assad and forced the US and its allies to seek a diplomatic solution on Russia's terms. Saudi Arabia will likely learn from Russia's success and aim to improve its military standing in Syria in order to counter Iran and Russia's growing diplomatic clout.

Without a more robust intervention from anti-Assad forces, Saudi Arabia has two military options to improve its bargaining position. First, it could use its own military forces, but it is unlikely Riyadh would risk such a drastic escalation with Tehran or Moscow. Second, it could increase its support for rebel groups fighting Assad. As Assad's position strengthens, Saudi Arabia and Turkey continue to shift their support away from the more moderate factions of the rebellion, such as the Free Syrian Army, towards Islamist groups, including Ahrar al-Sham, that aim to create a Syrian state based on Islamic law.

Increased Saudi support for Ahrar al-Sham, or groups with comparable philosophies, could pave the way for a Salafist regime in a post-Assad Syria. Although Ahrar al-Sham has fought against ISIL and opposes its ideology of global jihad, its ideas are rooted in Islamist militancy and its leaders hope to create a state in Syria that resembles Afghanistan under Taliban control. Any regime in Syria that resembles the Taliban may also permit militant groups such as al-Qaeda to operate within its borders. Given that Ahrar al-Sham's leadership has connections with al-Qaeda's growing affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, and that the two previously cooperated militarily, it is possible that a future relationship between Ahrar al-Sham and al-Nusra could mirror the past relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Even if Ahrar al-Sham distances itself from

al-Nusra, any influence Ahrar al-Sham wields in a post-Assad regime would harm stability in Syria and in the region. The organization expresses contempt for other religious groups and conducted violence against civilians of other Muslim sects, including against Alawites and Shiites, during its operations in Aleppo and Idlib. Sectarian violence initially helped fuel conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, and the sectarian nature of Ahrar al-Sham reveals that it is unfit to have influence in any Syrian state.

Thus, changing relationships between Middle Eastern powers could encourage Saudi Arabia to rely on extremist, sectarian actors to improve its bargaining position. The anti-Assad coalition must consider this risk when weighing the pros and cons of direct military intervention in Syria. A more aggressive military approach could tilt the battlefield in favor of anti-Assad forces. This would provide Saudi Arabia with an alternative to working with Salafist groups, while continued inaction could push Saudi Arabia down a dangerous path. •

Yemen on the Brink

- Maya Zreik

On March 26, 2015, Saudi Arabia began a brutal military operation in Yemen, wreaking havoc on a severely impoverished nation. Earlier in the year, a rebel group known as the Houthis, with backing from former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, overthrew the Yemeni government and forced the current president Abdrabbuh Hadi into exile, plunging the nation into a civil war. Saudi Arabia began airstrikes soon after in an effort to weaken the Houthis. However, Yemenis have paid a heavy price both in lives and livelihoods as a result of this conflict, which has received minimal coverage in the international press. With no end in sight, this conflict is finally beginning to catch the attention of world leaders and humanitarian aid workers. The deterioration of Yemeni livelihood has led many to question what objectives, if any, Saudi Arabia can claim in their military siege against the country.

Even before the civil war began, Yemen was one of the most food insecure nations in the world, an issue rapidly exacerbated by the airstrikes and destruction of infrastructure. As of September 2016, 21.2 million people—or 82 percent of the population—are in need of humanitarian aid, 3.1 million are internally displaced, and one in five people are severely food insecure. Yemen has the highest rate of stunting from malnutrition in the Middle East and depends on imports for 95 percent of its food. Due to a Saudi-led blockade of naval ports and borders, the closure of the Sana'a airport, and the bombing of many farms, it has become almost impossible for many civilians to find a secure source of food. George Khoury, director of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen, stated "while the conduct of hostility is one factor for deaths and killing, the major factor is not war in Yemen. People are dying silently every day because of malnutrition."

The war's effect on malnutrition is only worsened by the lack of health care services in Yemen. Approximately 600 health facilities have been forced to close due to infrastructure damage. The blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia on the port of Aden also caused a shortage of critical medical supplies, such as medicine and diesel. Due to the lack of supplies, doctors are unable to save civilians from diseases brought

“Immediate humanitarian aid must be provided to the people of Yemen before the situation deteriorates even further.”

on by the conflict as demonstrated by a recent cholera outbreak. The lack of aid for malnutrition has had disastrous consequences—many citizens turned to al-Qaeda out of desperation, as the territory controlled by the terrorist organization is one of the only parts of the nation not plagued by food insecurity.

The crisis in Yemen has largely been overlooked due to pressure on the UN from Saudi Arabia and its allies who silence any attempts to address the humanitarian situation. The UN was forced to remove the conflict from its annual Children and Armed Conflict report after Riyadh threatened to withhold funding, with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon admitting that he “had to consider the very real prospect that millions of other children would suffer grievously if, as was suggested to me, countries would defund many UN programs.”

The Saudi offensive is widely regarded as part of a larger conflict with Iran, their main rival in the region, despite the fact that the Houthis have historically had no connection to Iran. While exiled president Hadi was backed by the US and Saudi Arabia, the Houthis acquired Iranian support only in the last five years in an attempt by Tehran to insert themselves into Yemen. Their subsequent takeover of Yemen, which shares a border with Saudi Arabia, was perceived as an expansion of Iranian influence in the region. Saudi Arabia considered this a threat to their own power base in the Middle East. Although this power struggle has been framed in sectarian terms as Sunni vs. Shia, further inflaming societal tensions, the subsequent conflict is principally a proxy war, with the civilians of Yemen ultimately paying the price. The most recent atrocity for example, was an accidental bombing of a funeral that killed 150 people, highlighting the continuing humanitarian crisis in the country.

Examining the disastrous effect that this war has had on Yemen prompts the question as to whether it is achieving its objective or not. Ultimately, it seems to be an ideological power

struggle waged to ensure that Saudi Arabia does not lose its grip of influence over the rest of the Middle East. If Saudi Arabia's intentions are to contain Iran, they have not succeeded thus far if the conflict has reached their shared border with Yemen. If they intend to restore the former government to power, the societal polarization based on identity and the destruction that has befallen the Yemeni people and their country make it difficult for anyone to govern without a broad societal mandate that includes the Houthis. This can only be achieved through peace talks and a fair political settlement.

Immediate humanitarian aid must be provided to the people of Yemen before the situation deteriorates even further. After a string of failed ceasefires, many in Yemen have begun to lose hope that the conflict will ever come to an end—Saudi Arabia and Iran must immediately negotiate an end to the conflict to ensure that it does. The repercussions of not doing so are increased polarization within society and vulnerable Yemenis turning to organizations like al-Qaeda. Such radicalization carries global consequences. As conflict cannot be resolved while a nation is under fire, Saudi airstrikes must end at once, and all ports must reopen to allow humanitarian aid to enter the country. The new president of the United States can play a central role in this process by working on reducing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran and in supporting the UN as it attempts to negotiate a more durable solution to this conflict. •

Salt, Oil, and What's in the Way of Overcoming Dryness

- Jay Nautiyal

As many debate the cause and reality of climate change, regions around the world suffer from crippling droughts that have contributed to instability and suffering for countless individuals. Perhaps no place has been as negatively affected as the Middle East. In fact, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the drought that has been plaguing the Middle East since 1998 is the worst in 900 years. It is predicted that, coupled with a rising population and poor resource management, the drought will cause water insecurity for the next quarter of a century. Even as wars wage on, the nations of the Middle East must work to lead the world into an era of clean energy and desalination plants, rather than continue the use of fossil fuels that will only further exacerbate the issues they face.

Evidence pointing to an unprecedented drying comes from the examination of tree rings in the Levant and surrounding regions. By analyzing the rings, scientists are able to catch a glimpse of what the natural world was like in our recent geologic past. What they noticed was that the period from 1998 to now has been ten to 20 percent drier than any period in the past 900 years, and 50 percent drier than any period in the past 500 years. This evidence indicates anthropogenic warming as the cause for the occurring drought. However, critics of climate change argue that rising global temperatures are not a result of human activity, but rather of natural causes. Though the world's temperature has varied greatly throughout history, studies by numerous scientific bodies, such as the United Kingdom's The Royal Society, have demonstrated that what would have occurred over the course of centuries (or millennia) is now occurring in decades. The obvious explanation is increased human industrial activity.

While there is certainly merit in questioning the validity of scientific statements, those that deny climate change have views that reek of self-interest or plain ignorance. Opposition to ideas that have significant backing can lead to disaster in places like the Middle East. According to the Pew Research Center, as recently as 2013, 15 years after suffering from drought, the Middle East was far less concerned about climate change as a threat than those in Canada, Europe, and other nations around the world.

“It is predicted that, coupled with a rising population and poor resource management, the drought will cause water insecurity for the next quarter of a century.”

Given that the region is home to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and several other very oil-dependent economies, it seems that economic self-interest motivates the region to ignore climate change and its effects.

Whether or not warming is a result of human activity, can the phenomena really nurture unrest? US military officials believe so, having labeled it a “threat multiplier.” A 2014 report by the US Department of Defense argued that climate change is a root cause of “government instability that leads to widespread migration, damages of infrastructure and leads to the spread of disease”. The report also states that governance “gaps” that arise as a result of these issues can help push extremist ideologies to the forefront. The current Syrian civil war and migrant crisis are frequently attributed to dwindling resources as a result of warming. The war has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and created the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II; finding a solution is thus essential.

The Middle East is well equipped to combat these issues. The first step is to solve the root issue - oil dependence and greenhouse gas emission - by diversifying the economies of oil-dependent nations. This would hopefully slow down oil production and reduce opposition to the development of alternative energy infrastructure. Nations like Saudi Arabia, according to the Wall Street Journal, have already revealed plans to triple their non-oil revenue by 2020. Saudi Arabia plans to achieve their goals by reducing tax subsidies and increasing savings, all while expanding tourism and private industry in the country. The endeavor will not be easy, as oil revenue accounts for 38.7 percent of Saudi's GDP and 70 percent of Saudi government revenue. Regardless, there is increasing support for diversification, making it a promising option.

Unfortunately, diversification is a long-term solution that does not do much for the current drought. While it is important to take steps to prevent further warming, existing CO₂ emis-

sions would continue to warm the Earth for years even if humans stopped emission this very second. This means that the Middle Eastern nations hardest hit must come up with strategies to reduce food and water scarcity.

As Israel has found, the solution is to desalinate seawater. Desalination was previously fiscally unfeasible, but with increased demand and better technology, it has become the reason that Israel, one of the driest nations on earth, produces more freshwater than it needs. The state was driven to look for other sources of water once their largest source, the Sea of Galilee, dropped within inches of the “black line” which, once reached, would flood the lake with salt infiltration, effectively rendering it toxic. After desalinating efforts, the nation's farms now thrive and they face the more desirable dilemma of what to do with their extra water, sourced from the Mediterranean.

The adoption of large-scale desalination in the Middle East would make a scarce resource abundant. It could also allow for “water diplomacy” to occur between neighbors and potentially diminish some animosity between Israel and its enemies. Furthermore, desalination would discourage emigration and prevent extremist groups that happen to control scarce resources from acquiring dangerous amounts of power. Knowing the solutions, existing and affected Middle Eastern governments need to invest, or continue to invest in desalination infrastructure that will help make their states desirable for citizens and immigrants, groups of people that will help achieve goals of economic diversification. The successes of desalination have already been demonstrated in Israel, and immigration has proven to aid economic growth in places like the United States, where immigrants bring important skills, innovate, and create jobs by starting businesses. The future looks bright for the Middle East if its people take the correct steps to recover from the damage already done. •

The Forgotten War and Its Consequences

- Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

In 2002, the Taliban were driven from power in Afghanistan by a United States military that declared victory for the Afghan people. For America and its allies, ousting the Taliban from positions of power and forcing them to concede land was victory. However, for the Afghan citizens living in the southern provinces of Kandahar, Oruzgan, and Helmand, victory did not have quite the same meaning. It was in these mountainous provinces that Taliban fighters fled in the early 2000s and since that time, they have maintained varying degrees of influence and power over the provinces. At the same time, facing mounting troop desertions, the fledgling Afghan government is failing in ridding the southern parts of the country of Taliban influence. The Afghan government needs to channel greater resources to the Afghan National Army in order prevent further troop desertions to the Taliban side.

Shortly after the 2001 Bonn agreement, which formed the new Afghan government, President Karzai established a revitalized Afghan National Army (ANA) and called on the people of Afghanistan to join together in defending the democratic ideals of which many had fought for. From the onset, the ANA faced recruitment deficits as many young Afghans were skeptical of a centralized military force and more willing to side with local warlords for protection. Outside analysts from NATO and the UN estimated that the ANA would need close to 200,000 troops in order to successfully prevent a resurgence of Taliban forces. By 2003, a mere 4,000 troops had been trained and deemed fit for duty. Desertion estimates hovered around ten percent for the first five years of the program largely due to young, underpaid soldiers who lacked basic reading and writing skills. The early years were also marked by conflict between generals, which created a lack of cohesion and communication between corps. Karzai underestimated the threat that the Taliban continued to pose in southern provinces while overestimating the willingness of the Afghan people to join the ANA. It wasn't until an Afghan-NATO restructuring of recruitment practices in 2004 that the numbers of new recruits began to grow. By 2014, the ANA had an estimated 194,000 troops at its disposal, with more women joining the ranks than many pre-

“Although Afghanistan is no longer at the forefront of international attention as it was in the early 2000s, there is no excuse for the Afghan government to be complacent to the growing number of desertions among its armed forces.”

dicted. Despite this progress, the ANA is still not strong enough to resist the Taliban threat.

Some argue that the gains in personnel and infrastructure that the ANA have made since 2004 wouldn't be possible without money, weapons, and training from NATO and the United States. In addition, the argument emphasizes that going forward the ANA is bound to depend on these bodies for support. However, currently, the Afghan government is not contributing enough of its own resources to building up the ANA, as desertions are once again on the rise and the force is at risk of becoming decentralized and fractionalized.

Desertion in the ANA continues to upend stability among the hardest hit stations in southern Afghanistan. Over a one-week period in late October of 2016, three ANA bases in the southern province of Oruzgan were surrendered to the Taliban by the troops who were meant to defend them. Surrendered bases in Helmand and Kunduz contribute to the Taliban's growing control over Afghanistan that is now estimated at 33 out of 400 districts with 116 contested districts.

The biggest reason for the lack of investment in the military is the rampant corruption that plagues all levels of the Afghani government. For instance, opium is a major source of revenue for the Taliban as it is able to trade the drug freely. From the local level to the national level, government officials misuse their power by offering and taking bribes, resulting in an estimated 50 percent loss in customs revenue each year. Transparency International consistently ranks Afghanistan among the top five most corrupt governments. When it comes to making budgetary decisions, rampant misappropriation leaves little room for the military to receive necessary funds. An overhaul of these corrupt practices must occur if the Afghan government ever hopes to command an army ca-

pable of defending against the Taliban.

Although Afghanistan is no longer at the forefront of international attention as it was in the early 2000s, there is no excuse for the Afghan government to be complacent to the growing number of desertions among its armed forces. These desertions fuel the cogs of the Taliban machine who continuously commits acts of terror and violence in southern Afghanistan. Although the process of reforming government and disbanding corrupt officials will be difficult, it is the necessary action that President Ashraf Ghani and his administration must take in order to ensure the safety and freedom of the Afghan people. •

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