

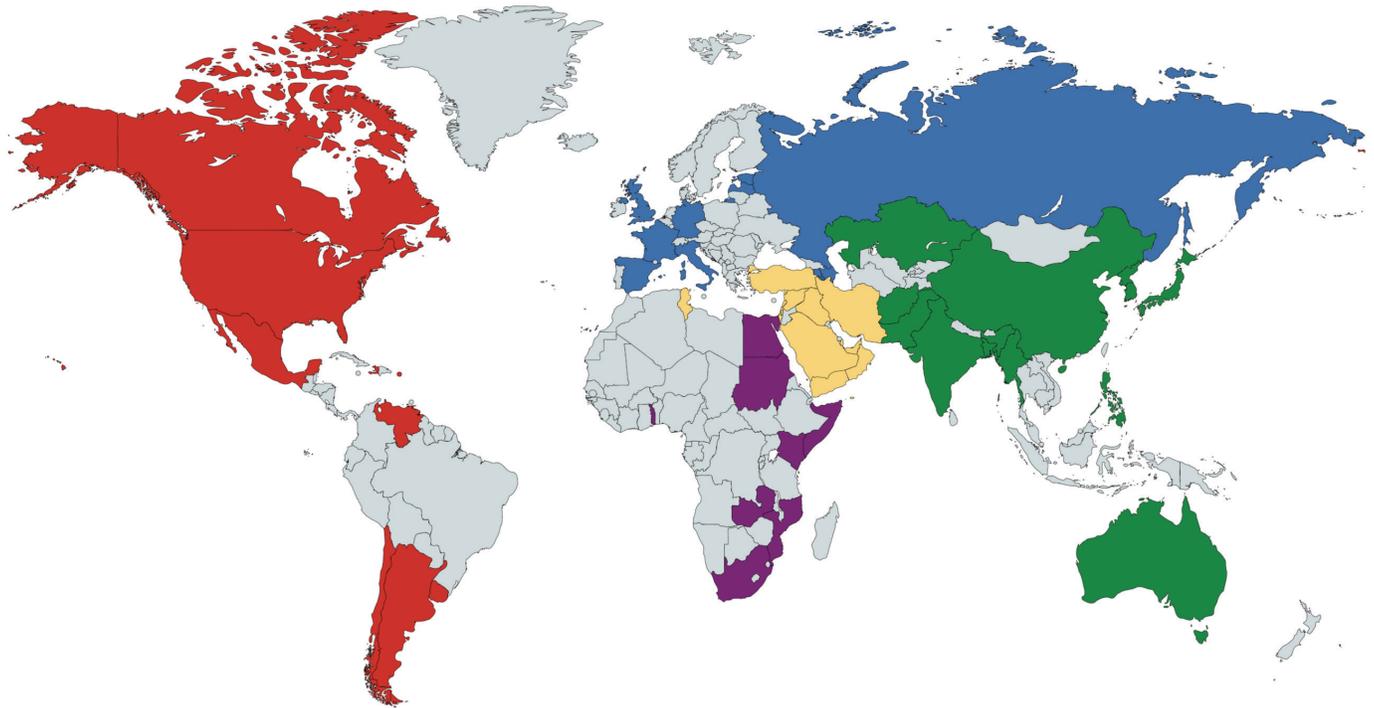
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IN THIN AIR

The background of the cover is a light teal color. It features several white, stylized clouds of various sizes and shapes scattered across the page. Additionally, there are several large, semi-transparent, light green circles of varying sizes that overlap each other and the clouds, creating a layered, ethereal effect.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD



This past year has seen increasingly volatile changes in global climates, not only in an environmental sense, but also political and economic ones as well. In this edition of the Michigan Journal of International Affairs, we therefore take special note of new developments that collectively represent a fundamental shift in climate across the world. While some events are more worrisome than others, the majority of these changes presents structural challenges to regional stability or traditional governing systems. Although recent years have been marked by a reversion to more traditional state politics and conservative policies, the changing global climate in all its manifestations, while the product of quite recent phenomena, represents an underlying shift in global politics with significant ramifications for the long term. Indeed, in some cases, these events even have the potential to change these institutions themselves.

In the Americas, a series of natural disasters including hurricanes in the Caribbean and earthquakes in Mexico have rocked the region and inspired calls on various governments to increase attention, resilience, and adaptation in the face of climate change. Regional contributors confront these issues and highlight the need for increased government commitment and oversight to disaster relief in the region.

Ayah Kutmah describes the destabilizing implications of the increasing political tensions between Middle Eastern regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran, in light of the Lebanese Prime Minister's recent resignation. While this rivalry is not new, Baibhav Panda describes how Qatar's refusal to remain dependent on Saudi Arabia has the potential to upend current alliances and further upset the regional balance of power.

Regional Editor Jack Ulses writes about the economic implications of China's rise and how China's investments in Central Asia stand to

challenge Japan's longstanding economic dominance in the Asia-Pacific. While China's expanded economic clout has been a widely-covered trend in international affairs for several years, Japan's increasing willingness to compete with China for influence in the continent is new.

Lauren Camp and Managing Editor Tyler D. Coady both discuss food insecurity in Africa, arguing existing economic systems dependent on foreign imports are ultimately insufficient given projected increases in the continent's population. Instead, both propose that state governments support sustainable domestic development projects.

Finally, the Catalan independence referendum in October represents a structural challenge not just to Spain, but also to the whole European Union and its already-uncertain future. Selin Levi argues that the EU must intervene in, rather than ignore, the escalating crisis in an effort to maintain democratic standards and unity across the bloc.

"In Thin Air" is a commentary on these changes in climate – environmental, political, and economic – that have the potential to shape the longstanding global landscape for years to come.

Michigan Journal of International Affairs,
Editorial Board

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2017

AFRICA

1. **Egypt's Sporting Success Brings Temporary Reprieve**
– *Moustafa El-Kashlan*
2. **The Double-Edged Sword of Terrorism – Why Terrorists' Biggest Threat is Themselves** – *Chris Young*
3. **Kenya's Presidential Elections – Marred by Controversy, But The Beginning of a Public Mobilization Against Corruption**
– *Jeremy Waxman*
4. **How ECOWAS Can Become the Key To West African Democracy – The Togolese Case** – *Sebastian Leder Macek*
5. **Grasping Economic Opportunity – The Potential for Africa's Feed and Poultry Industries** – *Lauren Camp*
6. **Why Africa Will Not Be Able To Feed Itself** – *Tyler D. Coady*
7. **Bottom of the Class – How South Africa's Education System is Being Held Back by Political Corruption** – *Kieran Byrne*

AMERICAS

8. **Natural Disasters in the Americas** – *Americas Region Contributing Authors*
10. **X Marks the Spot – Why Latinx Is Not the Solution**
– *Andong Li Zhao*
11. **Latin America's Urgent Need for a Climate Change Solution**
– *Noah Kerwin*
12. **The 21st Century French Fight for 'New World' Resources**
– *Max Goldman*
13. **Canada Warming – Businesses See Opportunity, Indigenous Peoples See Destruction** – *Jalen Zeman*
14. **The Departure of UN Peacekeeping Troops – Peace for Haiti at Last?** – *Grace Bristol*
15. **Maduro's Mess – Fixing the Venezuelan Crisis**
– *Margaret D'Antonio & Adam Udovich*
17. **Chile's Renewable Energy Transformation Leaves Much to Be Desired** – *Meghan Rowley*
18. **Pueblos Fumigados and Monsanto** – *Margaret Johnson*
19. **Uruguay Marijuana Legalization – A Global Model?**
– *Andrew Mitchel*

ASIA-PACIFIC

20. **Corridor Politics – Why Increased Indian Involvement in Afghanistan Will Not Affect Pakistan's Position on the Taliban**
– *Najeeb Amini*
21. **Crossroads – Why India Should Join China's New Economic Order**
– *Suraj J. Sorab*
22. **Rohingya, One Year Later – Sustained Struggle** – *William Feuer*
23. **China Continues to Tighten Cyber Control** – *R. Casey Dwyer*
24. **Cautiously "Building, Building, Building" – The Filipino Economy** – *Akash Ramanujam*
25. **What Is South Korea to Do When Its Allies and North Korea Are Equally Unpredictable?** – *Warren Yu*

26. **Microfinance on the Move – Grameen Bank's New Branch in Japan**
– *Kim Ira*
27. **Samurais on the Silk Road – Why Japan Should Aggressively Pursue Foreign Aid Development in Central Asia** – *Jack Ulises*
28. **Beholden – The Death of the Auto Manufacturing in Australia**
– *Vineet Chandra*

EUROPE

29. **EU Stands Silent as Spanish Democracy Falters** – *Selin Levi*
30. **U.K. Must Show May the Back Door** – *Benji Mazin*
31. **France's New Counter-Terrorism Law Walks a Dangerously Thin Line Between Security and Liberty** – *Daniel Evans*
32. **The Soul of German Liberalism** – *Andrew Beddow*
33. **Is Germany Killing More Than Just Turkey's EU Aspirations?**
– *B.A. Bacigal*
34. **Racism 1 - 0 Italy** – *Liam Beers*
35. **Estonia, Latvia Must Liberalize Citizenship Laws to Accommodate Ethnic Russian Non-Citizens** – *Mark Dovich*
36. **Regional Renaissance Leaves Armenia and Azerbaijan Behind**
– *Anna Haynes*

MIDDLE EAST

37. **How Middle Eastern Powers View an Independent Kurdistan**
– *Middle East Region Contributing Authors*
39. **Vladimir Putin's Revival of Russian Influence in the Middle East**
– *Middle East Region Contributing Authors*
41. **The Youth Vote in the Tunisian Backslide**
– *Madeline Hibbs-Magruder*
42. **Why the Gulf Must Look to Israel to Solve its Looming Water Crisis** – *Tyler D. Coady*
43. **The Salafist Perversion of Israeli-Palestinian Relations**
– *Jordan Sandman*
44. **Lebanese PM's Resignation – An Act of Resistance or a Condemnation of a Nation?** – *Ayah Kutmah*
45. **A Hazardous Standard – The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' Failure in Syria** – *Sanuri Gunawardena*
46. **Testing the Resilience of Qatar – Striking a Balance in Arab-Persian Gulf Relations** – *Baibhav Panda*
47. **Abandon the Iran Deal? Think Again** – *Maya Zreik*
48. **The Iran Conundrum – Finding a Pragmatic Approach in Unconventional Wisdom** – *Jalal H. Taleb*

Egypt's Sporting Success Brings Temporary Reprieve

- Moustafa El-Kashlan

In the 95th minute of the World Cup qualifier between Egypt and Congo, the referee blew his whistle. 85,000 people in Alexandria's Borg El Arab Stadium collectively lost their minds. The bench started celebrating and hugging each other, while dozens of fans tried to rush the field to express their sheer bliss. There was only one problem- Egypt wasn't going to the World Cup...yet. The referee had simply blown his whistle to award Egypt a penalty kick that, if converted, would indeed send Egypt to its first World Cup in 28 years. Up stepped Mohamed Salah, who coolly slotted the penalty home and instantly became a national hero. Tears were shed, hugs were given, and for the first time in a very long time, 96 million Egyptians were united in their unbridled joy. From a soccer perspective, it is exciting that Egypt will finally get to play on the global stage after dominating African play, but experiencing seemingly endless heartbreak in World Cup qualifying. However, the impacts of qualification will be felt even more keenly from a social and political perspective, as it gives Egyptians, both leaders and regular citizens, an exogenous reprieve from the numerous issues plaguing the nation.

In the aftermath of Egypt's qualification, social media has been flooded with the emotional responses of ordinary Egyptians. Videos of old men crying tears of joy were mixed with scenes of jubilant parties in Cairo's Tahrir Square and Alexandria's seaside promenade. That Egyptians gathered en masse in celebration, rather than in protest, is in and of itself both a welcome change for the general population. It also functions as a crucial lifeline for a regime whose reign has recently come under increased scrutiny both domestically and internationally.

Domestically, Egyptians are feeling the tremendous burden of recent economic reforms undertaken by the government in order to receive a loan from the International Monetary Fund. Egypt has cut down on food and fuel subsidies while also floating its currency, a move which caused the Egyptian Pound to lose approximately half its value relative to the US Dollar. This problem has been exacerbated by the fact that the tourists and foreign investors that Egypt traditionally relied upon have become increasingly wary of visiting and dealing



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

with Egypt because of increased recent security threats. Thus, Egypt's foreign currency reserves are dwindling. These factors have combined to greatly increase the price imported goods for many low- and middle-income Egyptians. Even wealthy Egyptians have felt the squeeze of rising prices and decreased purchasing power.

The regime has also become increasingly intolerant of what it claims to be internal dissent. Many prominent journalists have been detained indefinitely for shedding light on controversies, economic hardships, or executive overreach. The regime has also cracked down significantly on NGOs and their workers, claiming these organizations are run by spies. The official regime line has been that anyone who disagrees with the current state of affairs is looking to bring Egypt down either as a spy from the West, part of a terrorist organizations, or part of the Muslim Brotherhood.

However, it must be pointed out that the regime does still have pockets of popular support, mainly among older generations who support the stability the regime claims to provide. Supporters of the regime point to the Muslim Brotherhood's disastrous year in power when former President Mohamed Morsi failed in trying grant himself sweeping constitutional power. They also point to the alleged gross incompetence and mismanagement of public resources including electricity, public works projects, and agriculture. The Muslim Brotherhood also provided a safer environment for the religiously conservative Egyptians who disagree with Egypt's history of secular rule and relative inclusivity. This position has been further

supported by decades of propaganda by both the military and the Muslim Brotherhood that claimed that each group was the only feasible alternative to the other.

The many schisms within Egyptian society have seemingly disappeared with the national soccer team's recent success. The Egyptian domestic league's increasing competitiveness, along with the increasing number of Egyptians playing in top European leagues, has led to a dramatic reversal of fortune for Africa's most successful team. Egypt's Argentine-born coach Hector Cúper has been able to find a successful balance of experience and youth as well as domestic and foreign stars. In goal, the 44-year old Essam El Hadary is enjoying a career renaissance while the backline ahead of him is anchored by Ahmed Hegazi and Omar Gaber, from the clubs West Bromwich Albion in England and Basel in Switzerland respectively. Central midfield is composed of Mohamed Elneny and Tarek Hamed, with Abdallah Said pushed slightly further forward. Liverpool star Mohamed Salah is the team's talisman and is a constant menace on the right wing

The team's run to this past winter's African Cup of Nations final, as well as its aforementioned qualification to the World Cup, have seen Egyptians celebrate as one, young with old, conservative with liberal, religious with secular, Muslim with Christian. This team has allowed many individuals to forget their worries and to enjoy some semblance of unity, if only temporarily. While sport will never solve the most important problems facing Egypt, it has provided a welcome break from the hardships and discord currently faced by Egyptians collectively and individually. •

The Double-Edged Sword of Terrorism

Why Terrorists' Biggest Threat is Themselves

- Chris Young

Terrorist group Al Shabaab's senseless bombing in Mogadishu, Somalia on October 14th, 2017 was the deadliest terrorist attack in Somali history. The attack that killed at least 358 men, women, and children and left more than 400 injured is a chilling reminder of the threat that terrorism poses to societies around the globe. The immense loss of life also reflects a cultural change within African terrorist groups that may ultimately prove detrimental to their existence. As terrorist organizations ramp up the magnitude of their heinous acts in order to compensate for losses on the battlefield, members of the organizations and their sympathizers are beginning to question their allegiance. This shift within the bellies of the beasts of Africa may lead to the eventual downfall of several terrorist groups on the continent.

Over the past decade, counter-terrorism efforts in Africa have made significant progress in rolling back the influence and territorial reach of terrorist groups. In 2011, the Somali military recaptured Mogadishu from Al Shabaab after a grueling campaign supported by the African Union and United States. Just a year later, the Somali military and its allies forced the terrorist organization out of the port city Kismayo, an important launching pad that Al Shabaab used for pirate attacks in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Other terrorist organizations on the continent, like the ISIS-affiliated Boko Haram in Nigeria, have lost significant territory in recent years. Significant victories for the Nigerian government against Boko Haram in 2015 effectively removed the terrorist group from sections of northeastern Nigeria, its historical stronghold.

As a result of their declining territorial control, both Al Shabaab and Boko Haram have increased the frequency and severity of their terror attacks against civilian targets. They are attempts at protecting their legitimacies, which are threatened by their dwindling territorial spheres of influence. The Global Terrorism Database reports a steady increase in Al Shabaab-related fatalities per year, including a massive spike in the years immediately following the losses of Mogadishu and Kismayo. Boko Haram has posted similar numbers in recent years as well.



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Along with the total numbers of casualties per year rising, the severity of individual attacks and other acts has climbed. Boko Haram's kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria in 2014 represents the beginning of a series of more egregious crimes committed by African terrorist organizations. In 2015, Al Shabaab conducted an attack on the Kenya's Garissa University that left 147 dead. The following year, the same organization launched an attack against the Kenyan military that left as many as 200 Kenyan soldiers dead. With the recent Mogadishu bombing, Al Shabaab has now carried out the deadliest act of terrorist violence on the African continent to date. The correlation between territorial losses and both the frequency and severity of attacks displays terrorist groups' desperate cries for attention, which they receive in worldwide media outlets. Despite their increasing notoriety, this strategy may end up resulting in the downfall of the organizations themselves.

The scale of attacks like the one in Mogadishu is such that every Somali has either suffered directly or knows someone who has. As a result, in August of 2017, former Al Shabaab leader Sheikh Mukhtar Robow defected from the terrorist group, citing the inexcusable loss of life at the hands of the organization. He publicly condemned the attack in Mogadishu and donated blood to aid victims in local hospitals. According to Somalia's Senior Government Counter-Terrorism Advisor, Hussein Sheikh Ali, Mukhtar Robow is not alone; roughly ten of Al Shabaab's top 50 commanders have reached out to the Somali government with an interest in defecting from the terrorist organization.

A similar pattern can be seen within Boko Haram. Bana Umar, a respected soldier amongst the ranks of the Nigerian terrorist organization,

defected from the group in late August as he began to question the "merciless" and "unjust" attacks that the religious extremists carried out against civilians in his community. Umar claims that roughly 1,000 soldiers and Boko Haram affiliates are interested in leaving the organization, including "some original members of the sect [wanting] to leave because soldiers have intensified the war against [civilians] unlike in the past." As terrorists and sympathizers watch their own communities be torn apart by heinous attacks, more and more of them are likely to denounce and defect from organizations like Al Shabaab and Boko Haram.

The end of terrorism on the African continent will not come through Western drone strikes, assassinations of leaders, and victories on the battlefield, but through the internal implosion of these hateful organizations themselves. This internal implosion will come about as sympathizers and terrorist affiliates increasingly are not willing to turn a blind eye to the devastation of seeing their own families and friends being caught in the crosshairs of bombs and bullets. As terrorist organizations like Al Shabaab and Boko Haram continue to increase their wickedness in order to compensate for territorial losses, their numbers will dwindle until they lose the influence and power they may have gained in the past. •

Kenya's Presidential Elections

Marred by Controversy, But The Beginning of a Public Mobilization Against Corruption

- Jeremy Waxman

On September 1st, 2017, the Kenyan Supreme Court annulled the results of the country's August presidential election. Annulling election results was a first not just for Kenya, but for Africa as a whole. Incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta won the election, but opponent Raila Odinga, who received just below 45 percent of the vote, challenged the results in the Supreme Court, which sided with Odinga and ordered a rerun. However, just days prior to the rerun, Odinga refused to participate and called on his supporters to boycott the vote because he felt it would be rigged. The rerun went on as planned, but in the aftermath, in which Kenyatta won 98 percent of the vote, Odinga launched a 'national resistance' campaign to protest the election results. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the presidential rerun, the broader refusal of Kenyans to participate in the second election signals an increasing backlash against the traditionally corrupt politics that have plagued Kenya since independence.

Kenyan politics are heavily tied to the tribal makeup of the nation. Three of the four men to have been President of Kenya since independence have been from the Kikuyu ethnic group. Furthermore, politics at the national level usually involves act of nepotism; for example, Jomo Kenyatta, the current president's father, was the first leader of Kenya after the end of British rule in 1963. This has created an atmosphere of tribal exclusion when it comes to governing the country. Elections often devolve into tribes competing to garner the greatest amount of positions of power for their respective tribes. Odinga, Kenyatta's opponent, is a member of the Luo tribe, an ethnic minority that makes up about fifteen percent of the country. As election results are often divided along tribal lines, the fact that his campaign support expanded far beyond his tribe exemplifies the growing discontent among the Kenya people with the corrupt and incendiary politics of the country's elite.

The shadiness and scandal surrounding these two elections were apparent in two events leading up to each election. Several days prior to the initial August election, Christopher Msando,

“Kenyans have taken their first steps towards recognizing that their national political scene is marred by cronyism, and that they want to mobilize against it.”

the head of information, communication, and technology at the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, was found mutilated and murdered. Opponents of Kenyatta claimed this was an attempt to rig the election. Then, just days before the October 26th rerun, the Deputy Supreme Court Justice's police escort was shot. This was one day before the Supreme Court was to rule on a petition submitted by Odinga to postpone the second election on the grounds that fairness could not be guaranteed. Such uncertainty suggests an attempt by Kenyatta's allies to intimidate the judiciary. Only two of the seven judges showed up to the ruling; the others feared for their safety. The case was delayed, but the election went forward as planned. For his part, Kenyatta has denied his involvement in both of these cases.

Leading up to the second election, opposition leader Raila Odinga dropped out. He saw no point in running in a rigged election, since no reforms were made to the electoral process. Odinga also did not want a repeat of 2007, when he lost the election to then-incumbent Mwai Kibaki, who was thought to have rigged the election as well. It triggered riots in which 1,200 people died and hundreds of thousands were displaced. This time, he urged his supporters to stay home, boycott the election, and abstain from voting. As a result, just above thirty percent of Kenyans ended up voting in the second round, largely along tribal lines. A sizeable majority of Kenyans, therefore, were able to speak volumes without speaking at all. By abstaining from voting, Kenyans were able to express their disapproval with the Kenyan electoral process and prevent the possibility of violent clashes. Odinga, vowing to continue on as leader of the opposition, has since transformed his campaign into a movement that he claims will be one of peaceful resistance and civil disobedience.

However, the options for Odinga and his supporters are limited. Kenyatta is firmly ce-

mented in the presidency. Now that he has affirmed his control over the government, he will move to weaken the Supreme Court that nearly derailed his return to the presidency. There are already signs that Kenyatta and his political allies are pressuring the Supreme Court into various decisions, as evidenced by the court failing to postpone the second election, despite claims that not enough measures were taken to ensure its integrity. Beyond that, Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement is vastly outnumbered in the Kenyan Parliament, weakening its ability to impact legislation and serve as a strong check on Kenyatta and his party.

In essence, Odinga has been relegated to the role of public advocate, who can only clamor for more transparent democratic process and greater government inclusivity. While it is a position that lacks formal power, it allows him to focus on creating a greater mobilization of Kenyans to participate in public displays of dissatisfaction with Kenyatta's government. Whether this can help propel the opposition into greater political power remains suspect, but as evidenced by a recent mass gathering of Odinga supporters in the capital of Nairobi, it will certainly trigger wider awareness of the importance of political diversity in Kenya. In the face of an uncertain transition of power, the ability of the Kenyan people to voice their concerns is a critical step to ensuring Kenya remains a beacon of democracy in East Africa. •

How ECOWAS Can Become the Key To West African Democracy

The Togolese Case

- Sebastian Leder Macek

2017 has been a year of political unrest, and the West African nation of Togo has not been spared. Since September, protests have raged against President Faure Gnassingbé due to his flaunting of constitutional term limits, and these protests have been violently repressed. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional association committed to increasing growth and upholding human rights, has only called for dialogue. This stands in contrast to ECOWAS' decisive action in the Gambia earlier this year, when ECOWAS member states worked to ensure a democratic transition of power. This might have something to do with the fact that President Faure is the organization's chairman; as chairman, he controls the organization's intervention activity. In Togo, then, the person who is being protested against is in fact the one expected to protect the rights of the protestors on a regional level. In other words, ECOWAS' active role in asserting human rights is undermined by the conflicts of interest inherent to its political organization. Its governance structure, which concentrates power in the chairman and appointed ministers, is detrimental to pursuing its lofty goals. In order to move towards a more responsible and responsive governance, ECOWAS must undergo serious democratizing reforms to its institutions. These include instituting a chairman who is not head of state of a member country, as well as the institution of direct elections for organization officials.

ECOWAS demonstrated its potential as an advocate for human rights by intervening during the Gambian crisis earlier this year. In January 2017, Yahya Jammeh, President of the Gambia, refused to cede power to his democratically-elected successor, Adama Barrow. The intervention by ECOWAS ensured that Jammeh's anti-democratic consolidation of power would not succeed. As its chairman, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf attempted to negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis. When Jammeh refused negotiations, ECOWAS leaders had Barrow sworn into office and organized a military coalition to ensure Barrow assumed the presidency. This "Operation Restore Democracy" quickly forced Jammeh to step down and successfully ended the constitutional crisis. In short, Barrow was installed as

president, upholding the democratic elections, and ECOWAS was hailed as an effective proponent of democracy in the region.

Nevertheless, the ongoing crisis in Togo illustrates the problems with ECOWAS' current organization. Faure's government is anti-democratic, and the Gnassingbé family has ruled Togo for around 50 years. Though the constitution currently limits the presidency to two terms, there is no mechanism to enforce this law. Faure's party has responded to the protests by offering to create term limits that would allow him to rule until 2030. The opposition has rejected these proposals as insufficient. ECOWAS involvement is a necessity; yet, with Faure as chairman, its response has been almost nonexistent. ECOWAS has only issued calls for peace, while ignoring the violence and substantive issues surrounding the protests in Togo. Negotiation would give Faure time to consolidate power and would not guarantee that he follows any resulting agreement. Protesters need ECOWAS to defend their right to protest and to enforce the Togolese Constitution. Yet, ECOWAS' mission has been compromised by its organizational structure: Faure has escaped, so far, from any consequences for the suppression of protesters and for ignoring his country's constitution precisely because of his leadership position in the organization.

ECOWAS has legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The chairman is head of the executive and controls all mediation and intervention, and the position rotates among member countries. The legislative and judicial branches, on the other hand, lack authority in dealing with political crises and deal mainly with trade and commerce. The chairman appoints his own minister, and, in doing so, centralizes executive power by appointing allies. Consequently, the bloc's response to crises is largely determined by its leader. The result is that the organization depends on its member countries' heads of state to stand up for the citizens of other countries. It is telling that two democratic regimes, Liberia and Nigeria, took the lead intervening in the Gambia. But, as Ghanaian journalist Abdur Shaban says, "most African leaders will either back their peers or keep mute on their

affairs," either to avoid having the criticism reciprocated or to avoid damaging intercountry relations. Today, then, those seeking help from ECOWAS must rely on the exceptional efforts of an African leader or on good standing with the chairman.

This organizational setup requires fundamental reform. While ECOWAS has laudable ideals, it is limited in pursuing these principles. Reforms that give power to the people of its member states, rather than to their heads of state, would solve this problem. Accordingly, in 2007 a resolution for reforms was adopted called Vision 2020. These plans sought to spread the economic and political benefits of the organization to the people themselves. Although promising, there was no mechanism for turning these recommendations into concrete policy. Following up on these ideas the organization set for itself with actual democratizing reforms is essential to ensuring that ECOWAS can fulfill its commitment to human rights in the region.

This means the election of the legislature by citizens, rather than by lawmakers, as well as the expansion of the role of this legislature in political matters. Additionally, the executive branch should be separated from the executive branches of the member countries, based on the model of the European Union. Following this model, the chairman should be elected either by popularly or by a popularly-elected legislature. This would at once decentralize power away from the heads of member states and reallocate control of the organization to the people of West Africa. There would increase accountability and decrease the willingness to overlook human rights violations committed by political leaders.

Creating this change will not be easy, but the precedent for reform is already set. The Vision 2020 document outlines wide-ranging democratic reforms to the organization, even if there is no system for putting them in place. Popular pressure is required on the leaders and political parties of individual member states, to force through these much-needed reforms. Only then will an ECOWAS be fully committed to maintaining human rights and democracy in both Togo and throughout West Africa. •

Grasping Economic Opportunity

The Potential for Africa's Feed and Poultry Industries

- Lauren Camp

The chicken is to blame for a number of sub-Saharan Africa's current problems. Africa's growing middle class and increasing disposable income per capita across the continent has led to increased spending on food. Fast-food companies, especially Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), have identified a growing market in Africa and are spreading rapidly in popularity. Increased spending on "finger lickin' good" meals has significantly increased the demand for poultry in sub-Saharan Africa. The United Nations Agriculture Organization has predicted that poultry consumption in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by a shocking 270 percent by 2030. In conjunction with increased poultry consumption comes an increased demand for chicken feed. This is where the problems begin: African economies are not currently equipped to deal with rises in demand for poultry and feed. They are also not in a place to be competitive enough in the global market for African-based companies to compete for market share. In order to prevent large food companies from turning to cheaper imports as their main source of crops, African farmers must increase productivity and yields in the soybean and poultry sectors, while African governments should levy duties on foreign chicken and soybean imports.

Generally speaking, the main sources of animal feed are maize or soybean. Demand for soybean for feed has risen in particular, increasing by 135 percent in Africa since 2000. Soybean farming in Africa is estimated to grow at 34 percent this upcoming year. Around 98 percent of the farmers of soybeans in Africa are located in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, Africa is currently still a net importer of soybeans. The recent surge in the poultry industry has led to an increase in soybean imports, as local soybean farmers have not been able to keep up with demand. In attempts to support the rising demand for soybeans as a result of the growth of the restaurant industry in Africa, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are encouraging the building of soybean supply chains in Africa. Bill Gates himself is contributing eight million dollars to a \$24 million USAID soy pipeline project in Mozambique and Zambia that hopes to cre-



ate supply chains connecting small farmers to commercial feed producers and eventually to chicken wholesalers, who supply restaurants like KFC. The success of Africa's soy industry depends on the success of these supply chains and the ability of commercial feed producers to secure a consistent and dependable supply of soybeans from domestic African farmers. If plans such as these do not succeed, African states will have to continue importing the majority of their soybeans.

Moreover, the poultry industry is also under threat from imports, as South Africa has recently experienced. The poultry industry has long formed the backbone of South African agriculture, but the industry is now on the brink of collapse. Imports of chicken into sub-Saharan Africa have tripled between 2004 and 2014. A large portion of these imports are from the European Union (EU): there is low demand for dark meat in Europe, and so the EU exports their excess dark meat bone-in chicken legs at reduced prices to African companies. EU poultry-exporting countries have not been officially found guilty of dumping, as the volume of chicken exported falls below the World Trade Organization's threshold of volume exported before anti-dumping measures can be considered. The EU continues to deny dumping claims, and insists that its chicken exports are not responsible for the crisis in South Africa, as its meat contributes to less than 7 percent of the total chicken consumption in South Africa. Regardless, low prices on imported meat have already resulted in thousands of domestic jobs lost in the poultry industry in South Africa.

Bolstering African soybean and poultry industries means creating jobs across the entire supply chain. This is critical, especially with the increased interconnectedness of industries that would benefit from soy pipeline projects.

The solution must be to solve inefficiencies that undermine the competitiveness of African producers. The potential for soy as what many have referred to as "Africa's Cinderella crop" is promising. But in order to save African producers, the quality and competitiveness of African industries must be a priority. Until there are consistently low transportation costs and dependable infrastructure in African agricultural industries, they will struggle to be competitive on the global market. For example, production costs of chicken in Mozambique are 30 percent higher than the cost of imported chicken. Thus, safeguard duties could be placed on European chicken imports to Africa for protectionist purposes.

It appears that chicken will continue to be a staple in both the African diet and economy. So, in order for African industries to benefit from the expansion of dining options brought by Western restaurant franchises, the African poultry and soybean industries need to be more protected in the short term and competitive in the long term. •

Why Africa Will Not Be Able To Feed Itself

- Tyler D. Coady

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jeffrey Gentleman of the New York Times explained in his last dispatch from Africa how the confluence of climate change, soil degradation, and rising wealth are spurring tribal conflict not just in historically-combustible Kenya, but throughout the vast continent. While Africa may inspire images in the West of endless savannahs and limitless farmland, that is an increasingly antiquated reality as the amount of arable land is decreasing while the pressures on food production are increasing.

Politicians, aid workers, agricultural experts, and journalists often point to improving agricultural technology, increasingly robust governance, and limiting economic exploitation as ways for African nations to boost crop yields, local incomes, and combat hunger. However, there are more powerful factors signaling a bleaker, rather than brighter, future for agriculture and nutrition in Africa. As the climate changes in increasingly erratic ways, ecological degradation worsens, poor domestic and international governance continues, and population growth rates skyrocket, African nations will see marked decreases in the productivity of their agricultural sectors and will increasingly rely on the international community for their nutritional needs.

Throughout Africa, average temperatures are the highest in the world, dry land envelops the majority of the continent, and bouts of drought and intense rains are common. As climate change heightens in its intensity and pervasiveness, Africa, from the deserts of Niger to the jungles of the Congo to the coastal cities of South Africa, is acutely at risk to these changes. The global analytics firm Maplecroft lists seven countries in Africa among its top ten most vulnerable to climate change. Scientific climate models from the International Panel on Climate Change project marked increases in temperature this century, especially in the Sahel just south of the Sahara Desert, where agriculture is the primary source of income for most people. Furthermore, more intense droughts and floods are likely side effects of climate change, with the former heightening competition for already-scarce water resources and the latter inundating cropland. Couple future climate difficulties with vast swaths of farmland that have been spoiled as a result of salinization of soils and desertification of lands,



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and the environmental constraints impinging upon Africa's agricultural sector are as enormous as Mount Kilimanjaro itself.

Exacerbating the climate and environmental difficulties are decades of not only poor domestic governance pertaining to economics and agriculture, but also detrimental international aid regimes, governance structures, and business exploitation. While veteran journalist Michela Wrong is right in the New York Times Book Review that the draining of Africa's natural wealth "relies for its existence on the complicity of African presidents, ministers and members of parliament," one must not ignore how the United States and, more recently, China have pushed for agricultural and infrastructure projects that encourage the production of cash crops while doing little to develop the production of staple crops that provide adequate sustenance for local populations.

For example, China is investing heavily in Sudan's Gezira state, attempting to restore a British colonial-era agricultural scheme that emphasizes cotton production and exportation. This will provide foreign currency inflows for the regime of Omar al-Bashir and enshrine further Chinese influence in the war-ravaged nation. However, there exists no large-scale investments nor aid programs from the national government or foreign benefactors to help the vast amount of Sudanese farmers who raise the cattle, sheep, and goats that provide them income and food. As competition for farming and grazing land increases, due to increased foreign investment, urbanization, desertification, and other factors, domestic governance in cahoots with quasi-colonialist foreign influence is pushing agricultural measures that do little to address Africa's most pressing problem — feeding itself.

Cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Cairo are bursting at the seams as millions of people flee the rural areas where nutritional needs are most

dire in order to crowd the outer rings of burgeoning metropolises where greater resources exist. Compounding the issue are total fertility rates in Africa that are 88 percent higher than the world standard, according to Joseph Bish in the Guardian. By mid-century, the United Nations estimates the African population will have doubled from 2015 levels to 2.4 billion. As Africa's population swells, the pressure on food production for consumption purposes is bound to explode. On a continent already dealing with famine, malnutrition and low agricultural productivity, a doubling of the population is a guarantee that Africa will become increasingly reliant on foreign aid for nutritional purposes as its agricultural capabilities become too overburdened. It is not just the sheer numbers of all Africans that is sure to lead to this result, but that a growing African middle class with disposable income will inevitably consume more food and associated resources, leaving less for the poor.

The unnerving reality is that there exist policy solutions that could solve many of the ills associated with the future of African agriculture. Concerted and intensive measures dedicated to mitigating and adapting to climate change would be a strong starting point. Furthermore, developing more robust and transparent domestic and international management of African agricultural lands, involvement in international food markets, and development initiatives dedicated to staple, rather than cash crops, would improve incomes and ensure more adequate nutrition. Finally, increasing incomes in an equitable fashion and encouraging consumption in a sustainable manner would help eliminate poverty, equip peoples with more financial security, and lead to lower birth rates, eliminating much of the threat from a population boom. Yet, there exists seemingly inadequate political will amongst Western aid regimes, African political leaders, and international climate policy makers to tackle these issues in earnest, despite the fact that the decreasing of Africa's agricultural abilities will lead to mass starvation, mass migration, mass societal upheaval, and mass reliance on international aid, much to the chagrin of all concerned in Africa and beyond. •

Bottom of the Class

How South Africa's Education System is Being Held Back by Political Corruption

- Kieran Byrne

In January 2016, the BBC reported that Angie Motshekga, South Africa's Minister of Education, said that the country's education system was "in crisis." Motshekga cited poor teachers, high dropout rates, and a failure rate above 25 percent in national exams. More than a year and a half later, in October 2017, President Jacob Zuma fired Blade Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education, in a cabinet reshuffle. Yet this reshuffling did not have anything to do with outcomes in education, but instead came as a punishment for Nzimande's political criticisms of the current administration. South Africa's wider economic and social development is being held back by its sub-standard education system, and the situation will not improve until the current government roots out the corruption that has festered under Zuma. This will happen when the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), challenges the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party to the point that the ANC is forced to address the issues of corruption.

Zuma is currently battling allegations of corruption and is managing his worst-ever approval ratings. The most egregious of his alleged faults is using over 215 million Rand of public money, or roughly \$150,000, to renovate his house. Poor educational results are generally seen as a consequence of the enormously-powerful South African Democratic Teacher's Union's (SADTU) cozy relationship with the ruling ANC. SADTU is part of the so-called "tripartite alliance" in South African politics, consisting of the ANC, the Communist Party of South Africa, the ANC, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, of which SADTU is a member. In this arrangement, the members of the "alliance" agree not to contest each other in elections and to consistently support each other politically, giving the unions tremendous sway over ANC policy. SADTU consistently refuses to fire teachers who show poor results, and Minister Motshekga, has described the union as having a "stranglehold" on education reforms in the country. The union is a critical pillar of support for the ANC, and has repeatedly been implicated in scandals involving selling jobs, a patronage system described by South African media as "endemic".



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South Africa has long been dominated by the ANC, which was the party that ended apartheid and ushered in democracy over two decades ago. ANC dominance, however, has led to a government that suffers from high levels of corruption. The largest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, won only 22 percent of the vote to the ANC's 62 percent in the most recent national elections in 2014. Yet, at the local level, the DA governs Western Cape, South Africa's most prosperous region, and there is reason to believe that its governance has spurred further educational improvements and helped the economy in the region. Indeed, Western Cape has the highest high school graduation rate of South Africa, at 80 percent, as well as the most highly educated workforce across the board.

Supporters of the DA are typically urban and educated, as compared to the overwhelmingly impoverished and rural base of the ANC. In order to make inroads with these segments of the population, the DA must learn how to market its programs more effectively; the DA should promote its successes in Western Cape in other regions of the country. Moreover, the DA has struggled historically to shed its reputation as a white party, but this has been somewhat aided by the appointment of Mmusi Maimane, a black man, as party chair. The DA's growth as a viable opposition party is necessary to fight corruption and poverty in South Africa. The entrenched unions, particularly SADTU, and the ANC are at present inextricably linked with no impetus to improve or change.

In the meantime, however, the ANC can do a great deal to improve itself and, by extension, South Africa. In 2019, Zuma will step down as president due to presidential term limits. Fights over succession have already begun, particularly between Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, his ex-wife and staunch political supporter, and Cyril Ramaphosa, the current deputy president. However, it is clear that Dlamini-Zuma is already facing a number of corruption scandals and would be a poor choice in comparison to Ramaphosa, who has the backing of the current education minister and has publicly criticized corruption in the government. Ramaphosa has also expressed his desire to fight the influence of big businesses and wealthy families in South African politics, while implementing more policies that emphasize sound governance and active public policy making.

South Africa is a vibrant country with a young workforce, abundant natural resources, and good infrastructure. The potential for the country to grow and develop is enormous, but will only be possible with an efficient government that focuses its attention on improving education outcomes and rooting out corruption. The government will continue to function poorly until the DA becomes a viable political challenger. This trend has already begun, as the DA has taken power in local elections in major economic centers, like Western Cape. An enhanced and emboldened DA will give the ANC a serious incentive to fix its own corruption issues, which will lead to more robust political debate, active policy making, and better outcomes for all South Africans. •

Natural Disasters in the Americas

- Americas Region Contributing Authors



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From Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria in the Caribbean to various earthquakes in Mexico, 2017 was marked by climatic upheaval in the Americas. In this article, the Michigan Journal of International Affairs Americas region covers these tragedies and describes disheartening post-disaster situations in each case. Regional Editor Andrew Mitchel writes about the island of Barbuda, which was left without any of its inhabitants following Hurricane Irma. Managing Editor Meghan Rowley writes about the impact of the Puerto Rican debt crisis on the island's ability to respond to the

devastation of Hurricane Maria. Maggie Johnson writes about how the wrong type of aid was sent to Mexico City following a September 2017 earthquake, and how long-term changes in infrastructure are the real aid needed. Finally, Jalen Zeman writes about how small Caribbean territories of European nations, which were destroyed by various hurricanes, received lackluster aid from their mother countries in Europe.

Hurricane Irma leaves Barbuda with No People

- Andrew Mitchel

After Hurricane Irma devastated the Caribbean on September 7th, 2017, there was a shocking development: all 1800 residents of the Barbuda were not on the island itself, but instead on its larger neighbor, Antigua. Although many left Barbuda for Antigua on their own accord, others were soon forced to evacuate.

Though Antigua was mostly spared from serious damage, the story is quite different in Barbuda. Images published of the island are of complete streets of houses destroyed and debris scattered everywhere, showing how difficult the rebuild of this community will be. The civil leader of the islands, Prime Minister Gaston Browne, stated that after viewing the island by air, he could reasonably conclude that nearly every building, or at least between ninety and ninety-five percent of them, had been damaged or destroyed. This came after the storm brought wind speeds of about 185 mile per hour winds and torrential rain through the country. It is estimated that a total renovation will cost upwards of two hundred million USD for an economy that, between both islands, has a GDP of around

one billion USD. Unfortunately, reconstruction will not be fast, especially considering the nation relies on tourism for approximately 60 percent of its GDP.

Antigua and Barbuda, collectively part of the British Commonwealth and an independent nation since 1981, have been left on its own to rebuild after Hurricane Irma. The international community should thus look to support this small nation's rebuild and rebound efforts from the hurricane that left Barbuda destroyed and, for all intents and purposes, temporarily uninhabited.

Debt Crisis Hinders Puerto Rico's Hurricane Maria Relief

- Meghan Rowley

Months after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico on September 20th, 2017, relief efforts continue to be stalled by the island's damaged infrastructure. Outdated power and water systems were already in need of fixing long before the storm's landfall because of bankrupt public service agencies following the island's debt cri-

sis. Coupled with previous damage from Hurricane Irma and the fact that many power and water lines were outdated and above ground, Maria's landfall meant a complete breakdown of both power and pipelines. Contrary to Texas and Florida, which completely restored electricity and water seventeen days after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma respectively, experts predict Puerto Rico is likely to go at least six months without power.

PREPA, or the Puerto Rican Electric Power Authority, is the agency responsible for overseeing energy distribution in the country. However, it is understaffed with utility workers and cannot afford to attract private relief teams, as they cannot repay them for their services. Moreover, obstructed roads, low staff, and a lack of cellphone access means PREPA is slower to recover power plants than their mainland counterparts. The US Army Corps of Engineers has temporarily stepped in, but the 30,000 person staff is half that of those deployed on the mainland. Additionally, the Corps is unlikely to stay six months, as US President Donald Trump has announced he will begin removing first responder teams. Meanwhile, eighty percent of the population, especially those in rural areas, cannot access aid as a result of broken power lines. While supermarkets and gas stations are slowly reopening, they represent minimal progress compared to the estimated five billion USD needed to permanently re-

store Puerto Rico's infrastructure. As President Trump prepares to remove responders and decrease emergency funding, experts speculate it may take more time until the island returns to pre-Maria conditions, let alone fix its previous infrastructure problems. Thus, although the island has special access to US funds unlike its Caribbean neighbors, its debt significantly hinders its ability to recover.

Mexico City Post-Earthquake: Shaken but Resilient

- *Maggie Johnson*

On September 19th, 2017, an 8.1 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of the Oaxaca state in Mexico. Just two days later, a 7.1 earthquake struck southeast of the Mexican capital, leaving 370 dead. The event happened on the anniversary of the 1985 Mexico City Earthquake, when over five thousand people were killed in the same metropolitan area. Mexico City is partially built on a dried lake bed, a medium which amplifies, rather than absorbs, seismic waves, making it especially susceptible to earthquakes. After the destructive 1985 earthquake, the Mexican government took action to prevent a similar level of devastation in the future. The fact that the devastation of the 2017 reached nowhere near the same level of destruction speaks to the effectiveness of these efforts.

Aid response to this earthquake were both quick and generous. Shocking videos of building collapses spread on social media, and triggered hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to Mexican aid organizations. The aid that people are most inclined to give after disasters are food, water, and other immediate needs. However, in a state like Mexico that was well-prepared for the task, this aid was not exceedingly useful. The devastation of the earthquake was localized, leaving some areas relatively unaffected and thus able to help immediately with provisions like food and water. Shelters were even created for lost animals just a day after the earthquake. Those Mexicans left unaffected by the earthquake were ready to help as soon as the earth stopped shaking.

That does not mean aid should not continue to arrive in Mexico City; people still need help rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

Rather, structural repairs and loss of property are most needed, which are much more long-term projects. In the age of social media where disasters are documented firsthand and donations can be made with just a few clicks, it is easy to make an initial donation and move on to the next tragedy on the news feeds. However, aid cannot just be focused on the first few days, but must be there in the weeks and months after to help rebuild the community.

Sentiments of Abandonment in the Non- Independent Caribbean

- *Jalen Zeman*

Across the Caribbean, the 2017 hurricane season left various islands devastated. Hundreds of thousands were left stranded in towns and resorts without food, water or shelter. Hurricanes Irma, Jose, and Maria destroyed critical infrastructure like roads and telecommunication networks that are needed to facilitate recovery, hindering aid workers' ability to reach those stranded in the wake of the storm. Many of these islands' residents live under British, French, Dutch, and US dominion and have criticized their administrators for a lack of an empathetic response. Many cite the delay and resources commitment as frustrating. The many citizens of these administrative countries feel abandoned, rightfully feel neglected.

Thousands on the jointly-held French and Dutch island of St. Martin, where Hurricane Irma destroyed reportedly ninety-five percent of structures, were left without food as tensions grew. France and the Netherlands responded with mobilized forces to restore order and deliver aid. Yet, the citizens of the island still felt as though their needs were disregarded by the European powers. Due to a lack of infrastructural planning and the destructiveness of the storm, the governments had trouble delivering aid to those most affected. Additionally, for those able to navigate the debris-ridden roads and collapsed buildings, flights off the island limited what fleeing passengers could bring, forcing many residents to leave behind clothes and personal belongings. As residents queued to board departing flights, many thought of

the staggering task of rebuilding the island, emphasizing the governments' responsibility to help rebuild.

In many of the British Virgin Islands, residents spent days surviving with minimal-to-no assistance. The residents of one island, Jost Van Dyke, had only a satellite phone, a chainsaw, and a week's worth of food to survive before supplies finally arrived. Only after a public outcry at home and abroad did London slowly begin to deliver food packages by boat and helicopter to the many isolated islands. Although UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson announced a seventy-seven million USD aid package to fund aid relief efforts in the region, many question how long it will take to administer. These circumstances are emblematic of a region-wide apathetic commitment by major powers in distributing aid and restoring basic services, which has continued to leave hundreds of thousands of hungry residents without means to escape the ravaged islands. •

X Marks the Spot

Why Latinx Is Not the Solution

- Andong Li Zhao

Latin Americans' include many groups, indigenous peoples, descendants of Africa, Spain, Portugal, and many other countries. It is, therefore, hard to define one 'Latin American identity.' Another group to consider, too, is Latin American descendants that were raised in the United States who have created new identities and customs, which sometimes clash with those of people in their countries of origin. One example of this clash is the use of the term 'Latinx.' People have a right to their preferred term, be it 'Latinx,' Latino, Latina, or Latin-American, but forcing a label upon others should not occur. Hence, 'Latinx' should not be forced upon Latin Americans because it reinforces the English language's hegemony over Spanish language.

Cultural hegemony by the United States is a strong factor in the assumption that such a term as 'Latinx' would become standardized throughout the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas. Examples of this hegemony at work include Salvador Iglesias speaking in English to show off in the Mexican Netflix show *Club de Cuervos*, and Hondurans buying desirable but pirated Hollister clothing over local brands. When Mitú, an American internet "channel with a Latino point of view," in their words, and various American professors insist on using the term 'Latinx,' they are adding to this cultural hegemony, ignoring the perspective of those who choose not to use it at all. 'Latinx' has American origins and was created to conform to English linguistic standards of gender neutrality. 'Latinx' is not a term created by Spanish speakers throughout Latin America, so it is not inclusive and dictates what is appropriate for Spanish through English.

An argument in favor of 'Latinx' is that Spanish is itself a language of conquest in Latin America. Brooklyn College Professor Scharón-del Río states that the use of Spanish, and not indigenous languages, in colonial Latin America is a blatant form of linguistic imperialism. While this legacy exists, Spanish is the most widely-spoken language in Latin America. Clearly, it deserves to have its autonomy there both respected and fully preserved. Therefore, acting against Spanish for what conquistadors did in the colonial period by inserting 'Latinx' into the vocabulary will only lead to resentment

“‘Latinx’ is not a term created by Spanish speakers throughout Latin America, so it is not inclusive and dictates what is appropriate for Spanish through English.”

of the term and retaliation against it by those who do not accept it.

'Latinx' is also used because it is gender-neutral, whereas the default 'Latino' is male and 'Latina' is female. Mitú claims in one of its videos that the use of male forms as the default subconsciously excludes women. However, the claim that a language is sexist because it is gendered should be reconsidered. Recognizing the existence and presence of gender in a language does not mean that the language is inherently sexist, or that its speakers are sexists. This claim then forces a conclusion that the French, Hebrew, Portuguese, and Spanish languages, and their societies, are all sexist. Yet many of the countries, including France, Nicaragua, and Cuba, have high indices of gender equality, as reported by the Global Gender Gap Report. Indeed, their indices are higher than countries with gender-neutral languages. This indicates that gendered language does not cause sexism or gender inequality. Using 'Latinx' is not necessary step towards gender equality, regionally or globally. Gender inclusivity and equality should certainly be promoted, but using Latinx is not the way to do so.

Each language should be allowed to evolve organically to ensure inclusivity and respect for different identities as they arise; 'Latinx' as a term wrought by English speakers does not allow this to occur. In Spanish, measures taken to ensure inclusivity include the avoidance of pronouns, like using 'one' instead of 'he/she'; using neutral noun, such as 'partner' instead of 'wife/husband'; and changing the use of words like *nosotros* (we/us) to split into a male and female form, which for this example would be *nosotros* or *nosotras*. It is worth noting that some scholars do indeed advocate for the use of 'x' in words, which would include using *alumnx* instead of *alumno* (student). However, this has only been proposed for use in written Spanish, not spoken Spanish. Spanish has the Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy), the

official authority on the Spanish language, and this body has gradually incorporated more gender-neutral structures. Their stance on gendered language is that language is a social practice and can be modified, so long as these changes do not deform the language or go against grammatical structures. However, 'Latinx' goes against Spanish structures and the Royal Spanish Academy's standards.

The term 'Latinx' should not be forced into use by one group upon another, especially when the term is a case of American cultural hegemony being forced upon Latin Americans. Solutions should be collaborative, and not mandated, to ensure all issues are addressed surrounding the term. As the fight for gender equality and gender neutrality in language continues, we need to keep in mind issues of progress, and in the case of Latin America, both the brutalist colonial period, and in the modern world, the power the United States tends to wield over it. •

Latin America's Urgent Need for a Climate Change Solution

- Noah Kerwin

Drugs, corruption, and natural disasters have dominated headlines about Latin America in recent years. Rarely mentioned and woefully under-covered, however, is the growing threat of climate change and its potential effects on the region. Although plans to address climate change are being taken, such as the 2016 Paris Climate Accord, their success is far from certain. The United States has signaled its intention to leave the deal, and there exists no enforcement mechanism to ensure countries are meeting their emission reduction targets. Although they represent a small portion of global carbon emissions, Latin America is a region incredibly susceptible to climate change's worst effects. While Latin American governments should continue to reduce their own emissions and pressure other countries to commit to emission reduction goals, they must take matters into their own hands and invest significantly into climate change adaptation measures.

Latin America is uniquely vulnerable to the worsening effects that increased temperatures, drought, and flooding promise. All spell disaster for Latin American economies, many of which rely heavily on agriculture. Studies conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) predict that by 2050, arable land for coffee will decrease by 80 percent, and by 2030, Central American bean, rice, and maize production will drop by ten percent. To make matters worse, a large coastal population, combined with a significant amount of land barely above sea level, means that the effects of sea levels rising will affect a large amount of land and people. Major cities like Lima, Peru and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil will also face a serious rise in sea-levels. And, as a result of warming ocean temperatures, some of Latin America's largest and most robust coral reefs are at risk of disappearing.

Although the situation is dire, not all hope is lost. In fact, there is reason to be optimistic, given the myriad of possibilities that exist to deal with climate change. Firstly, Latin American countries can increase their payments into and expand coverage of regional disaster insurance. One existing example of regional disaster insurance is the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF). Since

“While the problems posed by climate change are plentiful, so are the possible solutions.”

its creation in 2007, numerous Caribbean and Central American governments paid into the program. In addition to having existing affiliates of CCRIF increase their payment into the program, non-members should seek to develop their own regional insurance program, as they have had empirical success in the wake of catastrophes. Neighboring countries such as Peru, Ecuador, and Chile, for instances, may see benefits in collaborating on their own parametric insurance organization. These nations have a great incentive to prepare for future disaster relief, since they are not in the CCRIF, as well as because of their status as high-risk areas for natural disasters according to the 2016 World Risk Report.

Additionally, construction of climate-resilient infrastructure is a necessity. A recent proposal by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) suggests that \$320 billion be invested in infrastructure annually in Latin American infrastructure by 2020. Still, infrastructure overall, if not built because of a changing planet, will need frequent repairs. Thus, climate-resilient infrastructure will cost countries less money in the long run. The World Economic Forum wrote that where the increased costs for resilient infrastructure are too high, modular design or phased construction could keep initial costs down while allowing for the infrastructure to be modified, augmented, and upgraded as funds become available.

Protection of the region's biodiversity hotspots, in their forests, wetlands, and reefs, must be another top priority. Although biodiversity and economic growth are often difficult to balance, maintaining biodiversity presents opportunities for economic growth in science and medicine, which can offset projected losses in agriculture and mining. For example, Brazil, among other nations, including Peru and Colombia, should increase reforestation efforts in the Amazon Rainforest. The Amazon plays a massive role in global climate change mitigation and carbon sequestration efforts. Furthermore, construction of artificial reefs is critical

for coastal countries with a large area of reefs offshore, like Cuba, Mexico, and Colombia. Restoring reefs using electro-mineral accretion method is the best course of action, as it is an empirically successful and affordable technology that uses low-voltage currents to stimulate coral growth and increase their resistance to both temperature change and acidification. Investing in reefs alone is one of the most important aspects of climate adaptation, as they not only provide billions in goods and services such as medicine, fish, and tourism but also serve as a buffer against coastal storms and erosion.

While the problems posed by climate change are plentiful, so are the possible solutions. Adaptation projects, although costly in a vacuum, have the potential to support key sectors of the economy, while spurring job opportunities across Latin America and the Caribbean. Investment looks even more appealing when the alternative is over 100 billion dollars of yearly damage from climate change by 2050, according to the IADB. In 2012, Luis Miguel Galindo, Chief of the Climate Change Unit of ECLAC, contended that “investments in adaptation are cost effective and have substantial co-benefits”, concluding that, “some of these adaptation measures are very easy to implement and have significant positive impacts.” As it stands, global temperature will continue to rise and consequences associated will continue to mount. Thus, the sooner Latin America and the Caribbean can invest in adaptation, the cheaper and less painful these changes will be. •

The 21st Century French Fight for 'New World' Resources

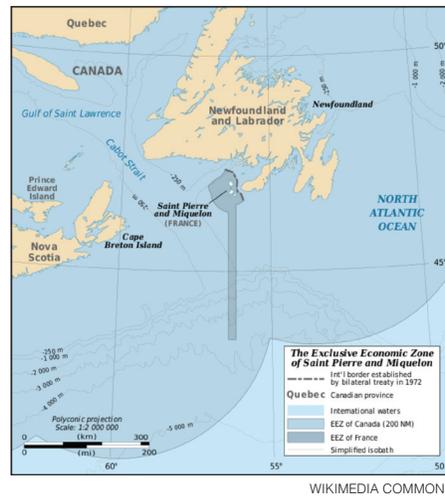
- Max Goldman

The French Empire once spanned over one million square miles across North America. French colonists often crossed the Atlantic Ocean to plunder natural resources. Today, all that remains of New France are the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, small fishing islands off the coast of Newfoundland inhabited by approximately 6,000 people. However, this has not stopped the French from attempting to claim potentially large oil and gas reserves located off the coast of Newfoundland. The French are claiming these resources by citing provisions outlined in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). France should not be given the rights to the resources on the continental shelf under its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The United Nations, which is responsible for resolving disputes pertaining UNCLOS, should deny France the legal right to claim those oil and gas reserves as the treaty does not endow France with the right to claim those resources.

According to UNCLOS, a country's exclusive economic zone extends 200 nautical miles (NM) from its coastline and grants that country sole rights to natural resources and fishing in that area. An additional 150 nautical miles can be added to a country's EEZ through an application process. Since Saint Pierre and Miquelon are surrounded by Canada's EEZ on all sides, France and Canada had to agree upon their maritime borders in 1972. However, these boundaries were never respected by local fishermen, with both sides continuing to break the agreement.

In 1992, a United Nations tribunal voted to award France a 10.5 nautical mile wide, 188 nautical mile long strip to the south of St. Pierre and Miquelon. This strip, known simply as "the baguette" to locals, was only eighteen percent of what France requested. Moreover, this strip did not give France access to its EEZ from international waters. Canada was also disappointed, having lost some of its fishing waters, which is where coastal Newfoundland derived its economic prosperity from.

Nevertheless, the 1992 ruling was misguided and had no precedent in international law. The "baguette" was intended only to give France a path from St. Pierre and Miquelon to international waters. The 1992 decision only estab-



lished maritime boundaries and did not demarcate the ocean floor itself. Despite the inherent defects in the 1992 ruling, France is now preparing to fight for its rights to the oil and gas reserves in this area under the terms of the 1992 maritime boundary.

France's history in international court is not going to help its case: when Great Britain requested additional space in its EEZ around the Channel Islands, which are much closer to France than Great Britain, France vehemently fought against it. A UN tribunal heard the case on this and various delineations between the boundaries of the two nations from 1977 to 1978. France claimed there was no precedent for what Great Britain requested, and that by awarding Britain additional territory, the tiny islands would gain more importance than they deserved. The UN tribunal sided with France, and kept the original maritime boundaries of the Channel Islands. France's argument in that case is the exact opposite of what they are currently arguing against Canada for St. Pierre and Miquelon. It will reflect poorly on the United Nations to side with France since they sided against Great Britain making the same argument. This previous decision seemingly ruins any French argument that it had to gain access to the seabed near Newfoundland under its EEZ.

Just like the neighboring Canadian island of Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon have faced economic downturn as fishing returns have fallen. The possibility of riches derived from natural resources is enticing to the ter-

ritory's residents. However, is it unclear how and if the resource exploitation will benefit the people of St. Pierre and Miquelon. The French government is interested in possible business ventures regarding the oil and gas reserves, but if investment comes from France, any profit from the investment will be returned to Europe and not to the islands. St. Pierre and Miquelon do not want to become another chapter in the book of overseas territories being robbed of their resources.

The optimal solution to this border dispute is extremely delicate. The 1992 UN ruling has not worked out for either side, and extending its legitimacy by giving France the rights to the continental shelf below is not the best solution. One possible solution is to fix the 1992 decision by giving France maritime passage to international waters, and allow Canada to keep complete access to the continental shelf. This would create the solution that the United Nations intended with its ruling from 25 years ago. Another solution is to simply restore St. Pierre and Miquelon's EEZ to its actual territorial waters, which according to international law, is just the twelve nautical miles out from the coastline, or equidistant between two countries if there is not a 24 nautical mile buffer. As France has previously argued, in the case of the Channel Islands, giving a small island a large EEZ is giving it disproportionate clout. Even though the 1992 decision was designed to help suffering cod fisherman, it has failed to aid the dying industry, and so eliminating the much-maligned "baguette" should be explored as a solution.

St. Pierre and Miquelon is the last vestige of France's North American empire, and the French metropole still wants to milk it of its riches. France says it is prepared to fight against Canada for its claim of the continental shelf under the Atlantic. The United Nations, which is tasked with demarcating disputed areas of the ocean floor, should not side with France. This would give the small islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon equal importance to the much larger Canadian province of Newfoundland. The natural resources under the continental shelf are not for the French, but for Canada, to claim. •

Canada Warming

Businesses See Opportunity, Indigenous Peoples See Destruction

- Jalen Zeman

While climate change is seen by many as a problem of the future, Canada's northernmost residents have to cope with its present-day consequences. Many of Canada's indigenous peoples, who have lived in the Arctic for millennia, deal with increasing food insecurity and crumbling infrastructure due to climate change. However, talk of the famed Northwest Passage and the opportunity for resource exploration in the Canadian north overshadows the issues Arctic inhabitants face. As the Canadian Arctic thaws and indigenous livelihoods grow more vulnerable, the Canadian government should tax businesses that benefit from increased transit opportunities or resource exploration in the area. Then, it should direct financial resources to indigenous peoples in order to help them to adapt to climate change.

The loss of sea ice in the Canadian Arctic presents shipping and energy companies tantalizing new routes and drilling opportunities. If temperatures continue to rise, the Northwest Passage is likely to be ice-free for much of the year. This would cut shipping times between Asia and Europe by one to two weeks, saving billions of dollars on transportation costs. A decrease in sea ice levels could also lengthen the drilling season for natural resources like oil. The region contains one-third of the world's untapped natural gas and approximately thirteen percent of the planet's untapped oil. Without a doubt, the Canadian Arctic will become a hotbed for global shipping and natural resource extraction this century.

As shipping through the Northwest Passage increases over the next few decades, the central government in Ottawa can tax those that use this route and redirect financial resources to indigenous peoples. A per-good or per-crate tax on each passing barge, or ship, could raise substantial revenue. This is especially true if the overall cost of transportation through the ice-free Northwest Passage is below that of other routes. Taxing this route is reasonable and doesn't worsen Canada's reputation as a business-friendly environment.

With regard to oil extraction, the situation is paradoxical. The government can allow private business to extract oil from the seafloor, and then tax the petroleum to help alleviate the consequences of climate change on indigenous

peoples. However, the resource extraction further exacerbates climate change itself, leading to further degradation of the environment. While it would be ideal to prevent any private action that will make conditions worse for the indigenous peoples, it is likely that Ottawa will allow extraction to occur. Thus, Ottawa should, at the very least, tax energy companies and pay for the indigenous peoples' adaption to climate change.

The Canadian government has a responsibility to help the indigenous people retain some of their ways of life, especially since it will gain monetarily from the warming climate. While global temperatures have risen on average by 1.5 degrees Celsius in comparison to pre-industrial levels, Canada's far north has experienced temperature increases of 5.4 degrees Celsius. This has inflicted tremendous harm on wildlife and threatens access to traditional hunting grounds. Additionally, warming temperatures engender contact between regional and outside flora and fauna, spreading diseases and invasive species that disrupt the Arctic ecosystem. Throughout the region, locals depend on traversing sea ice to hunt seals, caribou, and other migratory animals. As hunting ranges shrink due to decreasing ice levels, indigenous people have little choice but to turn to expensive and unhealthy food shipped from southern Canada. This change negatively affects their health. In addition, warming temperatures make travel to ancestral camp sites more difficult, inhibiting their ability to participate in traditional activities, which serve as one of the last cultural distinctions for a people increasingly assimilated into Canadian society.

Ottawa should invest to fight food insecurity. Investment in effective monitoring of travel routes can ensure safety and decrease the risk of becoming stranded when travelling to hunting grounds. Additionally, as variable weather increases, there should be funding for survival equipment. For example, increased funding for GPS and weather tracking units is a concrete way to protect lives. Furthermore, as the regional government of Nunavut has already done, allocation of money to further educate community members on effective means of monitoring and anticipating weather conditions can help people avoid risks and death. In the battle against a changing climate that is destroying

hunting grounds and traditional travel routes, Ottawa has many options to help indigenous peoples overcome the consequences a warming climate has on traditional hunting grounds.

In addition to helping indigenous people overcome threats to food security, Ottawa must also help rebuild infrastructure. Thawing permafrost threatens roads, buildings, and airports built for the extreme cold. Previous infrastructure was constructed on frozen ground, but temperature increases cause these foundations to shift and weaken, severely affecting infrastructural strength and integrity. Even energy giant ExxonMobil recognized decades ago the harm that thawing ground does to its underground pipelines. While new construction can accommodate for warmer temperatures, the integrity of all previous infrastructure remains in question, which is very troubling in an isolated region with high transportation costs.

In response to this threat, the Canadian government can subsidize the costs of refitting existing infrastructure to ensure infrastructural integrity and strength. Currently, the isolation of many indigenous communities places a large financial burden on residents, as it takes time and effort to get anything to and from the Arctic. Many communities have to divert resources away from the construction of new infrastructure, and towards fixing old infrastructure impacted by thawing permafrost. Thus, government funding of projects that ensure infrastructural stability and integrity would help the Arctic's indigenous peoples adapt to a warming climate.

As humanity struggles reduce its carbon footprint, climate change will only grow more severe. For Canada's indigenous people, the sea ice will get thinner and the infrastructure will weaken. The destruction of thousands of years of indigenous cultures and traditional means of living, largely derived from the land and its resources, are a foregone conclusion. The Northwest Passage will become ice-free, and this, in turn, will bring more shipping and resource extraction to Canada. However, the benefits of expanded economic opportunities must alleviate the suffering of indigenous peoples. If Ottawa wants to open up the Canadian Arctic to business, support for the indigenous people must occur to justify any gains climate changes allows. •

The Departure of UN Peacekeeping Troops

Peace for Haiti at Last?

- Grace Bristol

United Nations Peacekeeping troops are finally leaving Haiti with a rather un-peaceful legacy. The United Nations (UN) announced it would end its peacekeeping mission in Haiti, and withdrew in mid-October. The United Nations has had a substantial military presence in the country since 1994. The peacekeeping troops are leaving in their wake a trail of destruction and abuse, which overshadows much of the good they have done in the poverty-ridden nation. As a result of this legacy, the United Nations should create a new regulatory body to oversee peacekeeping missions and impose harsh punishment on any peacekeeping troops who abused their power and broke the law during their mission.

Haiti has a history of political turmoil, and UN troops arrived in Haiti to provide order during the transition of power after the ousting of democratically-elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Aristide was elected president of Haiti twice, in both 1990 and again in 2000. He was overthrown by a military coup in October 1991, but reinstated with help from the UN in 1994. However, it wasn't until 2004 when an official UN organization in Haiti was established, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. This organization was formed in response to insurgent violence in several cities in 2004, which the United Nations classified as a threat to international peace and security in Haiti.

However, there have been numerous reports of UN peacekeeping troops sexually abusing both adults and children. The troops have also been blamed for the 2010 outbreak of cholera, which killed over 9,100 people. They have also killed many civilians in an attempt to rid neighborhoods of gangs. Given these various, and serious, scandals, it brings it to question whether or not UN Peacekeeping troops were ever really needed. It seems they have done more harm than good for the people of Haiti. While the peacekeeping troops were sent with good intentions, they abused their powers and are now leaving the country as impoverished and politically fragile as ever.

The United Nations has been dealing with the issue of abusive troops across the world. An investigation led by the Associated Press over the last twelve years reported almost 2,000 allegations of sexual assault, abuse, and exploitation



UN peacekeeper interacts with Haitian children.
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by peacekeeping troops, including more than 300 allegations involving children. Yet, very few troops served jail time. In Haiti, for example, at least 134 Sri Lankan troops reportedly demanded to have sex with children as young as twelve years old. Although these troops were dismissed and sent home, they faced no punishment. The peacekeeping troops have also torn apart communities and disrupted families. Many of the troops have left children they fathered with local women in Haiti. One local woman, Roselaine Duperval, supporting a child fathered by a peacekeeping troop, said she was furious with the troops since, “[they] left us with nothing.” Woosler Delifort, a local photojournalist from Haiti said, “They should take responsibility, they know about the children.” He too has repeatedly heard what he terms “stories of mistreatment.”

In addition to these troubling testimonies, there was a catastrophic cholera outbreak in 2010 that originated at a UN base. Organizations such as the Institute for Justice and Democracy have tried to bring justice to the Haitian victims of this outbreak. They filed a federal class-action lawsuit against the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti both to obtain compensation for the victims and to rebuild crumbling water facilities. They requested \$400 million dollars, but only two percent of that goal has been secured from the UN as of 2017.

The United Nations contends that its peacekeeping troops made a positive difference in Haiti. United Nations officials have applauded the troops for their work. They argue that these troops have aided in the peaceful transfer of power, as multiple, successful elections have transpired since their arrival. Supporters of the UN mission point to their efforts to train of local police personnel, contributions

of humanitarian aid, promotion of peace and democratic institutions, and establishment of a law enforcement office to address sexual violence. Robert Maguire, a George Washington University Professor and a Haitian specialist in the US State Department, concluded that, “just the presence of those troops kept the Haitian political scene in balance.” He add that, “there’s always the chance and risk in Haiti that a coup d’état can occur against the government in power... [t]he UN effectively... kept it a politically stable place.” Yet, these positive actions don’t mean their presence should continue, as their good deeds do not outweigh the trail of death and abuse they have left behind. Thus, the announcement that their mission is coming to an end is a positive development.

The systematic abuses reported regarding UN troops is emblematic of malfeasance pertaining to worldwide peacekeeping missions. The UN has been unable to control and monitor its troops, and they are slow, and even unresponsive, when crises arise. Since the UN has limited legal jurisdiction over these troops, they have to rely on host countries that the troops are in to enforce their policies. Many UN troops, as mentioned, are not punished adequately; perhaps the UN is too large of a body to closely monitor its Haitian mission. The organization should develop a powerful regulatory body, one separate from its peacekeeping mission, to monitor deployed troops. In addition, perpetrators of crimes should be brought to trial in the host country, and not sent back to their home country, where they too often avoid retribution.

The United Nations should carefully assess the damage done by its troops, and attempt to fix the damage that it caused in Haiti, starting with the cholera reparations. Thousands have been killed, raped, and abused by UN troops, and the UN must hold the perpetrators accountable. The United Nations has been criticized for its inadequate response to these abusive troops and has failed to realize the consequences that its missions have on the local population. The departure of the UN peacekeeping troops from Haiti is a positive step in what will undoubtedly be a long road of recovery for Haiti and its people. •

Maduro's Mess

Fixing the Venezuelan Crisis

- Margaret D'Antonio & Adam Udovich

Venezuela is facing a reckoning. With foreign debt upwards of \$150 billion, and a President Nicolás Maduro, who uses corruption and political favoritism as means to consolidate power, the citizens of Venezuela are desperate for answers. Food shortages and protests abound, and many uncertainties surround the next transition of power. Americas Staff Writers Margaret D'Antonio and Adam Udovich detail this untenable political situation, and provide insights into how both the international community and Venezuela itself can bring itself back from the brink of chaos.

Political Situation in Venezuela at a Crossroads

- Margaret D'Antonio

Venezuela has collapsed into a complete humanitarian crisis, with massive food and medicine shortages; increases in malnutrition, child mortality, and disease; repressive state actions and violence; and inflation expected to skyrocket to over 2,300 percent by the end of 2017. The country has fallen into a recession as a result of both the falling price of oil, its main export, and an overall mismanagement of the economy. However, President Nicolás Maduro's never-ending schemes to consolidate power appear to be succeeding. His instatement of a new legislative body, the Constituent Assembly, in July 2017 has bolstered his power and contributed to a further splintering of the opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD). Moreover, the ruling party, The United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), surprisingly won eighteen out of 23 regional elections in October 2017. In November 2017, Maduro passed a new censorship law prohibiting any form of media that criticizes the government. Yet although it may seem that Maduro is more powerful than ever, this is just an illusion. Crippling external debt looms large. On November 2nd, 2017, Maduro announced plans to refinance and restructure the foreign debt payments. The international community must use this inability to pay back these loans as leverage against Venezuela by refusing to agree to the debt restructuring, imposing economic sanctions, and increasing pressure on Maduro to stop human rights abuses and

restore democratic rule.

Maduro's direct shots to democracy in the region have escalated in recent months. Opposition-led protests exploded in early April 2017 when the Supreme Court tried to curtail the legislative authority of the National Assembly, the opposition-led congress. While this decision was soon rescinded, the protests continued unabated. In early May 2017, Maduro announced that Venezuela would be instating a legislative super-body known as the Constituent Assembly, essentially rendering the National Assembly totally powerless. The Constituent Assembly would have the ability to rewrite the constitution and write its own laws. Over 125 people lost their lives due to brutal police repression during these protests.

In spite of these protests, the PSUV held elections on July 30th, 2017 to choose members for this new Constituent Assembly. The elections were boycotted by opposition members, as all of the candidates were Maduro supporters. The election outcomes were treated with skepticism, though Maduro crowned them a success. International dissent to these elections is evident, as the Lima Group, an organization of countries that formed in August 2017 to place international pressure on Maduro to restore democracy including Latin American nations, as well as Germany and France, did not recognize the new legislative body.

Following the Constituent Assembly's installment, the PSUV requested to reopen talks with the opposition. Although the MUD tentatively accepted the request in September 2017, they had certain demands: a specific date for the presidential election in 2018, release of hundreds of political prisoners, respect for the Constitution and a restoration of power to the National Assembly. Although the preliminary talks were underway by mid-September 2017, within weeks the opposition pulled out, stating that the talks

would distract from the country's economic crisis, and that the government had failed to address human rights abuses rampant in the country. These talks have largely failed to generate any significant change in Venezuela.

The fractured opposition is divided on how best to combat Maduro's rule. The latest disagreement concerns whether to continue protesting, or to acquiesce and negotiate with the PSUV. This conflict culminated in the recent regional elections that took place on October 15th, 2017. The opposition was projected to win and voter turnout expected to be low, as opinion polls revealed discontent with both the PSUV and the MUD. However, a staggering eleven million people reportedly showed up to vote. The PSUV won 54 percent of the total vote, and won control over eighteen of the 23 Venezuelan states. The MUD contested these results as fraudulent, as they claimed 200 polling locations in opposition areas were moved, and that ballot papers included candidates who had lost in the primaries.

The opposition did win five Venezuelan governorships, which actually drives a wedge deeper into the divide in the coalition. Some argued this election would give legitimacy to an unconstitutional and anti-democratic regime, while others claimed it was a way to fight from within the existing political sphere. The dissidence to these elections was exacerbated by the fact that the five elects needed to be sworn in by the Constituent Assembly, which the MUD does not recognize. Four of the five were eventually sworn in, while the fifth elect, Juan Pablo Guanipa, would not swear allegiance to the Constituent Assembly and was jettisoned. The acceptance of the four others is a blow to those in the MUD who wanted to boycott these elections, and also to those who do not recognize the Constituent Assembly's legitimacy.

With the opposition coalition rupturing, the PSUV in a majority of the positions of power, and a new legislative body that can pass virtually any law, the outlook in the political sphere is bleak. While it may seem that Maduro is victorious, his recent concession that the PSUV would be restructuring Venezuela's external debt payment plan has revealed his greatest weakness: Venezuela's crippling external debt of between \$100 and \$150 billion. If Venezuela cannot pay off its debts, it is possible that the country will default, driving the currency value down further and making it harder to obtain loans in the future.

The international community can use his predicament as leverage when negotiating with Maduro. The countries involved in Venezuela's debt restructuring plan should impose strict economic sanctions. Unfortunately, while imposing economic sanctions will hurt regular citizens, this may be necessary to get the attention of the ruling class. The Lima Group has already imposed sanctions on Venezuela, but more countries need to join in to put more international pressure on Maduro.

Some argue that isolating Maduro will drive Venezuela closer to Russia. As of November 8th, 2017, Russia agreed to restructure three billion USD of debt which Venezuela owes Moscow. In exchange, Russia hopes to broker a deal with Venezuela in which it will house Russian warships at their ports. This demonstrates Maduro's weak bargaining position: Venezuela owes Russia little money as compared to their total debt, and this deal would greatly benefit Russia. Unlike Russia, the rest of the international community should be using these debts as leverage not for reasons of self-interest, but rather to pressure Maduro to do the right thing for Venezuela.

The international community must also refuse to accept the debt restructuring unless certain conditions are met: human rights abuses must end in Venezuela, Maduro must restore democratic rule and reinstate power to the National Assembly, and release political prisoners. Since the new Constituent Assembly theoretically has the power to postpone the upcoming presidential election in 2018, it is critical that the global community act as soon as possible. Through use of the debt as a bargaining chip, the world has a chance to put an end to the crisis in Venezuela.

Venezuela: On Its Last Legs

- Adam Udovich

Starving people, hospitals lacking fundamental supplies, one of the highest homicide rates in the world, and expiring debt repayments would make for a textbook example of a failing state. This is indeed the current situation in Venezuela. This is a stark contrast from the government under President Hugo Chavez, and the actions of his party, the PSUV. The previous government pulled millions out of poverty and developed effective social and education programs thanks to healthy revenues from the state-owned oil company, PDVSA. In the last five years, declining oil prices, coupled with deteriorating farmland, a lack of economic diversification and irresponsible government spending, caused Venezuela's economy to crash. The failing economy has led to widespread protests across the nation and in response, President Nicolás Maduro has tried to tighten his authoritarian grip. The situation has only gotten worse, however, as the current economic and political breakdown has reached new highs in the past few months. The international community must reach out with foreign aid as a way of supporting Venezuela's suffering people.

The political collapse of the country centers around Maduro's attempt to seize full control of the legislature and courts for the PSUV from all opposition parties. On March 29th, 2017, the Supreme Court of Venezuela, which supports Maduro, assumed the powers of the National Assembly due to what it declared were violations of the Constitution by the Assembly. While this ruling was revoked three days after it filed, it ignited protests across the country. The Assembly is not safe even after the revocation of the court's ruling, as President Maduro said he wants to establish a Constituent Assembly to rewrite the country's Constitution. He stated his main goal is to "neutralize" the influence of what he calls "coup-plotters," but in reality, he hopes to acquire more power for himself.

Economically, Venezuela is sliding close to a total financial collapse. Revenues from oil are Venezuela's largest economic driver, but recent declines in oil prices have caused the economy to weaken. The lack of reduction of social programs have forced the government to take loans from other countries and private institutions. Venezuela is now billions in debt to creditors. Recently, private financial institutions have

been offered Venezuela loans being referred to as 'hunger bonds,' as the current government scrounges for cash to keep the nation afloat and save its starving people. Maturation of these debts is imminent, and in early November 2017, Venezuela defaulted on a payment of over one billion dollars. Along with defaulting on these loans, the country has given oil to Russia as a form of debt repayment.

Loan defaults put Venezuela even further behind, as the country is losing one of its last lifelines to save its economy from total collapse and its people from death. A corrupt political system has done little to search for more options. With few domestic food sources or consumer goods remaining to feed and care for its nearly thirty million people, Venezuela needs the international community's support to salvage its economy. Yet, President Nicolás Maduro has propagated the usual populist stance that the international community would attempt to control Venezuela and negatively change the country. In general, he is decidedly against the stance that the country is by any means failing due to his, or his party's, policies.

As President Maduro moves to consolidate power as Latin America's newest dictator and Venezuela crumbles, the international community needs to approach President Maduro with the spirit of support and humanitarian relief, not chastisement nor panderies. Venezuela needs intervention from the UN and neighboring Latin American nations to stage fair, monitored elections. The people of Venezuela are well-educated, as the country has a literacy rate over 95 percent, and they have shown they will reject President Maduro and his policies if given the chance. Along with election support, organizations such as the International Monetary Fund or the Inter-American Development Bank Group need to offer loans to Venezuela based off a long-term repayment plan. The country needs to develop its infrastructure and economy before it can pay off debts or it will end up in a cycle of debt payments and foreign dependence, like Jamaica, post-independence from the United Kingdom.

There is the obvious retort that President Maduro will reject such intervention. In that case, there may be few options available to help the people of Venezuela. Hopefully, the country's government will be rational and accept aid from the global community. Likewise, the rest of the world should not try to dominate Venezuela, but instead lift it out of its collapse and help it toward an independent and prosperous future. •

Chile's Renewable Energy Transformation Leaves Much to Be Desired

- Meghan Rowley

A recent New York Times article praised Chile for its innovative renewable energy transformation, lauding the country for making its energy sources more sustainable while serving as a leader for the rest of Latin America. But the Times did not offer a comprehensive look at energy and the environment in the country. Chile is one of ten global leaders in renewable energy, due to geography that provides a plethora of natural resources: the Atacama Desert is perfect for the procurement of solar power, the long coastline provides ample winds for wind farms, and active volcanoes make the country poised for geothermal energy collection. Yet, investments in these renewable sources are new, and face problems of transmission and excessive demand. Furthermore, the Times article focused on energy for electricity, but ignored heating. While endowed with a natural advantage for renewable electricity sources, Chile has little to no natural gas reserves to speak of. The country is thus reliant on Argentinian imports for heat energy, making utilities incredibly expensive and environmentally harmful. Therefore, while Chile is well-positioned to develop both electric and geothermal alternatives, these avenues have not been sufficiently explored. Thus, Chile is not yet experiencing as much of an energy transformation as projected and must further develop these technologies.

Several years ago, it was clear Chile needed to shift its electricity priorities. Though the market was reasonably profitable, prolonged droughts and a major 2010 earthquake affected hydroelectric output and damaged transmission lines, making electricity vulnerable in a country prone to natural disasters. These events called for more diverse and sustainable energy sources, leading the Bachelet administration to invest in solar and wind power.

However, the administration soon ran into problems of transmission and demand. Chile's electricity grid is mostly concentrated in the northern desert SING grid, where most energy is generated, and the central urban SIC grid, where 90 percent of the population resides. Yet, main transmission lines connecting the two grids are just starting to be completed and many sources of renewable energy remain unconnected. This disconnect has led to prob-



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lems of oversupply in one region and undersupply in another, meaning while there may be a surplus in the overall energy market that leads to low spot prices, most residents cannot gain access to power. While the first connecting line is projected to open by the end of 2017, experts predict Chile will likely need many more. Thus, its infrastructure will likely experience the same problems for the next few years.

Moreover, renewables make up less than 20 percent of energy sources, meaning traditional mining sources supply the majority of electricity in transition. Increased demand and recent government auctions indicate new renewable projects are in the works. Indeed, 2018 conservative presidential candidate Sebastian Piñera has made a 90 percent renewable pledge by 2050. But these ambitious plans will take time to develop and have yet to impact the sector. Thus, without further transmission and generational development, Chile cannot hope to truly experience an energy transformation.

Then there is the issue of heat energy. With very few natural gas reserves, Chile has long relied on natural gas imports from Argentina to supply heat. Natural gas is then controlled by a government monopoly, ENAP, or Empresa Nacional del Petróleo, that sets high price controls in order to encourage foreign investment. This makes Chilean utility bills among the most expensive in South America. The few natural gas reserves that Chile can claim are limited to tight gas produced in the southern Magallanes region. Tight gas is a form of liquid natural gas (LNG) that is so low in permeability that it requires massive hydraulic fracking, leaving irreversible environmental damage to Chile's breathtaking Patagonia region for only modest output.

A 2016 bill capped the profits utility companies are allowed to make through ENAP, easing the cost borne by residential consumers. Chile also signed an energy swap deal with Argentina

in September 2017, trading electricity for natural gas with the promise of lower prices. Yet ultimately, the country is still run by a monopoly beholden to foreign imports. And because of utility costs, most Chileans don't have central heating, but rather rely on space heaters. This makes for cold winter households and distances everyday Chileans from the benefits of various energy investments.

However, Chile could still develop its own heat alternatives. Electric and geothermal sources can serve as alternatives to natural gas heating, both of which Chile has in excess due to its copper industry and volcanoes. As the Times article described, the first geothermal energy plant in South America opened in Cerro Pabellón, northern Chile in August 2017. But the plant is for electricity rather than heating, and as the continent's first, vast developments are required before this resource is available for heat. So while Chile has not yet explored these heat alternatives, it is still valuable in the long-term as renewable sources for heat would decrease costs for residents, mitigate environmental damage, and increase energy independence.

For all of its shortcomings, Chile is still one of the top ten renewable energy leaders in the world, and the market has increased threefold since 2011. However, these investments have still failed to translate to better heat and electricity access for Chilean residents, though it is one of the best-positioned countries for renewables. This does not mean that investments in renewable energy are not worthwhile; they are necessary for Chile to solve increasing demand and vulnerability issues. Yet current renewable investments have a long way to go before its benefits are fully realized. Therefore, Chile must recognize these shortcomings and further expand both its renewable electric and heat energy markets to truly produce the energy transformation it promises. •

Pueblos Fumigados and Monsanto

- Margaret Johnson

Monsanto Company is a common name in contemporary debates about the environment. Their promotion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is a polemic issue in many nations. GMOs are designed to withstand the use of pesticides and herbicides, making the crop less vulnerable to destruction by weeds and pests. As of recent, Monsanto has introduced several new herbicide and pesticide-resistant seeds to Argentina. To some, this has brought foreign investment into a struggling economy and new jobs to the historically poorer regions of Argentina. To others, it has brought health problems and water contamination to already economically vulnerable regions. Yet, the narrative that Monsanto brings prosperity to the country dominates public discourse, while the risk of a health emergency barely receives any state recognition. The Argentinian government, especially President Mauricio Macri, must set aside economic interests and initiate a full investigation into the health effects of pesticides and herbicides before a health crisis emerges.

Much is not yet known about the health risks that have arisen in regions where Monsanto's GMOs are present: what exactly about these GMOs causes health issues? To what degree do pesticides and herbicides accentuate these health problems? Little can be known without extensive research. Thus, the government should begin a full scientific investigation into the broader health risks GMOs pose. Those who live near the fields owned and planted by Monsanto – usually poor, agricultural workers – believe that the company's practices pose an ever-present health problem. Researchers and advocates concur. *Medicos de los Pueblos Fumigados* (Doctors for Fumigated Cities, MPF) found in a 2010 study that the rate of cancer was three times higher in areas near Monsanto's fields, indicating a correlation with pesticides used in GMO production. In 2016, The National Geographic Society ran a photo story in its magazine showing some of the more visible health repercussions; the central image included a young girl covered with benign and malignant tumors. Some other investigations by the Associated Press and British Broadcasting Company have raised questions about proper storage of the chemicals. Meanwhile, several groups have organized alongside MPF, *Abogados de Pueblos Fumigados* and *Vecinos de*



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Pueblos Fumigados (Lawyers and Neighbors of the *Pueblos Fumigados* respectively), to produce reports where the Argentinian government refuses to do so. Yet, their reports are useless without government oversight and initiative. Thus, they demand that the government give equal attention to the potential health crisis posed by Monsanto as it has to the program's prosperity.

Additionally, the government should immediately sponsor efforts to construct water infrastructure projects. As of now, there is no system for clean running water in rural areas where soy GMOs and pesticides are present, exacerbating the health problems outlined by independent reports. The majority of the water used in the area comes from rain runoff, which, because of the area's proximity to soy fields, is often filled with herbicides and pesticides. This is damaging because, without clean water, people in affected regions cannot clean themselves or their food. Moreover, chemical residues remain on food and household items, posing longstanding health problems. Some residents even use containers previously used for chemical storage to collect their drinking water. Others have begun to dig their own wells in hopes of finding uncontaminated groundwater, but to no avail.

There has been little government-sponsored research done into the struggles faced by these communities affected by contamination. Many who live in the area have called for a working irrigation system, as well as complained of the larger health risks GMOs may pose. However, the current minister of interior, Leonardo Sarquís, is a former Monsanto executive, and therefore has no incentive to investigate his former company and potentially incriminate himself. Thus, without a change in oversight, there will be no action taken by the Macri administration.

Still, some argue that soy now plays an in-

tegral role in economic activity and that interfering or halting production would have devastating effects. Yet, Argentina exports much of its soy to China as animal feed. Thus, soy produced in Argentina is not consumed in Argentina. In fact, soy production has interfered with the once-revered practice of raising cattle for beef and leather, because soy profit margins have raised land value out of the modest price range of small cattle ranchers. Argentina was once renowned for its beef production, but in part because of the emergence of this lucrative soy industry, their beef has lost prestige. Neighboring Brazil and Uruguay now hold the titles for largest beef exporters in the world, damaging Argentina's cultural reputation. Therefore, soy has indeed negatively affected the economic landscape of Argentina, but that is not to say that these changes are irreversible. By looking into the soy industry's potential public health threats, the government can devise plans for regulations that could ensure public safety while reintroducing the prosperity that beef production offers to Argentina.

Unfortunately, with Monsanto's profits and close relationship with the Argentine government, direct and immediate action by the Argentine government is not likely to occur. However, it is not unreasonable to expect that the Argentine government could launch an investigation into the health effects of herbicides and pesticides used in soy GMO production and to begin constructing water infrastructure in the interior regions to alleviate immediate suffering. All indications point to certain problems in rural regions of Argentina being caused by chemical use, though the extent is yet unknown, and the exact causes, be it poor maintenance, chemical composition, or administration techniques, remain undetermined. To address the problem, the Argentinian government must launch an investigation to begin addressing the health risks immediately. •

Uruguay Marijuana Legalization

A Global Model?

- Andrew Mitchel

The legalization of recreational marijuana in Uruguay in 2013-2017 has led to a multitude of changes in the country. In Uruguay, pharmacies now serve as dealers of marijuana. The two distributors of marijuana are heavily policed, as they send marijuana to these pharmacies in patriotic blue and white bags. Citizens are allowed to grow a set number of marijuana plants in their homes, and cannabis clubs, where various people grow their plants together, have been legalized as well. This form of marijuana legalization may not be universally applicable in other countries, especially in places where drug traffickers, or narcos, operate. However, the model Uruguay has created for how to societally accept and legally engrain the drug into the market is instructive for the rest of Latin America.

In December 2013, Law 19.172 passed through the Uruguayan General Assembly. The bill set out guidelines for state control over marijuana. The laws permitting its growth and use by citizens were to be rolled out in phases. By July 2017, marijuana possession was decriminalized, and Uruguayans had full legal access to buy and smoke marijuana. Surprisingly, the law does not tax the drug for revenue purposes, but instead in order to make it seem more socially acceptable. The original authors and proponents of the law had a two-pronged rationale for its creation. The law, firstly, would serve as a way to promote social justice, especially concerning the unfair incarceration of those who buy and smoke marijuana. The second rationale was to combat the illicit drug trade in Uruguay, which plays out both within the region and globally.

One case of imprisonment for marijuana possession that drew heavy media attention was that of elderly Alicia Castilla, popularly known as the 'reefer grandmother.' Castilla was arrested for growing marijuana, and it took the Uruguayan state three months to process her release from prison. Her case sparked public outrage in Uruguay over her treatment, as police stormed her home and she was handcuffed to a bench in the police station. It elevated the voices of those who supported legalization of marijuana simply on principle. However, it also swayed the opinion of those who originally were not inclined to legalize marijuana. The case of

“The model Uruguay has created for how to societally accept and legally engrain the drug into the market is instructive for the rest of Latin America.”

Castilla sparked a wider discussion and uproar over the high incarceration rates in the nation for simple possession and use of the drug.

The bill is also positioned to weaken drug cartels and the illegal selling of drugs, which has bred violence and dangerous gangs, especially in the capital of Montevideo. The full legalization of marijuana serves as a way to avoid the more brutal policies of the 'Drug War,' which nations like Mexico and Colombia have adopted under US pressure. Legalization and heavy policing of marijuana use and sale is a far better solution than those employed in nations with narcos. However, Uruguay is a nation which is not a part of either the growing or exportation of drugs on a mass scale, like the countries which do have more brutal policies. Yet, the Uruguayan bill is written to thwart the gangs which do exist in the nation and the social problems they bring. The law marks a big step towards a new policy for how to police narcotics in Latin America. Other countries are undertaking similar policies concerning the legality of drugs, as medical marijuana is now legal in Colombia, and Canada is looking to legalize recreational marijuana use by the end of 2017. There exists a desire to institute policies based on the Uruguayan idea that if marijuana is legal and policed by the government, it will decrease gangs and drug cartels.

This being said, the bill and its rollout still comes with strict policing of who can buy and sell marijuana in Uruguay. As mentioned, pharmacies are the purveyors of marijuana. This centralization of selling marijuana, alongside the use of the fingerprint scanners to screen legally-allowed buyers and careful policing of the amounts of marijuana present in each pharmacy, allows the sale of marijuana to be closely regulated by the Uruguayan government. Many major pharmacy chains have chosen not to sell marijuana, as they are less willing to agree to be 'dealers' of this now-legal drug amid security concerns.

Uruguay has also set fairly strict limits on

how much marijuana can be grown and who can buy it. The nation is not looking to promote the sale and use of recreational marijuana; it is just regulating its use in a standardized way. Uruguay also has no intention of being like Amsterdam, a mass provider of drugs for those in the region and a beacon for 'weed tourism.' Only locals, both those born in Uruguay and permanent residents of Uruguay, can purchase or grow marijuana. It is also illegal to move the drug across international borders. Uruguay is clearly not looking to become a destination for tourists to come to do drugs which are illegal elsewhere.

This model of legalization, especially its roll out over the past few years, shows how a socially liberal policy can benefit a nation. Uruguay's model serves as a test case for other countries to unearth if this sort of regulation of marijuana, with its open selling and growing as national policy, can work. The law gives local Uruguayans a legal way through which to grow marijuana and smoke it recreationally. Since the nation is fairly liberal, there is limited stigmatization towards this behavior. Thus, a situation where marijuana is legalized and still policed serves as a sustainable model other nations can look towards to combat their own issues. It might be less likely to be adopted in nations where narcos dwell, but a national policy of gradually accepting marijuana use would work to usurp some of the power of these violent cartels. The success of this legalization of marijuana in Uruguay can serve as a symbol for countries like Mexico and Colombia, which wish to address social justice issues and mitigate the raging 'Drug War.' •

Corridor Politics

Why Increased Indian Involvement in Afghanistan Will Not Affect Pakistan's Position on the Taliban

- Najeeb Amini

With the Taliban gaining ground in the southern and northern parts of Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani seems to lack the resources and military capability to fight off the insurgency. This struggle is due in part to Pakistan's role in providing refuge for Taliban forces in the north-western border region. This is where India comes into the equation. Since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, India has fostered close ties to the Afghan government and has sponsored economic development in rural provinces as a means to reduce the country's reliance on Pakistan. Given the incredible duress Ghani finds his government under, India has an incentive to increase economic and military cooperation with Afghanistan in an effort to weaken Pakistani influence in the country. If India makes great inroads into Afghanistan, then Pakistan will not reel back its support of militant groups like the Taliban so as to prevent greater Indian influence in a neighboring nation. Although this carries the risk of creating a situation that emboldens more extremist elements to target Pakistan, the Pakistani military cannot afford to cede influence to India in a neighboring nation.

To better understand how Indian military boots in Afghanistan threatens Pakistan's interests, the history of South Asia must be assessed. Since the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, there exists little trust between India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed. Pakistan fears if India is to have greater presence in Afghanistan, then its influence in the country will grow, leaving Pakistan's regional security at risk. Compounding the problems, due to alleged ties between the Pakistani security service and the Taliban, Afghanistan and India have little to no trust towards the government in Islamabad.

India believes that stronger ties with Afghanistan can help expand its regional influence and calm a chaotic situation in the seemingly ever-at-war nation. Firstly, India possesses significant military capability and would be a useful partner for providing military support to the Afghans. Secondly, Afghans in general have a very friendly view of India and its government. It can easily be debated that of the countries neighboring Afghanistan, from Iran



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (L) meets Afghan President Ashraf Ghani
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

to Central and South Asian countries, India is by far the most trusted by Afghans. This relationship between Afghans and India has grown over time as the actions India has taken to help rebuild a battered Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban cemented this budding alliance. India has provided Afghanistan with three billion dollars in aid since the early 2000s. Additionally, India has helped build Afghanistan's infrastructure: more than 2,500 miles of roads have been built, numerous dams created, many hydropower plants completed, and even the Afghan Parliament building was funded by India. If India were to offer robust military support to Ghani's government, it would elicit minor objections and most likely be accepted.

This emerging alliance is further being cemented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ghani as both take efforts to increase commercial and economic ties through trade and investment. In December 2016, while meeting with President Ghani, the Prime Minister described Afghanistan as a critical economic hub between Central and South Asia. In addition, Ghani announced the goal of increasing bilateral trade and investment to ten billion dollars in five years. Efforts to pursue these goals is exemplified through events such as "The Passage to Prosperity: India-Afghanistan Trade & Investment Show" in September 2017, where representatives from 200 Afghan companies met with 800 Indian representatives to forge business ties and propose investments. The effort to forge these close economic bonds is very likely to form a strong alliance between the two countries, which is detrimental to Pakistan's regional interests, as it is squeezed between arch-rival India and Afghanistan. Thus, Pakistan must

reconsider how it approaches supporting insurgent groups like the Taliban in Afghanistan if it hopes to wade off increased Indian influence.

Some analysts argue that the importance of Pakistan in ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban insurgency is overstated, and that Pakistan is not essential to any peace process. Rather, as the Afghan-Indian alliance grows closer, it would be in Pakistan's interest to maintain a certain level of chaos in Afghanistan. This would ensure Pakistan two important objectives: first, the Afghan-Indian alliance does not tilt the balance of power towards India with a stable Afghanistan; and second, it allows Pakistan to use Afghanistan as a buffer for Pakistani security, so that terrorists do not move to Pakistan, but rather remain in Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan has an incentive to encourage continued insecurity as it would make increased Indian involvement in Afghanistan more of a costly foreign policy endeavor.

However, sowing greater chaos on the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan could prove detrimental. The consequences of failing to deal with the extremist group in this area has led to previous tragedies: in December 2014, in Peshawar, located in north-western Pakistan, a Taliban gunman killed 134 children. This dreadful incident caused an uproar in Pakistan as citizens called for its government to take action, and the government responded by stepping-up military operations in the region. This incident showcased to Pakistan what can occur should the government fail to address the existence of militant groups that traverse between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

To Pakistan, increased Indian influence in Afghanistan would seemingly trigger a reconsideration of its policy towards the Taliban. The policy prescription Pakistan will most likely follow is not to acquiesce to greater Indian influence and thus provide tacit support to rebel groups that weaken the government of Ashraf Ghani. While it does carry the risk of attacks happening again like the one on Peshawar, Pakistan deems dampening Indian influence in the region a major priority. Thus, expect little to change in the dynamics that shape the border regions straddling Pakistan and Afghanistan. •

Crossroads

Why India Should Join China's New Economic Order

- Suraj J. Sorab

In September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the One Belt, One Road Initiative (OBOR), with the intent of connecting sixty countries in a five trillion dollar trade system across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Four years later, India and Japan proposed the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) to connect Oceania, Asia, and Africa. While both projects appear to be profitable, India is caught at a crossroads. Either it can join OBOR and cooperate more with China, or it can continue down its current direction with the Growth Corridor, Japan, and the United States, to counteract China's economic influence. Given the current state of Sino-Indian trade relations and China's increasing influence throughout Asia and Africa, it would be wise for India to join China's new economic order under the One Belt One Road Initiative.

Relations between China and India have been strained in recent years, as both nations employ nationalist rhetoric in their political discourse. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rode to power on a wave of nationalism that continues to influence national dialogue and negatively portray China based on trade imbalances and territorial disputes. At the same time, Chinese President Xi Jinping has pushed an ideal of the "Chinese Dream," part of a national patriotism campaign to make China the world's dominant power, and used it as a rationale to expand China's diplomatic efforts and investment into both the rest of Asia and Africa. While it may appear that the rise in nationalism in both countries will make them less likely to cooperate, the two countries are still very economically integrated in a globalized world.

Bilateral trade between India and China has flourished in recent decades, totaling \$71.5 billion as of June 2017. However, this figure is skewed heavily in favor of China. Indian exports to China primarily consist of raw materials like cotton and ores, yet China dominates 16.2 percent of India's import market, compared to India accounting for only two percent of China's exports. This imbalance forces large sections of the Indian economy to rely on trade with China, whereas trade reliance does not necessarily go the other way on China's part. This means that if India attempted to reduce trade with China in favor of more distant trading partners, raw-

“India should decide on which economic path to take dependent on which program offers it the most connectivity and potential for growth.”

materials industries in India could be harmed by retaliatory measures, without a similar threat to Chinese markets. Conversely, the Belt Road Initiative would offer India the opportunity to gain a more favorable trade balance.

India should decide on which economic path to take dependent on which program offers it the most connectivity and potential for growth. While the Growth Corridor offers greater access to Africa, the comprehensive naval and land-based nature of the Belt Road Initiative gives India greater potential for reaping spillover benefits of Chinese infrastructure development in their backyard. By the end of 2017, an estimated two thousand trains will travel from dozens of Chinese cities to destinations all over Europe and Central Asia. Transportation infrastructure, including railways and pipelines, are already being constructed in Southeast Asia. Chinese companies are partnering with builders in nations like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Kenya to construct new ports to develop the maritime economic belt. India's integration into this system will not only offer it the ability to help construct these new trade routes, creating jobs and stimulating its economy for the next three decades, but will also increase investment opportunities from Europe, the Middle East, and China itself.

At the same time, joining China's economic order will involve India making concessions to China in the coming years, which may present a public-opinion obstacle for the Modi administration. One of the flagship programs of China's Belt Road Initiative is a trade corridor with Pakistan running through Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, which directly challenges India's territorial claims in the region. Additionally, the Indian government is facing pressure from businesses regarding what they consider are unfair protectionist practices by the Chinese government in manufacturing industries. These issues could affect negotiations for entrance into OBOR, especially given accusations of neo-imperialism from smaller African states. While these barriers will need to be overcome, boycotting OBOR

will come at too great an economic cost. India risks being excluded from these increasingly vibrant trade networks as infrastructure hosting these exchanges develops outside its borders. China's economic partners, including many of their mutual neighbors with India, will be more likely to side with China in political disputes, reducing India's trade and influence. While it may be difficult to overcome short-term concessional issues, it would be beneficial for India to avoid the drawbacks in the long-run.

India has further political benefits from joining the OBOR by utilizing its own power. China's goal of moving up the manufacturing chain from heavy industry to high-end technology and automation presents India with a unique opportunity. China will increasingly demand more basic manufactured goods from other countries, which India is attempting to produce through its "Make in India" campaign. Should India join OBOR, Modi can leverage India's supplier power to have greater say in how OBOR is executed in India. For example, India could demand that domestic labor be used to build domestic infrastructure, in essence appropriating the Initiative for its own benefit, a practice which the Hindustan Times refers to as "cherry-pick[ing] the OBOR menu." India has already signed declarations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit of June 2017, praising the Belt and Road Forum, indicating its potential openness to China's economic order.

Even though Sino-Indian relations are becoming increasingly tense, it would be in India's best interest to join the One Belt One Road Initiative. Its current plans to deepen ties with Japan via the Asia Africa Growth Corridor offer potential for growth and investment, but these benefits pale in comparison to the potential payoffs in joining the Belt Road Initiative. India can leverage its power and influence to negotiate better deals for itself within OBOR, benefitting it both in the short run and the long run. While this may involve making a few unpopular concessions, India will be more prosperous with a better economic relationship with China. •

Rohingya, One Year Later

Sustained Struggle

- William Feuer

“If the world continues to ignore the cries echoed throughout the Rakhine state, it will lead to an increasingly desperate situation by which the Rohingya community could face violence and tension.”

I wrote those words seven months ago, when 60,000 Rohingya Muslims fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar due to what the United Nations (UN) has now deemed “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” Today, multiply that figure by ten: 600,000 of the 1.3 million Muslim Rohingyas who formerly called Myanmar home sleep under tarpaulin roofs on the Bengali side of the Naf River, the border separating Myanmar and Bangladesh.

It is hard to tell how many Rohingya civilians the Myanmar military has killed under the guise of so-called “clearance” operations. The borders are sealed, keeping reporters and aid organizations out. However, from acquired videos and satellite imagery, there is overwhelming evidence that indicates the military is systematic massacring peaceful civilians, some reportedly with their hands bound and begging for their lives. The UN said that troops are targeting “houses, fields, food-stocks, crops, livestock and even trees,” making it “almost impossible” for the Rohingya to return home. This is a violence rooted in deep, historical ethnic animosity.

In Myanmar, the Muslim Rohingya and the Buddhist Rakhine – the two main ethnic groups in the Rakhine state – have long been disparate groups. They speak different languages, wear different clothes and practice different religions. In World War II, when the Japanese invaded Myanmar, then British-controlled Burma, the Rohingya fought with the British while the Rakhine fought with the Japanese. Both sides used the chaos of the war to massacre tens of thousands of civilians.

When British forces came out on top, many Rohingya hoped for independence or integration into Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, where Rohingya ancestors hail from. Keen to win support from the Buddhist majority, the British incorporated valuable Rohingya-majority land into soon-to-be independent Myanmar. The nation’s mainly-ethnic Burmese leaders were quick to treat the Rohingya as scapegoats for turmoil in Myanmar, calling them illegal Bengali immigrants with no legitimate claims to citizenship



– or rights – in Myanmar. Even today, Myanmar’s leaders officially describe the Rohingya not as citizens, but only as Bengali, and extremist Buddhist monks call them the reincarnation of snakes and insects who should be exterminated. Long before 2017, oppression created violence on both sides. At its core, today’s situation is one of dueling understandings of ethnicity and nationhood. What then is to be done?

One can start by examining the current political situation in Myanmar. The Myanmar government, ironically led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, remains complicit in the military’s atrocious attacks against the Rohingya. Suu Kyi has failed to speak up on the subject except to scold sources of so-called “fake news” regarding the situation. The Rakhine state is a mess, and the Rohingya people are feeling the full weight of decades of enmity and sporadic outright violence. Given this, one might suggest international institutions like the UN could help; however, such interference is unlikely.

As has been the case too many times before, the UN Security Council remains locked in political stalemate with China, backed by Russia, predictably threatening to veto any action. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi says that China supports the Myanmar government and their efforts to protect their nation’s security: “China is willing to continue promoting peace talks in its own way, and hopes the international community can play a constructive role to ease the situation and promote dialogue.” Chinese leadership indeed likely hopes the situation eases, but only with them gaining the most. While a perhaps generational humanitarian

crisis rests on the surface, beneath it lies economic development plans that could change the dynamics of the region for the foreseeable future. To put it bluntly, when people are gone, land is up for grabs.

A \$7.3 billion deep-sea project, a \$2.45 billion oil and gas pipeline, and a \$2.3 billion trading estate are to be completed in coming years, with even more in the works. China is capitalizing on the Rohingya crisis to fund crucial projects in the Rakhine state, which happens to reside on the coast of the Bay of Bengal. This means two things: oil and trade routes. It is far from coincidental that in late 2016, the government allocated 3,100,000 acres in the Rakhine state for “corporate rural development,” according to the Guardian. This is a massive leap from the first such allocation of land in 2012, of just 17,000 acres. With this in mind, it is no wonder that China’s government is willing to turn a blind eye to the ethnic cleansing. Where the Rohingya suffer tremendously, Chinese investors see opportunity. And surely those military families doing the dirty work will get a slice of the pie too.

Eventually, the outright violence will end. After all, conflict is bad for business. However, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya civilians will be left disenfranchised, slipping through the cracks of new-age globalization manifest in China’s uptick of foreign investment, which hinges upon past, misplaced hatred. With every passing day that more Rohingya cross the Naf River, it becomes even less likely that any major country or international institution will take action to alleviate suffering in and around Myanmar. The future of the Rohingya community therefore lays in the hands of those who can empower the Myanmar government – the moderate Buddhist majority. Urbanites in Yangon and other major cities isolated from the anguish of conflict while benefitting from its spoils can stand up to their own government’s complicities. Citizen reporters can expose abuse, engage in social media campaigns, and virtually organize – the opportunities are endless, if ordinary civilians take up the issue. While the military continues to oppress the Rohingya through violence, it’s time for the people of Myanmar to raise up and use the one thing they all have in common – a voice. •

China Continues to Tighten Cyber Control

- R. Casey Dwyer

Since Xi Jinping's ascension to role as party chairman and president, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has demonstrated a continued, and often frightening, commitment to increasing censorship and surveillance throughout China. According to the party, these policies are justified through "cyber sovereignty" which purports that all governments have the right to create their own laws for the internet and information-sharing within their borders. For years, private companies as well as foreign governments have done little to encourage China to dismantle what is often deemed "the Great Firewall." As this increased use of censorship continues, foreign governments, as well as leading multinational corporations, must not acquiesce to the Chinese government; instead, they must pressure China into slowing a trend of censorship that is endowing the party and government with evermore control over the companies that operate there and the citizens who live there.

In January 2017, China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology issued a broad statement saying they will clean up the internet by the end of March 2018. Then, in June, the party enacted a new cybersecurity law that requires foreign companies to store data on local servers, thus giving the state nearly unlimited access to often sensitive information. In July, Beijing reportedly ordered all VPN services, which allow travelers, expats, and millions of Chinese to access basic websites like YouTube or Gmail, to be banned by major telecommunication companies by February of 2018. They further convinced Apple to immediately remove all VPN services from its App Store in China. This is all in addition to the 100,000 "internet policemen" and estimated two million party loyalists who create, censor and, steer online political conversations every day. In what seems like a party congress-year tradition, the CCP has once again demonstrated its excessive commitment to controlling political discourse and thought.

While there has been resistance to cyber sovereignty in the past, most notably from Google pulling out of China after censorship and cyber-attacks to its search engines, there is an increasing global trend that sees cyber sovereignty as a legitimate policy. Apple reflected this acceptance this summer when its CEO Tim Cook stated, "we would obviously rather not

“As this increased use of censorship continues, foreign governments, as well as leading multinational corporations, must not acquiesce to the Chinese government.”

remove the apps, but like we do in other countries, we follow the law wherever we do business.” However, private industry is not alone in compromising the free flow of information and the freedom from surveillance. Major western governments, including the US and UK have also introduced, albeit less subtle, pro-civilian surveillance laws over the past year. Other major powers, such as Russia and Saudi Arabia, have adopted very similar models to the Chinese methods of internet censorship.

In China's case, as long as the CCP is focused on staying in power, controlling political discourse, particularly on the internet, will be a mainstay of the regime. Without any realistic hopes for domestic-driven change, it's clear that the international community must rally around the natural freedoms and rights of Chinese citizens, just as the UN did when it condemned "measures to intentionally prevent or disrupt access to or dissemination of information online." Without any legal weight of the UN condemnation, sanctions from foreign governments, particularly against the Chinese internet industry, are toothless. As Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent (WeChat) and other Chinese companies now occupy large market shares in foreign countries, the international community must push back by penalizing the very companies that are complicit in China's censorship, whether it be through economic or political means. After a year of increased controls and restrictions, which included a massive crackdown on political and legal figures opposed to the regime, freedom of information and digital-control must immediately rise to prominence in foreign policy conversations with China.

Private industry must also step up if there is to be a consensus against China's grip on the internet. Google demonstrated its commitment to free speech and the freedom of information when it uncovered the massive hacks from "Operation Aurora" that saw Chinese groups with ties to China's army target hundreds of anti-government civilians. The company subsequently pulled all operations out of the country, sending a message that cyber sovereignty is no

excuse for totalitarian censorship and surveillance. Apple, on the other hand, has not sent the same message, joining a growing group of companies that are prioritizing profits over progress. China cannot and will not destroy the Great Firewall overnight, but it is extremely important for private industry to stress anti-censorship and surveillance, both for the citizens of China and the companies themselves. With the new cybersecurity law requiring all data to be registered on local servers, private companies now have even further motivation to question the legitimacy of cyber sovereignty. If private industries begin to pull out of China due to information security and access concerns, and foreign governments enact penalties on Chinese companies promoting censorship, China may finally be convinced to phase out parts of its digital control structure.

There ultimately must be strong public and private cooperation in the international community to dismantle the world's largest anti-speech and information policy. In 2017, the Chinese government took multiple steps to fortify the Great Firewall, and the international community must respond without hesitation. Businesses and governments operating in China can no longer sit idle as one-sixth of the world is forbidden from accessing or disseminating any viewpoints that do not align with the CCP's. •

Cautiously “Building, Building, Building”

The Filipino Economy

- Akash Ramanujam

The Filipino economy has proven remarkably resilient throughout a series of political and societal abnormalities since Rodrigo Duterte's inauguration as president in June 2016. Growth has remained above six percent, despite a brutal and controversial drug war and an insurgency in the south of the country. Impressively, the Philippines has enjoyed this level of growth without runaway inflation; Bloomberg notes that the Filipino central bank (BSP) estimates inflation to be 3.2 percent through 2018, comfortably within the BSP's target range of two to four percent. Additionally, President Duterte's proposed hike in federal funding on infrastructure projects, dubbed “Build, Build, Build”, has attracted a wave of positive attention from overseas investors and generated optimism with domestic businesses. At the same time, the Duterte administration has relaxed restrictions against foreign banks, leading to a tremendous expansion in credit, and his infrastructure proposal has spurred domestic companies to ambitiously import resources to meet demand. All of these factors weigh on the Philippine Peso at a time when the BSP has voiced its unwillingness to raise interest rates. Thus, the Duterte administration and the BSP must decide between the “Build, Build, Build” initiative and low interest rates, since combining the two could result in an elevated inflation rate and hampered growth.

Duterte's infrastructure initiative addresses a significant roadblock hindering Filipino growth; improving physical infrastructure would improve mobility for the developing country and could provide tremendous benefits to an economy already well-regarded for its service sector. Modernizing ports, roads, and airports would allow the various islands of the Philippines to integrate their markets and stimulate their tourism industries.

However, unlike previous infrastructure projects, the “Build, Build, Build” initiative will be entirely government-funded. This will place an inordinate burden on the Filipino government's finances, with Duterte himself estimating the cost at \$180 billion dollars. The administration has drafted a Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) to cover the costs of the infrastructure proposal by increasing taxes on petroleum usage, improving government valuations of property values, introducing a carbon tax, and

indexing certain excise taxes to inflation while lowering corporate tax rates and income tax rates at certain income levels. The CTRP could reap tax revenue from new sources but could also diminish revenue collected from other sources.

However, a number of factors still determine whether the CTRP and “Build, Build, Build” program will ultimately be successful. First, with a drug war that has seen thousands killed, Duterte is facing increasing domestic disapproval ratings that could hinder his ability to pass such ambitious reforms. On the one hand, international institutions like the World Bank are cautiously optimistic about “Build, Build, Build”, noting that the government's commitment to the program will determine whether or not the Philippines will experience a rapid pickup in growth. Yet, the administration's spending could be reined in if Duterte's approval ratings continue to deteriorate. Though the CTRP looks as though it will pass through the legislature, alternate fiscal proposals may be introduced in the future should opposition legislators wish to hamper Duterte's infrastructure push.

Second, the possibility of a lackluster CTRP windfall that stalls spending could jeopardize the health of local firms who have already made investments in anticipation of increased infrastructure spending. This may result in local firms shouldering heavy debt burdens because they borrowed expecting to win government contracts that were never offered. Filipino lenders to these firms would be left holding worthless debt, making it difficult for them to offer more loans without taking on more debt themselves. This outcome would lead to an even larger decrease in Duterte's approval ratings, contributing to further cuts to his “Build, Build, Build” program.

Finally, if the government overestimates CTRP revenue and overspends on infrastructure projects, foreign investors may pull out of the Philippines because the government will be in a tenuous fiscal position. To make matters even more difficult, many Chinese construction firms are clamoring for a spot at the table. But, if the Filipino government issues contracts to Chinese firms for projects it ultimately cannot afford, the Philippines may find itself heavily indebted to Chinese firms, complicating its

relationship with China at a time when it appears to be pivoting away from its traditional ally, the United States.

Heavy corporate and government indebtedness and a loss of foreign investment could stall economic growth and decrease international demand for Philippine Pesos. This situation, combined with heavy capital goods imports, would cause exchange rates to sink and set off inflation, which would be accelerated by a current account deficit. The Filipino economy has already started down this road: Reuters notes that imports by domestic firms have dropped the Peso-dollar exchange rate to record lows and pushed the country's current account from surplus to deficit. That is exactly what the Filipino government does not want at a time when it is attempting to deal with insurgent movements, lessen the existence of poverty, and root out illegal drug use. The fusion of stagnant growth and inflation provides fertile recruiting ground for extremists and does nothing to lift real incomes or provide employment.

This is where interest rates come into play. Their effect is twofold. Firstly, high interest rates would discourage lending when moderating lending would limit the debt burden that companies can accumulate. However, increasing interest rates could lead to more stable exchange rates, which helps control inflation. Specifically, increasing the interest rate in the Philippines would increase the rewards of saving money in Pesos, so the demand for Pesos relative to other currencies would increase along with the interest rate. As relative demand for a currency rises, so do its exchange rates. Thus, increasing the exchange rate would make imports relatively cheaper, placing a damper on inflation.

The Philippines has experienced notably smooth economic expansion over the past few years, but the Filipino government needs to be cautious in the approach it takes to spur more growth. It needs to choose between keeping interest rates low and Duterte's “Build, Build, Build” initiative. Otherwise, the country will risk stagnant growth and runaway inflation as it tackles even more serious problems: eliminating poverty, a ruthless drug war, and Islamist insurgent movements. Thus, the country must tread lightly or risk exacerbating its current problems with disappointing growth. •

What Is South Korea to Do When Its Allies and North Korea Are Equally Unpredictable?

- Warren Yu

As Washington and Pyongyang fling a flurry of threats and tightly issued statements at each other, Seoul sits uneasily in the middle. From medium-range launches earlier in the year to an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test over the summer, North Korea now possesses a growing nuclear arsenal. On September 3rd, 2017, a chorus of international disapproval met a North Korean test of a hydrogen bomb. With the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopting fresh sanctions, the North puts itself into an ever-tighter corner. Yet, for all the rhetoric about 'dotards' and 'rocket men', one party has been consistently and painfully excluded – South Korea. The reality of any conflict with the North coming to fruition is that the entire region will suffer the devastating human cost nuclear war would bring. It is, therefore, imperative for South Korea to take the reins of this situation. While South Korean President Moon Jae-in's assertion that "no one should be allowed to decide on a military action on the Korean Peninsula without South Korean agreement" is a step in the right direction, it is not enough. South Korea should adopt a policy of aggressive flexibility to respond to situations, rather than remain silent and be at the mercy of erratic foreign leaders.

Although the Korean peninsula has been in a perpetual stalemate for over sixty years, recent warmongering has heightened anxiety for many South Koreans. The capital of Seoul, home to some ten million people, is a mere 35 miles away from a border with North Korea, one bristling with weaponry and soldiers. In the face of such danger, it is no surprise that the South has acquiesced to annual military exercises with the United States and has also deployed the controversial American-backed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. Yet, for every move South Korea does to bolster its own security, the North has improved its weaponry. Current strategies do not seem to be working, and President Moon is correct with his questioning of the status quo.

Concerns are not assuaged in the South when its strongest ally, the US, has become increasingly recalcitrant. When President Donald Trump threatens the North with "fire and fury" and total destruction, it is actually the

“South Korea should adopt a policy of aggressive flexibility to respond to situations, rather than remain silent and be at the mercy of erratic foreign leaders.”

South that faces the potential consequences of any action. The situation has become a dilemma that the South has no control over: its fate is nearly entirely linked to the whims of the United States. A South Korean adviser, Moon Chung-In, captures his country's frustration: "if the US had spent even one-fifth of the time and effort on the North Korean issue compared with the Iranian case, then the North Korean issue could have been resolved." A dangerous approach has emerged in Washington, and the South has been consistently sidelined when it should be the preeminent actor in regards to its northern neighbor.

In spite of the intensity of the situation, South Korea still has options it can, and should, explore. It would be a worthwhile endeavor to pressure North Korea's main supporters: China and Russia. Indeed, if the recent UN sanctions are any indication, cooperation and progress can occur at the highest levels. A possible solution to North Korean troubles could be derived in a roundabout way. The South could consider a Chinese and Russian proposal to halt military exercises with America in exchange for suspending North Korean missile tests as a sufficient tit-for-tat. In this way, dialogue could be reinstated between the two Koreas, with other world powers as mediators.

Drawing from history offers another solution. The division of Germany was a major point of tension during the Cold War, yet reunification was still achieved peacefully, with West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik (eastern policy) being the key to this success. The policy urged cooperation by West Germany with East Germany through commerce and small-scale interactions and was a departure from the hostile posturing favored by previous West German leaders. Ostpolitik began the long process of ameliorating separation between the two Germans. Ostpolitik was not a West German departure from the network of NATO or any of its Western allies, and it was also not disarmament or capitulation. This same prin-

ciple should be applied to any South Korean rapprochement with North Korea. While the South should work to secure its own interests, it should not do so at the cost of its international relationships. Regime change in the North is more likely to happen in the long run through focused diplomatic pressure, rather than constant saber rattling. If fear and mistrust are what currently dominate inter-Korea relations, words overshadowed with weapons will not cause any change. At this time, it would be worthwhile to revive the principles of Ostpolitik, if only to bring the North back to the negotiating table.

War with North Korea is simply untenable for South Korea. With so many lives on the line, fueling the fires of conflict with further aggression is not the solution. Dialogue and détente have happened in the past, even between bitter rivals. While some would consider talks between the Koreas at this stage as pointless, it should be understood that Ostpolitik was treated with the same disbelief in its own time. Flexibility as a doctrine does not mean stubbornly adhering to only one option at a time; rather, it should entail resourcefulness and a willingness to break convention, if the need for it arises. Thus, South Korea should have no doubts in charting a path more suited to its needs. If this requires taking a bolder stance on the international stage, then President Moon Jae-In should reassert control over the situation and South Korea's destiny. •

Microfinance on the Move

Grameen Bank's New Branch in Japan

- Kim Ira

Grameen Bank, based in Bangladesh, seeks to serve poor communities in Asia, the Americas, and Africa through microfinancing. It aims to alleviate poverty by providing small loans without collateral to the impoverished citizens of developing countries so they can start their own small businesses. It helps those who would otherwise be targeted by predatory lending practices, or who would be deemed “unbankable” by larger financial institutions that feel this population would not repay loans. Next year, the bank will embark upon a new approach to fighting poverty in developed nations by opening a branch in Japan. This could prove difficult for the bank because the field of microfinance lacks codified rules and regulation in Japan. If Grameen Bank wants to succeed in promoting social entrepreneurship and poverty alleviation in developed nations like Japan, it must adopt stricter banking practices and more reliable lending policies in order to comply with traditional Japanese banking norms and laws.

Grameen Bank was established in 1976, though the official government institution, the Bangladeshi Microcredit Regulatory Authority, was only established in 2006. This trend is relatively commonplace in the countries Grameen Bank operates. For example, the Central Bank of Nigeria only developed microfinance policy framework in 2011, despite the fact that groups like Grameen Bank had already been operating there for years. This lag in developing policy and regulation pertaining to microfinance gave the industry a significant amount of autonomy in developing their own lending principles without being monitored by proper government oversight. Grameen Bank, therefore, developed its policies largely in response to the cultures of the small and impoverished villages it serves.

The bank's stated mission is to alleviate poverty and promote social entrepreneurship by creating “a banking system based on accountability, mutual trust, creativity, and participation.” The Bangladesh-based bank grew from Chittagong University Professor Muhammad Yunus's idea to lend his pocket money to local basket weavers, who had struggled to repay high-interest loans that funded their supplies. He lent a small amount of money to the weavers

“Grameen Bank must adopt stricter banking practices and more reliable lending policies in order to comply with traditional Japanese banking norms and laws.”

with no collateral, which they used to purchase more supplies, and received a full payment soon after they had sold their new baskets at a higher profit due to their decreased payment expectations. Small loans helped the weavers to earn surplus income and endowed them with a greater degree of self-sufficiency. Because the bank places a premium on building trust with the communities it serves, it can safely assume that members of the community will pay back their microcredit loans.

However, opening a branch in Japan places the Grameen Bank in a new economic environment that might not be conducive to a microfinance system based solely on trust. Furthermore, while twenty million people in Japan do live under the poverty line, the Japanese economy is much more developed and robust than that of nations like Bangladesh where the bank is used to operating. To counter this, Professor Yunus stipulates that microfinance gives an option between entrepreneurship for social change versus entrepreneurship for profit, especially in more developed nations. While expansion to Japan helps fulfill Yunus's vision, establishing a microfinance bank in a country with great wealth sows doubt about how the bank will continue to serve the poor elsewhere.

Exactly who will be deemed eligible for microfinance loans is unclear. Will loans be made available for those in the lower-middle class, or just for those beneath the official poverty line? This grey area of determining who can receive a loan threatens Grameen's traditional philosophy of operating on mutual trust, solidarity, and participation. Simply trusting the potential community members of the Japanese branch to cooperate with Grameen's philosophy will not suffice. The bank needs to ensure a reliable, long-term lending policy based on its principles. If Grameen Bank intends to establish a branch in Japan, it needs to adopt banking practices more in line with typical Japanese financial regulation.

This possible difference in regulatory practices between the Grameen branch in Bangladesh and the branch in Japan could raise an amount of skepticism from impoverished communities that are served by the bank. These communities would have reason to doubt whether the Grameen Bank really does exist to alleviate poverty, or whether it is turning to a profit-making mindset in the face of its move to a more developed country. Countries that host long-running microfinance institutions, therefore, must take leadership in establishing microfinance regulation so that it becomes a standard example for other countries.

Governing bodies such as Bangladesh's Microcredit Regulatory Authority have taken steps toward achieving feasible microfinance policy, but they will have to continue to implement tougher regulations in order for microfinance institutions to operate. Other nations must follow suit, especially if Grameen Bank and other institutions hope to use microfinance as a positive social and economic tool in developed countries. If Grameen Bank is able to succeed in Japan, that success will only come about if it operates more like traditional banks in Japan. •

Samurais on the Silk Road

Why Japan Should Aggressively Pursue Foreign Aid Development in Central Asia

- Jack Ulses

On August 29th, 2017, the Japan Nippon Railway agreed to a memorandum of understanding with the government of Kazakhstan to increase shipping container traffic through the overland Silk Road passage. Coming on the heels of previous agreements in 2016 that resulted in over one billion dollars in economic activity, the Japanese-Kazakhstan rail project signals the potential for increased trade and economic cooperation between both countries. Meanwhile, many were quick to compare this agreement to China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative of similar infrastructure development. In recent years, China has rapidly increased spending on foreign infrastructure projects, especially in Africa and Eurasia, with the goal of leveraging their goodwill to strike deals for natural resources and gain allies. Prime Minister Abe's recent internationalist approach signals a desire to counteract China's effort, and deals like the aforementioned railway agreement are a step in the right direction. Allowing China to pull Eurasia and all of its mineral wealth away from Japan, and rest of Asia, has serious consequences for the regional balance of power. To directly counteract China's aggressive foreign aid program as a means to project diplomatic and hegemonic power, President Shinzo Abe should pursue further cooperation in Central Asia.

Japan has emerged as the largest provider of foreign aid in Asia, having given almost \$30 billion in 2014 and 2015. Japan is positioned to maintain similar spending for the foreseeable future. While Prime Minister Abe's approval ratings are by no means high, the Japanese public has supported a more visibly active Japan in the Asian-Pacific region. Yet, aid packages such as the recent One Trillion Yen pledge to Filipino leader Robert Duterte pale in comparison to recent Chinese foreign aid programs. Since the start of 2000, China has skyrocketed up the list of foreign aid donors, and is now the largest developing country providing foreign aid to other nations. China's programs, however, have been criticized for both unscrupulous spending and unfair loan repayment stipulations. In a method known as the Angola Model, China offers large low interest loans to African and,



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as of late, Eurasian countries, but uses the mineral resources in those countries as collateral. Recent examples include China bailing Kenya out with a \$600 million loan in 2016, and Angola being estimated at \$25 billion in debt to China. China has set up mining and drilling companies in both countries in order to reap the diplomatic and economic benefits of their loan programs.

Why should Japan care about China making inroads into Eurasia? As evident by the sovereignty debate in the South China Sea, natural resources are a valuable currency for consolidation of regional power. China is keenly aware that, in an era of North Korean provocation and increasingly unstable relations with the strategically located Philippines, Japan cannot afford to lose out to China on a bidding war for allies in Eurasia. Nonetheless, increasing foreign aid presents a Catch-22 for Japan: if they engage in increased aid programs in Eurasia, they awaken a security dilemma with China. On the other hand, if Japan allows China to pursue rigorous spending unchecked, the security dilemma will arise when Prime Minister Abe will inevitably react to China's overzealous natural resource grab. Thus, Japan has no choice but to pursue aid programs in Eurasia to counteract China's push for mineral wealth.

This brings us to Kazakhstan. While historically lacking a strong relationship, Japan and Kazakhstan have much in common that can be leveraged for closer ties, and by association, more opportunities for infrastructure development and mineral wealth. Born out of a desire to free his country from quasi-imperialistic Russian overtures, Kazakhstani President Nursultan

Nazarbayev has announced negotiations with many countries to pursue more foreign aid. In a bidding war, China has emerged as the most determined hegemon to capture the attention and financial support of Kazakhstan. However, Nazarbayev has stated that he is open to pursuing more opportunities to allow Kazakhstan to grow. Japan must heed this call and continue pushing for more regional cooperation in Eurasia to ensure it maintains a competitive edge over its Chinese and Russian rivals in the economic development sphere.

To be sure, Japan and China do share similar interests in Central Asia. For example, they could both provide infrastructure development without unnecessarily overlapping on spending. Yet, as two regional hegemons compete over spheres of influence, Abe cannot allow China to continue projecting power in the Eurasian sphere without damaging Japan's regional hegemon status. The railway project serves as a litmus test of sorts: will Kazakhstan want to pursue greater relations with Japan if the project succeeds? These are the types of questions that Abe, and Japan as a well, should consider in the near future. As China appears determined to stretch its influence across the steppes of Central Asia and beyond, Japan should follow with foreign aid that at the least provides a fair and sustainable alternative to China, and, at the best, shores up a foreign policy objective to pursue increased regional cooperation and mineral wealth at the expense of Chinese aggression and power. •

Beholden

The Death of the Auto Manufacturing in Australia

- Vineet Chandra

On October 20th 2017, the Australian automobile manufacturing industry took its last dying breath. Holden, an iconic Australian brand owned by General Motors, shuttered its final factory in southern Australia. This factory-closing is the last in a string of shut downs that have caused an end to the Australian auto industry, as Toyota and Ford both ended their manufacturing operations in the country in 2016. Though not unexpected, the end of automobile manufacturing in Australia is a massive loss and leaves an uncertain future for the nearly 50,000 employees left unemployed by the industry's death. Moreover, the Australian government has done little to ease this situation.

The writing has been on the wall for some time regarding the fate of Australia's automotive manufacturing industry. In 2005, Australia entered into a bilateral free trade agreement with Thailand under the direction of then-Prime Minister John Howard. Critically, the agreement imposed no tariffs on imported Thai cars. With low labor costs and growing investment from car manufacturers from around the world starting in the 1990s, Thailand quickly became the automotive capital of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. While Australia opened its borders completely, Thailand has kept in place many hidden fees that applied to imported Australian cars. For instance, Thailand maintained higher registration costs on cars with larger engines, like those produced by Ford and Holden in Australia. Though free trade is beneficial in certain circumstances, the 2005 Thailand agreement has been an unmitigated disaster for Australian auto manufacturing. Almost overnight, the Australian auto industry faced an existential threat. In the years since the agreement, Australians have purchased almost two million cars manufactured in Thailand, while Australia has exported just 100 cars to Thailand. For its part, the Australian government provided some incentives to automakers to continue production domestically, but made no serious efforts to retain Toyota, Ford, or Holden's manufacturing operations when it became clear that production would likely end. Indeed, it is almost surprising that the industry held on for so long.

Despite moving their manufacturing facilities elsewhere, Holden, Ford, and Toyota have



A Ford Falcon and Holden Commodore lead the field in a V8 Supercars race
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all kept their retail operations in Australia alive. Consumers today have more choices in the car industry than ever before. What has changed, however, is the types of cars available. For the last several decades, Australians have had the best automotive performance bargains available anywhere in the world. Particularly noteworthy offerings included the Holden Commodore SS, the Ford Falcon XR8, and compact pickup truck variants of both these cars, affectionately known in Australia as "utes". All of these cars offered big engines, unmatched bluster, and unmistakable swagger at a relatively attainable price. In many ways, the Australian car industry marched on well into the new millennium as if the 1960s never went out of style, and the vehicles only got marginally safer. With little demand for these cars abroad, the classic utes and super-saloons of yesteryear were poised to meet their untimely demise, and they did, as Holden and Ford shuttered their Australian manufacturing plants.

For the 50,000 Australians employed by this industry either directly or indirectly, blaming Thailand, automakers, and/or the Australian government for the loss of their livelihood is of little solace. Though the factory closings themselves only resulted in 5,000 direct job losses, the entire supplier network for automotive parts has also begun to crumble. The Australian government has announced plans to increase defense spending dramatically and open submarine factories in South Australia, the same part of Australia that previously played home to the automotive industry. These plans, though, have been laggard in nature at best, and downright muddled at worst. Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott reportedly favored a Japanese compa-

ny's proposal in early 2014, but re-opened the competitive bid process in 2015 after the plan lost political support. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull settled on a \$40 billion French bid in 2016, insisting that the submarines be built in Australia. In October 2017, however, a new report suggested that the plan was inordinately expensive and would not adequately bolster Australia's defense capabilities. It would also cover only a fraction of the jobs lost by the auto industry, and it would require a lengthy retraining for the hired workers. The Australian government's lack of clear response to the end of this industry is bewildering, and reflects a poor understanding of the sheer magnitude of this situation.

Australians have long embraced their rich automotive history, both on their daily commutes and in their leisure time. They pioneered their own motorsports ecosystem with the V8 Supercars series and built some of the most beautiful race tracks in the world, all while having one of the highest purchase rates of enthusiast-oriented models. The end of the Australian pinnacle of motoring is therefore a significant cultural loss. It is true, of course, that other exciting cars will come. Chevrolet, Holden's sibling in the General Motors portfolio, is considering importing the next generation of the famed Corvette to Australia. Meanwhile, Ford is actively trying to boost Mustang sales on the continent as well. For those who treasure the history behind Australian cars and for those who built them, however, these substitutes will never be enough. The Australian government is complicit in the death of this cultural institution, and leaves much to be desired in their response. •

EU Stands Silent as Spanish Democracy Falters

- Selin Levi

This article was written immediately following the successful October 1st Catalan independence referendum. The Spanish government has since declared the referendum vote unconstitutional, dissolved the Catalan parliament, and driven Catalonia's President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet out of the country. Although Puigdemont and other Catalan have not sought political asylum abroad, they nonetheless face charges of rebellion, sedition, and embezzlement should they return to Spain. Although Brussels has rejected the Spanish government's extradition requests, the EU at large has yet to intervene. Given Spain's takeover of the region and threatening of Catalan officials, it is now unlikely independence negotiations will occur. Ms. Levi and MJLA Staff still contend that there are other ways besides mediating dialogues that the EU could intervene should it choose to. Thus, we believe her arguments for EU intervention are still relevant, although the prospect of negotiations has likely passed.

The scene in Spain during the October 1st referendum on Catalan independence was one of a country at war with itself, where police resorted to violence to stop citizens from casting their votes after the Spanish government declared the referendum unconstitutional. Officers could be seen seizing ballot boxes and dragging, beating, and shooting rubber bullets at voters. The harsh police action, which left hundreds of citizens injured, was a shocking sight for a European Union member country. Instead of speaking out against the Spanish government and condemning the violence that took place, the EU has resigned itself and labelled the issue a domestic dispute that does not merit the involvement of the broader European community. Yet the police crackdown on the referendum in Catalonia is extremely worrying for the future of Spanish democracy. Furthermore, the potential economic ramifications of independence should be considered. Catalonia is responsible for a significant percentage of economic output for the Iberian peninsula, although the EU has stated they are still not economically strong enough to stand alone as a separate member country. It is therefore necessary that the EU oversees any negotiations to affirm its role as the enforcer of democratic standards for the continent, while also ensuring that any subsequent decisions

would not destabilize the country's – and by extension, the Union's – economy.

The issue of independence is long and complex, but tensions and arguments remain the same. Many Spaniards believe that independence is unconstitutional and that the country should remain united. Many Catalans contend that it is within their rights as sovereign citizens to democratically pursue independence. However, the Spanish government's response to the referendum represents a potential slide to autocracy in Catalonia. To some, it is eerily reminiscent of the Franco dictatorship, which suppressed Catalan expressions of culture and political opinions. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has already relied on strong nationalist rhetoric in order to give his party a winning edge, and Spanish nationalists and right-wing voters supported his intense resistance to the referendum. Rajoy's actions are made even more troubling by the steps he has taken to silence Catalan voices, including the censoring of websites relating to the referendum in the weeks leading up to the vote.

Given the past oppression faced by Catalans, the silence of the EU, which prides itself on upholding democratic values and which requires its members to support human rights, is unacceptable. As long as the EU remains uninvolved and refuses to aid the process of negotiation, there will be no guarantee of the protection of Catalan individual liberties, as it has become clear that the Spanish government has abandoned its promise of upholding democratic practices within its borders. Thus, the EU must intervene and oversee independence negotiations to ensure civil rights are adhered to.

However, the issue of independence is not only one of national sovereignty, but also one with significant economic ramifications. Catalonia is Spain's wealthiest and most industrialized region, making up about nineteen percent of Spain's GDP while boasting a booming tourism industry thanks to Barcelona. Catalonia also produces roughly a fourth of Spain's exports and houses a number of large banks and corporations. Given the country's slow recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, the loss of Catalonia would prove severely damaging. Thus, the outcome of negotiations between Catalonia and Spanish officials after the referendum will prove impactful not just for Spain itself, but also for

the EU at large. Thus, it is in the EU's interest to end its silence and play a leading role to ensure stable negotiations.

The EU can serve as an effective mediator between the two governments as they navigate the historically controversial and culturally significant debate of independence. Should the two governments decide to remain united, the Union should also play an active role in presenting options for the renegotiation of economic and political ties. Catalonia has made clear it wants the opportunity to act more independently; thus, in the event Catalonia foregoes independence, it is likely they will necessitate an amended relationship with Spain. The EU must facilitate this compromise to ensure a stable, long-term agreement. Without the Union's leadership, Spain's staunch defense of unity could produce one-sided provisions that further destabilize the region.

However, in the event of independence, the EU must look to the future and actively engage with a potentially-independent Catalan state. Should Catalonia proceed as a state outside of the EU, it would require extensive renegotiations regarding economic and political agreements. Thus it would be in the Union's interest to negotiate mutually agreeable provisions that do not punitively hurt Catalonia. Regardless of the outcome, the economic and political landscape of the EU is bound to change dramatically. Therefore, it is imperative that the EU leadership stops considering the issue of Catalan independence as merely a "domestic dispute" and intervenes as a lead negotiator.

The future of Catalonia remains uncertain and tensions will remain high throughout the next few months of negotiation. Furthermore, it is clear that the environment of Spanish politics will never be the same, and that further political and economic instability have the potential to plague the European Union. However, if the Union starts playing an active role and directly involves itself in negotiations, the EU can make significant strides in stabilizing the process of negotiation, ensure civil liberties are protected, and potentially diminish the political and economic ramifications of Catalan independence. Thus, moving forward, the EU must serve as an active negotiator and mediator, both to protect democratic practices and to ensure economic and political stability. •

U.K. Must Show May the Back Door

- Benji Mazin

Theresa May's much anticipated speech at the Conservative Party conference in October quickly turned into a nightmare for the Prime Minister. First, a prankster made his way to the stage and presented her a "P45" — essentially the British "pink slip" — hinting at her party's dissatisfaction with her leadership. She then suffered a coughing fit so strong even her bitterest of rivals had no choice but to feel bad for her. And to put the nail in the coffin, letters from the slogan on the wall behind her, "Building a Country That Works for Everyone", began falling to the floor one by one. The embarrassing spectacle turned out to be the perfect metaphor for the state of her government: frail and falling to pieces. If the Conservative Party wants to get back on its feet and reassert its authority during a time of Brexit negotiations, it needs to find a new leader to replace May as soon as possible.

As it stands, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union in March 2019, meaning the clock is ticking for negotiators who are trying to strike a deal. However, negotiations over trade are set to be pushed back from their original December 2017 date. Thus, fears about a no-deal scenario before March 2019 are growing. If a deal is not reached, the U.K. would leave the EU without agreeing to terms of a new trade deal with the European Union. The UK's largest business lobby has already warned about how damaging that would be to enterprise, as it seems the trade relationship between the U.K. and Europe would fall under World Trade Organization rules, which could be punitive to the British. To highlight May's indecisiveness about what negotiations will yield, *The Economist* branded her "Theresa Maybe".

One of May's greatest challenges is balancing the desires of hardline Brexit proponents with the moderates in her cabinet. Pressed by anti-E.U. backbenchers in her party, she has little margin to maneuver. She has argued for extending the transitional period to two years after March 2019, a time at which the full effects of Brexit would not yet come into effect. But many supporters of Brexit reject this strategy, wanting out as soon as possible, regardless of whether a deal is reached with the E.U. At the same time, it is unlikely that a no-deal Brexit would be approved in Parliament, in which the Conservatives hold a tenuous majority in coalition with a party from Northern Ireland. In

“In the challenging times of Brexit, the U.K. needs a prime minister that can inspire, not one in free fall.”

the meantime, May's Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, an eccentric character, has consistently undermined the Prime Minister in her Brexit plans as he seemingly aims to challenge her for her job. Given these challenges, the U.K. needs a prime minister that can inspire, not one in free fall.

To fortify her position and gain a strong mandate for Brexit talks, May called for a general election which took place in June. It ended in humiliation. Despite having 20 point lead in the polls with little time before the election, she made a litany of mistakes by not attending key television debates, putting forth policy proposals that targeted the elderly, and changing positions on critical issues. She spent the rest of the campaign visibly scared, repeating the same unconvincing electoral slogans again and again. At the end, she scraped a two point lead in the general election, which failed to secure her the parliamentary majority that David Cameron previously won for the party. An unnecessary election meant to give her a landslide victory and fortify her authority preceding Brexit negotiations resulted in a minority government forced into coalition.

Her troubles did not end there. Just a few weeks after her election fiasco, an awful fire devastated Grenfell Tower, a low-income residential building in West London, killing 71 people. The incident sparked debate about a potential lack of enforcement for residential safety standards, particularly in less gentrified neighborhoods. But in the aftermath of the disaster, May came under furious criticism for her reaction. In a visit to the site of the catastrophe, rather than calling for investigations, meeting with those involved, or calling for reformed safety standards, she avoided contact with the victims; Michael Portillo, a former Conservative Member of Parliament, accused her of "failing to show her humanity".

While May's response to such tragedy reinforced her image as robotic and distant, Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition party, showed great compassion, hugging and talking to the victims, earning him applause and favor in the eyes of the media. Corbyn, a longtime Labour

Parliamentarian, is a staunch leftist with wonky foreign policy views and a socialist approach to the economy. If there were another general election in the near future, the poll indicate that he would likely become prime minister, a prospect that terrifies May's Conservatives. In fact, the threat of a Corbyn premiership may be the only factor keeping Theresa May in power. A recent party coup attempt led by Grant Shapps, former Chairman of the Conservative Party, failed to garner the support of high profile cabinet members. They know that if instability within the Conservatives leads shows in a general election, they might be out of luck.

While current Conservative ministers are extraordinarily uninspiring, Ruth Davidson—the party leader in Scotland—has the potential to revitalize the party. After securing her party its best electoral result in Scotland since 1983, she has shown to be a realistic and favorable alternative to May, both in character and in policy. Although having campaigned against Brexit, she states that after the results, she prioritizes keeping the "largest amount of access" to the EU single-market. As a 38-year-old lesbian woman, she has the charisma and energy to appeal to young voters and moderate liberals, who are currently strongly on the side of Jeremy Corbyn. She is the kind of leader who could and should substitute May. In the meantime, the prime minister's approval ratings remain dismal, having dropped by 50 percentage points to a negative 20 percent net approval rating in the last year. Even 50 percent of Tories want her to resign before the next election.

While the possibility of a Corbyn premiership may scare Conservatives, it is not a good enough reason to painstakingly carry on with May, especially when viable alternatives like Ruth Davidson are waiting in the wings. As George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer during the Cameron years said, "Theresa May is a dead woman walking, it's just a matter of how long she will remain on death row". It is time Conservatives force Theresa May to step down before it is too late. •

France's New Counter-Terrorism Law Walks a Dangerously Thin Line Between Security and Liberty

- Daniel Evans

‘Tony’ awoke to a nightmarish scenario in the days following the 2015 Paris terrorist attack. Police forces raided his home, ordered him to lie face down on the ground, and tied his hands behind his back. They directed his wife and children into another room while shouting at him to relinquish his weapons and subsequently placed him under house arrest, forcing him to stay in his home and report to the police several times per day. A court later declared him innocent. In an interview with Al Jazeera, he speculated that he was unfairly targeted for being Muslim, and also for belonging to a recreational shooting club – something that was not out of the ordinary before panic struck France, but seems to have suddenly become criminalized, he remarked.

France’s national state of emergency, which began in November 2015, permits French authorities to conduct such raids with only circumstantial evidence and with limited judicial oversight. Since 2015, Parliament voted to extend the state of emergency six times, making it the country’s longest uninterrupted state of emergency since the Algerian War in the 1960s. The nation’s legislature is currently ironing out the details of a bill that enshrines these emergency provisions into common law, which took effect November 2017. The new bill derails France’s commitment to civil liberties, and cedes unprecedented powers to the executive branch of government and to the police.

Though the intent of the law is to end the current state of emergency and aid a smooth return to normalcy, many of the most worrisome aspects of the conditions of the state of emergency will continue. For example, it allows officials to establish security perimeters around public places such as airports and train stations, within which they may search people and vehicles, at will, for as long as a month. Singling out individuals for surveillance using house arrests can take place without the approval of a judge and, if investigators suspect radicalization occurring, officials can temporarily close places of worship like mosques.

Many liberal advocates in France point out that some of these powers will lead to the unchecked and unfair targeting of Muslims and

other French minorities. The lack of checks on government action substantiates such fears. Kartik Raj of the Human Rights Watch says that the sanitizing and vague language sprinkled throughout the bill normalizes practices usually only seen during emergency situations. An example he points to is using terms like house “visits” rather than warrantless searches. Loose requirements on judicial supervision also contribute to heightened concerns about government overreach. To start with, house arrests will only require the approval of prefects, who are government officials appointed by the Ministry of Interior and thus components of the executive branch. This circumvents the court system and places more power into the hands of the French executive. The authority to conduct searches may technically require some sort of judicial approval, but the grounds on which the judges can issue approvals are overly broad. According to Amnesty International France, such grounds can include any persons whose behavior the Interior Ministry deems to be a threat to public safety and security.

In order to prevent potential overreach, lawmakers must work on providing clear, specific, and detailed evidentiary standards for court or prefect approval in house arrests and personal property searches. These standards should be subject to judicial review before becoming law, so as to maintain a balance of powers. In the interest of increasing the quality and quantity of evidence, more funding ought to flow towards electronic surveillance measures. On-the-ground efforts are no doubt important, as interior minister Gérard Collomb says, having thwarted twelve attacks so far in 2017 and seventeen in 2016. But, they are only as effective as the intelligence provided about them. Of the 3,600 house searches carried out in the first seven months after France declared its state of emergency, only six resulted in terrorist-related charges or any criminal proceedings. Such an egregious false-positive ratio can be corrected if the quality of evidence improves, minimizing the instances of unfounded persecution of innocent French citizens.

President Emmanuel Macron sees this law as the best possible outcome given the present

situation. Other politicians agree, having voted overwhelmingly in favor of it 415-127 in the French National Assembly. Recognizing that continuously renewing a state of emergency would be unsustainable, Macron also faces the reality that the public enjoys the added comfort these increased safety measures provide. A Fiducial/Odoxa poll shows that 57 percent of the population supports the new law, even though 65 percent agree that it curtails civil liberties. Most of the public thus does not mind this trade-off. With 241 deaths due to terrorist attacks in France since 2015, the French people have good reason to prioritize their safety.

Admittedly, the new law does take some steps in the right direction. By increasing the radius of movement for individuals under house arrest, lowering the number of times they must report to police stations, and allowing for judicial appeals, the law softens some of the infringements on rights which existed under a state of emergency. Macron has also promised that the bill will be reviewed annually and contain a sunset clause which, according to the latest draft, means the law will be discontinued in 2021. It is important to note, however, that the law could always be renewed after 2021 depending on both public sentiment and political climate. Moreover, majority approval does not make a policy moral, especially given that this case will disproportionately target minority groups, like French people of African or Arab heritage.

The reach of France’s new counter-terrorism bill is not solely restricted to French minorities; it has the potential to affect everyone. In fighting for individual liberties, the concern is rarely about the administration currently in charge, but the administration that comes next. The government using the law’s provisions to combat terrorism today can, in just one election cycle, be replaced by one more interested in using it to quell protests and social movements. France must, therefore, err on the side of caution when formulating its new counter-terrorism law and protecting the civil liberties of its people for years to come. •

The Soul of German Liberalism

- Andrew Beddow

Four years after their most disastrous electoral performance in history, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) has made its way back into the German Bundestag in 2017. Under the leadership of Christian Lindner, the Free Democrats have out-performed electoral expectations, and, with the Social Democratic Party moving over to the opposition, the FDP is set to join Chancellor Merkel's 'Jamaica' coalition of conservatives, liberals, and greens. The Free Democrats cannot squander this opportunity as they did when last in power in 2009, when they simply conceded to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on every issue. They must be, above all, an ideological party and lead the fight against the rising tides of right and left-wing populism. Making this case, however, will require seizing upon the tradition of German liberalism and offering a compelling political vision beyond and other than the technocratic conservatism of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Above all, this will require the Free Democrats to make the case that there is an authentic liberal legacy in Germany, and assert that liberalism is not just an 'Anglo-Saxon' phenomenon.

It is not uncommon to hear that liberalism is alien to German thought, that it is not *bodenständig* (rooted in the soil), but rather imported, or – worse – imposed upon Germany by the victorious Allies after World War II. This line of argument, which ascribes an innate illiberal disposition to the German national character, is not new. See, for instance, Thomas Mann's *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (1918), in which Germany is depicted as a naïve, wordless, barbarian land between East and West. It is seen as standing against the political rationalism of 'Roman' civilization, and this is shown through the Varian Disaster from 9 CE between Germanic tribe leader Arminius and the defeated Varus and his Roman legionaries. On this view of Germany, especially popular among Anglo-American thinkers and illiberal elements within the German right, it was never Germany's destiny to become a liberal democracy. Germany has a unique *Sonderweg*, or 'special path,' viewed as an aristocratic and chauvinistic alternative to liberal individualism.

Given the tragic history of German liberalism since 1848, one might be forgiven for thinking that there is something to be said for this view of its incompatibility. Even the FDP, the supposed 'proxy' for Anglo-American lib-

eralism, differs from its cousins elsewhere in Europe. It more closely reflects social and economic neoliberalism, which stands to Merkel's right on migration and refugee policy, on Euroskepticism, and on crime and punishment. This should not come as a shock: German liberalism has always drawn upon a different intellectual foundation than that of the English and French, placing greater emphasis on national identity, the rule of public law, and devotion to the state than these two other nations.

At the core of the FDP's ideology is the *Rechtsstaat*, or the state constrained by the rule of law, which the FDP's 2017 Program lauds as balancing "freedom and security such that it decisively confronts concrete dangers without infringing upon the rights of citizens." The *Rechtsstaat* is not as concerned with actively promoting the happiness of its people. Instead, it serves to guarantee their freedom and equality under a set of general laws, establishing fair rules of society so that private individuals can freely organize themselves. It is not purely *laissez-faire*, but its social-market economy is guided only by formal considerations, emphasized in the FDP's 2017 Program and 1997 Wiesbaden Declaration. Thus, the foundation of German liberalism is truly *Selbstbestimmung*, or the capacity for individuals to determine their own fate by free choice.

To the extent that the state must intervene, German liberalism contends the government should do so only for the sake of freedom itself, ensuring that no individual falls into a condition of dependence upon others. Here, we see the difference between Anglo-American and German liberalism: in the *Rechtsstaat*, liberty is not fundamentally negative (the right to do as one wishes), but republican (the right to be one's own master). Freedom and right are fundamentally interpersonal, and therefore presuppose a political condition in the context of a shared public life regulated by law. The German liberal tradition does not, like John Locke, fixate on the rights of atomistic individuals, but instead seeks to outline the institutional requirements for a rational state.

With the irreducible nature of public life now resting at the core of the German liberal tradition, we see how the FDP, unlike the British Liberal Democrats, can entertain nationalist tendencies on, for instance, migration and European integration. In the Wiesbaden Declara-

tion by the party, the FDP followed Prussian philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt's teachings in emphasizing the importance of variety for self-development, in this case, on this basis of defending the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in Germany. Yet, like the late von Humboldt, the FDP transforms this emphasis on individualistic diversity into a national distinction, arguing that a genuine commitment to the European project must be "rooted in national and regional identity," setting as the goal "unity through variety, because variety is freedom."

This is not mere rhetoric. Nationalism has been an essential element of German liberalism since the late eighteenth century: then-prominent philosopher Johann Fichte viewed it as a commitment to both universal humanity and the nation not as contradictory, but as mutually interdependent. Similarly, for Enlightenment philosopher Johann Herder, the liberal nation-state was the mediating idea in a synthesis between the particular (local loyalties) and the universal (common humanity). The universal ideal of humanity as manifested in a rich cultural-national diversity bridges the divide between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. This view, according to which the nation is a reflection of humanity itself, begins with Herder, continues through Humboldt, and has evolved today to include the Free Democratic Party.

Such a form of nationalism, with its sometimes-populist expressions, is seemingly incoherent for a British or French liberal. And, yet, nationalism rests at the core of German liberalism, and it is on this basis that the FDP can claim an authentic place in the German intellectual tradition. They are not populists or hyper-nationalists themselves, but instead defendants of traditional German nationalism against the right-populist *Alternative für Deutschland*. The FDP must also not surrender to the technocracy of Chancellor Merkel and the CDU. In a desperate time of social disintegration and rising populism in Germany, the FDP must instead be the vanguard party for well-ordered liberty. It must not be ashamed to be liberal in Germany, but claim more boldly what traditional German liberalism is for all to see. •

Is Germany Killing More Than Just Turkey's EU Aspirations?

- B.A. Bacigal

Just months after implementing the 2016 European Union-Turkey Joint Statement on refugees, a coup-attempt hit Ankara, worsening EU-Turkey relations. Since then, those hours of uncertainty have inspired months of anxiety for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. His latest crackdown on public officials and news outlets has escalated previous efforts to consolidate power and silence government opposition, further undoing years of hard-won credibility from the EU and widening the schism between Turkey and central EU figure: Germany. With a robust Turkish diaspora and critical eye towards the human rights situation in Turkey, Germany is perhaps the least sympathetic to Erdogan's pursuit for greater power. His call for Turkish Germans to vote against Merkel's conservative CDU and other traditional parties like the Social Democrats exacerbated these tensions. In fact, German criticisms of Turkey have been on the rise following the German national elections of late September. Plainly stating that she would seek an end to Turkey's membership talks with the EU, Merkel held both her stance and her Chancellorship. After praising Turkey for its reception of Syrian refugees, she is now officially calling for cuts in the Instrument for Pre-Admission Assistance (IPA) funds currently granted to Turkey. This is a grave mistake.

Discouraging Turkey's European accession for short-term electoral gains is an unwise decision by Merkel, and ending accession talks entirely is, frankly, reckless as this issue transcends the grudges of governmental officials. Even brief retaliation against Erdogan's attempts to curve election results could have long-term destructive effects on not only Turkey, but also the over three million refugees and asylum seekers currently waiting there for admission into EU countries. Regardless of whether or not Turkey should join the EU, it is in the interest of refugees and asylum seekers, EU member states, and Merkel herself, to maintain IPA funds and continue with Turkish accession talks.

If Merkel's primary grievance is with Erdogan's human rights violations, perhaps she ought to be reminded of why the funds she intends to cut exist in the first place—to encourage Turkey to pursue democratic reforms. IPA funds are allocated to EU aspirants to make



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economic and political reforms that bring national policy in line with EU standards. Among these obligations is a mandate to uphold the highest standards of human rights protections. The maintenance of these funds would provide incentive for Erdogan to clean up his act, whereas the loss of these funds could disincentivize reforms. Rather than undermining Turkish aspirations to return to the more democratic rule it experienced before the coup-attempt, the EU should return to full engagement that previously inspired Erdogan's initial commitment to greater rule of law.

Again and again, Merkel has articulated how the cutting of IPA funds to Turkey will not affect the EU-Turkey Joint Statement on refugees, but she can only speak for the EU's obligations, the adherences to which thus far have been abysmal. It is overwhelmingly apparent that many EU member states' sole pursuit in engaging Turkey is to minimize the number of refugees flooding their borders. This is demonstrated by how many of the refugee deal's conditions the EU has yet to carry out. The EU's implementation of a "meaningful, safe, and legal way out of Turkey" was intended to provide resettlement for approved refugees on a one-to-one basis so that each refugee transferred from Greece to Turkey would correspond to one refugee formally resettled into an EU country. As of February 2017, the number of Syrian refugees who resettled in EU member states from Turkey was 3,565 of the pledged 25,000 – a number made even more negligible when contrasted against the over three million Syrian refugees still in Turkey. It is hypocritical, then, for Merkel to shame Turkey for not upholding obligations for IPA funds, when the EU is not in fact upholding its obligations to Turkey.

Erdogan wields the refugee deal over the EU in negotiations. If Merkel were to cut IPA funds, there is a very real possibility that Erdogan's human rights violations will grow even more egregious and that he may neglect the Turkish responsibilities outlined in the EU-Turkey Joint Statement on refugees. If he is failing to respect the human rights of his own government officials and citizens, it is not a far cry to expect those trespasses will also affect refugees and asylum seekers within his borders. This also undermines the entire purpose of the deal for EU member states: to reduce irregular migrant flows. Disagreements between the EU and Turkey discourage refugee and asylum seekers from waiting in Turkey to be resettled. A minor flight has already begun just in reaction to the rising EU-Turkey tensions. Increasingly more refugees and asylum seekers are illegally attempting to cross into Greece via smugglers and the Aegean Sea, choosing to jeopardize their safety and forfeiting their right to legally resettle in an EU member state. If Erdogan were to defect on the migration deal, the potential opening of the "door to the west" would allow refugees and asylum seekers to rush en masse through known routes into Europe, further overwhelming Greece, which is already overwhelmed by refugees and asylum seekers.

Much like promises made by the EU to Turkey, the cutting of IPA funds would be largely symbolic, sending a message that Germany retains a firm grasp on EU policy towards Turkey. It would also send a message to refugees and asylum seekers that Turkey is no longer a viable waiting room for resettlement. It remains evident that were it not for the refugee-deal, Germany and other EU states would be far less delicate in the dealings of these funding cuts. With neither fulfillment of EU obligations from the deal, nor the progression of Turkish accession talks, cutting the IPA funds would be the first step down a long road leading away from years of EU-Turkey progress. •

Racism 1 - 0 Italy

- Liam Beers

When mentioning Italy, people usually think of the exquisite architecture, the distinctive food, or the world-class soccer played in the country's top division, Serie A. Unfortunately, Serie A is embroiled in constant racism scandals emanating from the fans towards the players. While the Italian government has acknowledged that racism is an ongoing problem in Italy, it has done little to address the issue. There is a vital need to combat racism, especially in Serie A stadia, as it allows tensions to escalate to dangerous levels. While professional soccer isn't the front line of migrant problems, it is an ideal place to start to relieve racial tensions between Italians and people from outside the country. Serie A represents a huge part of Italian culture, and if it can be utilized to support diversity and inclusion of other peoples, then Italy may become a more inclusive environment for refugees crossing an increasingly deathly Mediterranean Sea.

Racist chants in Serie A have attracted the eyes of FIFA, soccer's world governing body, which has attempted to stop repeated attacks against players. In April of 2017, tensions rose to the point that a Pescara player named Sulley Muntari, a Ghanaian national, stormed off the field after being not only harassed by adults in the crowd, but also by a group of kids, to whom he had offered his jersey. After pleading with the referee to take action and stop the fans, Muntari himself was given a yellow card and cautioned about dissent toward the official. This is the first time since 2013, when the entire AC Milan team left the field, that players returned to the locker room to avoid racist chanting. Yet both incidents share a common theme: they are directed at foreign players, mostly of African descent.

It is no surprise that racist jeers have returned to Serie A as the migrant issue escalates throughout Italy. This problem arose in 2014 when there was a sharp uptick in migration from North Africa and the Middle East to the European Union. Estimates say that 1.7 million irregular migrants have arrived on the European continent since 2014. Italy alone has seen more than 93,000 migrants arrive so far this year, a seventeen percent increase over the same period last year, according to the International Organization for Migration. The more refugees that arrive, the more frustrated the Italian government and citizens become.

“While Italian soccer teams are known for a defensive style, it is time to go on the offensive, cut racism off at the roots.”

Italian officials said that they are considering closing its ports to humanitarian ships that aren't flying the Italian flag to stem the tide of migrants that enter the country. It seems that many Italians agree that the country has reached a saturation point, and that steps must be taken to stop what many consider an invasion of migrants. A recent national opinion poll showed 67 percent of the respondents believed migrants should be blocked from entering Italy or immediately repatriated. But if Italy closes its ports to boats that aren't flying the Italian flag, the number of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea could rise. Furthermore, should more anti-immigration parties win majorities in coastal towns, these port closures could happen more rapidly than expected.

This would be an intolerant mistake. For most migrants, Italy is a stepping stone to many other countries farther into Europe, but for others, Italy is now home. Moreover, in Italy, most migrants are productive members of society, working on farms, in cities, and contributing to the economy. For example, in the coastal city of Catania, many migrants take Italian lessons, attend vocational training, and work temporary jobs while waiting for their asylum requests.

The chants in stadiums are evident of a problem at the local level: these arenas are full of fans from coastal areas, the same fans who believe that migrants should be blocked from entering Italy. These frustrations have only been exasperated by Italy's recent shortcomings on soccer's world stage. After failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, several political leaders, including Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Northern League, have stated that this embarrassment is because there were too many “foreigners” playing for the national team. They called for more space to be given to real Italians on and off the field by ending mass migration to Europe. It is clear that not only must the Italian government address the issue, but FIFA has to also assist, or soon there may be more problems than players leaving the field in the last minutes of a game.

In several other countries, such as Spain and England, there are sporting regulations in place

that support the de-escalation of racial tensions through retrospective action against fans. Bans on ticket sales and prohibitions on the trading of racially-taunted players serve as deterrents to clubs as well, forcing teams to take action against their own fans in order to avoid harsher punishments to the club as a whole. If Serie A teams enact more robust measures to condemn racism and protect their players, it could help increase racial tolerance in the country, helping Italians to realize that contrary to popular belief, migrants are not freeloaders, but rather hard workers.

Even though up until now coaches, referees, and the Italian Football Association have done little to support players in the face of racial chants and jeers, it is of the utmost importance that players continue to stand up to fans. Regardless of the news stories the next day, more teams should think about leaving the field like AC Milan in 2013 and Sulley Muntari in 2017. These displays of protest will continue to send a message to Italian citizens that racist remarks will not be tolerated while a player is representing his club and city. If players can make headway against bigotry on a big stage, it will be the first step in a public effort to change the harmful rhetoric surrounding migration.

Racist commentary surrounding Mediterranean migration often forget that migrants are putting their lives in danger, hoping to live safely in Europe after escaping unstable environments, and praying they not be turned away before they can reach land. It cannot be stressed enough that Serie A teams represent the local battle against racism in Italy, and have the potential to remind citizens of this fact and change public opinion. While Italian soccer teams are known for a defensive style, it is time to go on the offensive, cut racism off at the roots, and show all foreign visitors to Italy that they are welcome. •

Estonia, Latvia Must Liberalize Citizenship Laws to Accommodate Ethnic Russian Non-Citizens

- Mark Dovich

In August 2017, the Saeima, Latvia's parliament, rejected a proposed law that would cease the granting of non-citizen status to the children of non-citizens born in Latvia. In response, Leonid Slutsky, the chairman of Russia's International Affairs Committee, called the rejection "an absolutely absurd and inexplicable manifestation of Russophobia" in Latvia. Why such a harsh rebuke from the Russian government? And who are these non-citizens?

In the 1990s, as the former Soviet republics rose from the ruins of the USSR, more than 25 million ethnic Russians suddenly found themselves living outside of Russia proper. This 'new minority' presented an immediate and serious dilemma to the post-Soviet governments: there was a clear need both to integrate ethnic Russians and ensure social cohesion, but also to move decisively away from the Soviet past. In Estonia and Latvia, this problem was especially pressing. By percentage of population, Estonia and Latvia had some of the highest numbers of ethnic Russians among the post-Soviet republics: 30.3 and 34.0 percent, respectively, in 1989.

Despite their large ethnic Russian minorities, the Estonian and Latvian governments established citizenship requirements based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (nationality), rather than *jus soli* (residency). In other words, all citizens of Estonia and Latvia prior to the incorporation of the Baltics into the Soviet Union in the 1940s, and their descendants, as well as all ethnic Estonians and Latvians currently living in their respective states, automatically became citizens, while all others could not. In practice, this meant that ethnic Russians had to gain citizenship through naturalization, despite the fact that many of them had lived in Estonia or Latvia for their entire lives.

Disregarding the strict rules for obtaining citizenship, the Baltic republics are often held up as models of successful post-socialist democratization and marketization. Indeed, when the Baltics joined the EU in 2004, they were required to meet the Copenhagen criteria, which include "democracy, the rule of law, human rights, [and] respect for and protection of minorities". And yet, significant percentages of their populations are largely barred from political and economic

life. In order to truly embrace the democratic ideals and values they espouse, Estonia and Latvia must liberalize their citizenship laws and work to incorporate ethnic Russian non-citizens into their political and social structures. If they fail to do so, they risk inflaming interethnic tensions and continuing to neglect their obligations as democratic states.

Naturalization presented serious problems in and of itself. In Estonia, the naturalization test required proficiency in the Estonian language, which very few ethnic Russians knew, since the language was suppressed during Soviet times. In Latvia, the process was even more restrictive: in addition to taking a Latvian language test, which presented the same problems as in Estonia, the examination also required applicants to take a 'loyalty' oath acknowledging Latvia's membership in the Soviet Union as an illegal 50-year occupation by the Russian government. Even though this is the official legal position of not only Latvia, but also the US and the EU, many Russians, nevertheless, deemed the oath Russophobic and refused to take it on moral grounds.

For these reasons, most Baltic Russians did not take Estonian or Latvian citizenship after the Soviet collapse. Instead, they became officially classified as non-citizens and now form one of the largest stateless groups in the world. Today, in Estonia and Latvia, around sixteen and eleven percent of the populations, respectively, are non-citizens. Although both governments have since issued so-called gray passports to these non-citizens, which provided some limited rights, ethnic Russians are, nonetheless, effectively disenfranchised from political and economic life. By law, non-citizens need visas to travel and work abroad, including in the EU, despite the fact that both Estonia and Latvia are themselves EU member states. Furthermore, non-citizens are barred from voting in national elections, holding elected office, or working in the public sector.

The first and most obvious way for Estonia and Latvia to liberalize their citizenship laws would be to amend the existing laws and change their legal bases to *jus soli*, ensuring that all people born in Estonia or Latvia, regardless of ethnicity, would be guaranteed citizenship. Un-

like Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania did exactly this: its citizenship law automatically provided citizenship to all people who were born or had a parent or grandparent born in Lithuania. As a result, today there is no such non-citizen problem in Lithuania. It would also be possible to change the naturalization process, rather than the citizenship laws themselves: if Estonia and Latvia were to remove the problematic aspects of their naturalization tests, namely the language requirements and, in Latvia's case, the 'loyalty' oath, ethnic Russians would have significantly fewer obstacles to obtaining citizenship. Finally, the governments could reform the gray passport system and give the holders of such passports equal political and economic rights. This option, however, solves the symptoms without addressing the underlying problem: non-citizens would have the same rights as other Estonians and Latvians, but they would effectively still be second-class citizens.

Those who would criticize these proposals and, instead, support continuing the granting of non-citizen status would probably point out that Baltic Russians tend to have a distinct political consciousness, often at odds with ethnic Estonians' and Latvians'. For example, according to a 2017 survey by Pew Research Center, ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia are significantly more likely to favor a militarily strong Russia than their fellow countrymen. Moreover, they are also significantly less likely to be proud to be from the Baltics than ethnic Estonians and Latvians themselves. Other studies suggest that Baltic Russians profess significantly higher levels of nostalgia for the Soviet Union than other ethnic groups in the region. However, despite these critics' arguments, Estonia and Latvia have responsibilities as open, democratic states to treat all of their residents equal before the law and accommodate minority groups, regardless of their political opinions.

For more than a quarter of a century, the Estonian and Latvian governments have failed significant percentages of their populations, depriving them of basic civil rights and liberties. It is high time for Estonia and Latvia to stand firmly by their commitments as democratic states, accommodate ethnic Russians, and abolish the non-citizen system in its entirety. •

Regional Renaissance Leaves Armenia and Azerbaijan Behind

- Anna Haynes

The youngest generation of Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed region between Armenia and Azerbaijan, only knows its homeland to be violent, destructive, and unstable. Long after the 1994 ceasefire between Azerbaijan and the Armenian separatists occupying the region, crumbling Soviet-era apartments and eviscerated libraries still bear the scars of endless skirmishes. Some of these scars are new, created in one of the seven thousand ceasefire violations since 1994, reminding both Azeri and Armenian residents of the lives lost in the crossfire. Over one million people have fled the embattled regions, with many Azeris forced to take the treacherous mountain route to Baku where they reside in tent settlements outside the city. Meanwhile, those who stayed in their homes now bear witness to sharply rising tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan as heavy-artillery and anti-tanks weapons cause increasingly high casualties.

But beyond these two neighboring countries, the picture in the wider South Caucasus and Central Asia region is beginning to look quite different—promising, in fact. These other nearby nations also bear the scars of post-Soviet life, having experienced first-hand the economic and political struggles facing Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, stabilizing the economy and implementing reformed political structures has proven successful for formerly Soviet countries like Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Territorial disputes have faded from the region's political discourse, replaced now by talk of reform, growth, and collaboration. International railways between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, relaxation of visa restrictions, improvement of diplomatic practices, and outspoken commitment by national leaders to regional cooperation all point toward a new era of productivity and peace in these post-Soviet nations.

Meanwhile, Armenia and Azerbaijan are left in the past as they continue to channel resources to a 25-year-old conflict; Azerbaijan spends over \$3 billion on its military in an ongoing attempt to establish its regional dominance. Armenia, though lacking the financial means of Azerbaijan, receives diplomatic support from the Russian government in negotiations over the breakaway region. As long as the two rivals continue to pour such diplomatic

leverage, technological advancements, and inordinate economic resources into the fight over Nagorno-Karabakh, the blossoming regional renaissance will leave them behind economically and politically.

Frozen conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh creates stagnation across all spheres of government, weakening both countries' international image and draining nearly all political capital that remains. The OSCE Minsk group, tasked with facilitating talks between Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders, has struggled to coax the opposing governments into any lasting, effective agreements; worse, any consensus has almost always been violated by at least one side. Co-chairs of the Minsk group—the US, Russia, and France—have hosted summits and sent peacekeepers to no avail. Fruitlessly expending the negotiating power and energy of such influential nations does not bode well for the future of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the world stage, given their respective allies Russia and Turkey reason to question the benefit of their current partnerships. Armenia felt the consequences of these tenuous relationships in 2016 after war broke out again in Nagorno-Karabakh, killing 350 people. In the aftermath of this fighting, members of the Eurasian Economic Union—the regional economic bloc—refused to convene in the Armenian capital of Yerevan to show their disdain for the conflict.

In contrast, warming relationships between surrounding countries are seen as being widely successful, improving trade and strengthening trust in political partnerships not only within Eurasia but also with mainland Europe. In recent months, Georgia has been lauded by the European Union for making incredible strides in policy reform and resolving a number of problems that had been hindering trade and cooperation with EU member states. Until Armenia and Azerbaijan can overcome the Nagorno-Karabakh territorial dispute, they will struggle to forge important diplomatic and economic relationships.

Mass exodus and displacement of young Armenians and Azeris also feeds into the two nation's economic stagnation. Young people have been key triggers in the accelerating growth of Eurasia, due to a number of higher education reform policies, global connectivity, and a new

generation of post-Soviet leaders. Unfortunately for Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict stalls their progress, forcing young people to leave their homes and in some cases their country. The 2016 escalation drove 2000 people from their homes, making Azerbaijan home to one of the world's largest populations of internally displaced people. With no choice but immigration or homegrown violence, a growing number of young people are choosing to start over somewhere new. Armenia faces this problem too. Ethnic Azeris have fled to Azerbaijan amid ethnically motivated violence and ethnic Armenians, faced with the increasingly dire economic situation, migrate to other neighboring countries. This brain drain further weakens the economy and stifles the regional push toward interconnectedness and modernization. Given the young median age of both countries, reportedly around 31 in 2015, Armenia and Azerbaijan's failure to provide for the development of their young people is not only harmful now, but also to their futures.

Of course, to blame all of these countries' problems on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would be a shallow analysis, as would reducing the conflict to a small territorial squabble. The politics and economies of both countries are fraught with the influence of international markets, pressures from powerful allies, and unique cultural beliefs that shape national preferences. In fact, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began as a confluence of factors; Moscow intervention, dearth of economic opportunity, and deep ethnic tensions.

But complexities aside, it is obvious that this conflict has dominated the political climate of both countries for years and cost an enormous amount of resources and lives. With the expressed support of allies and distant powers alike, coming to a resolution is entirely possible and on the whole desirable. Resolving this conflict would free the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to focus on creating more reforms like those currently bringing about prosperity in countries with similar histories and priorities. Most importantly, a fast, official resolution would prevent the further devastation of land and of lives that, at present, seems inevitable. •

How Middle Eastern Powers View an Independent Kurdistan

- Middle East Region Contributing Authors

Since the end of the First World War, the Kurdish people have been divided among Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey—all of which are united in their efforts to prevent them from forming their own state. Landlocked and surrounded by enemies, the Kurds have waged a long, hard, and bloody struggle for independence. The pursuit for Kurdish independence reached an inflection point in September 2017 when a referendum was held in the Kurdish territories of Iraq, only to be halted by Iraqi military forces the following day. Over the years, each regional player has perceived an independent Kurdish state under the lens of their own economic, historical, and political interests, resulting in unique implications for the Kurdish pursuit for autonomy.

Iranian Resistance to Kurdish Independence

- Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

Despite previous alignment and cooperation between Iran and Iraqi Kurds over ousting Saddam Hussein and fighting the Islamic State (ISIS), independence for Iraqi Kurdistan is a movement which Iran cannot and will not support. Leading up to the September 25th independence referendum, Iranian forces launched extensive practice drills near its western border with Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran's chief fear is that Kurdish independence will have spillover effects that spark a similar movement for Iranian Kurds, who make up roughly ten percent of the population. Iran has not seen any major movements for Kurdish independence within its borders since the 1940's but leaders fear that independence for the Kurds in Iraq could turn the tides against Tehran. As a minority in Iran, Kurds are subject to sub-standard aid and development from the government, social isolation, and a lack of representation at the highest levels. Tehran worries that these latent grievances will gain traction as the referendum invokes international attention. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei expressed his strong opposition to the referendum, saying that those who support it are "opposed to the independence and identity of Iraq" and are in violation of the Iraqi constitution. By setting a hardline against Kurdish independence, Iran hopes to dissuade its own Kurdish populations from seeking a similar movement.

Iraq's Staunch Opposition

- Tyler D. Coady

In late September, the Iraqi government under Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi moved swiftly to delegitimize the Iraqi Kurdish independence referendum. Baghdad was supported in its condemnation of the vote by the United States, effectively shut down the main airports in Kurdistan, and by late October, seized back control of the important oil-producing city of Kirkuk from the Kurdish Peshmerga. Haider al-Abadi's government was right to undermine Kurdistan's independence vote and assert its territorial integrity, as Kurdistan Regional Authority acted in a unilateral and illegal fashion by holding a referendum and supporting its outcome. Prime Minister al-Abadi, other Arab leaders, and the American government all warned now-former Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani that staging an independence referendum during a time of conflict with the Islamic State would only add volatility to an already combustible Iraq. The referendum and its fallout undermines the efforts of both Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq to increase oil exports, stabilize the economy, defeat the Islamic State, and build greater cohesion in a nation perpetually on the verge of conflict. Iraqi Kurdistan may feel that its unique history, culture, and recent battlefield prowess endow it with a right to independence, but the reality is that international law favors the position of al-Abadi and Baghdad. The Prime Minister took appropriate military measures to restore Baghdad's influence over areas that fall under its legal jurisdiction. While Western liberals may fantasize about an independent

Kurdistan fulfilling its supposed destiny, the reality is far more complex and potentially dangerous, which undermines Kurdish claims for full autonomy and bolsters the case of Baghdad.

An Existential Threat for the Turks: Kurdish Autonomy

- Jalal H. Taleb

Turkey's hostility towards Kurdish autonomy dates back to 1923, when the young nation, still reeling from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, fended off foreign occupying forces to reclaim much of what constitutes modern-day Turkey. As regional borders were redrawn, Turkish leaders tried to forge unity among their Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Alevi and Kurdish citizens by encouraging them to embrace their new Turkish identities. Vestiges of these nation-building efforts can be spotted to this day in Turkey, where mountains and school courtyards are still adorned with the words of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the republic's first president: "Ne mutlu Türküm diyene" or "How happy is one who says, I'm a Turk." The phrase has been etched into the national psyche, setting clear limits for minority groups, and discouraging expressions of divergent identities. From the beginning, to be a Turk has meant the shedding or negating of other allegiances. For this reason, the concept of Kurdish autonomy anywhere in the region poses a very literal existential threat to the Turkish Republic. In late September, when the Kurds held an independence refer-

endum, Turkish tanks were positioned across the main border crossing with Iraq's Kurdish region. Turkey's President Erdogan, in many ways, holds similar views to Mr. Ataturk with regard to Kurdish independence, and it is unlikely Mr. Erdogan will modify their views on any form of Kurdish independence on the basis of historical nationalism and the Kurdish existential threat perceived by the Turks.

An Intricate Balancing Act: Assad's Case Against Kurdish Independence

- Ayah Kutmah

Kurdish-Syrian relations are particularly tenuous and on unstable ground due to the complications of the Syrian conflict. The recent Kurdish independence referendum has sparked caustic critiques by many Arab nations, and Syria is no different. Syria's foreign minister released a statement rejecting the Kurdish referendum, stating, "We in Syria only recognize a united Iraq," calling the referendum "a product of American policies." Syria is one of the four countries, along with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, with a significant Kurdish minority, making up between seven and fifteen percent of the Syrian population. Kurdish-Syrian relations are particularly affected by the complications of the Syrian conflict. They have been historically marginalized by the pro-Arab nationalist President Assad. At the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, Kurdish demonstrations became a routine part of the Syrian uprising. However, as the conflict evolved into a civil war, many Kurdish groups have banded together to create an alliance and a governing body over the Kurdish-majority areas in northern Syria. They often cooperate with the Syrian government against ISIS or other rebel incursions in what has become a "tacit alliance." Similarly, at other times, they coordinate with Syrian rebel groups against the Syrian government. They differ from their Iraqi Kurdish counterpart in that they, for the most part, do not seek independence as a country, but autonomy as a republic under a federal Syria.

Israel's Self-Interest in Kurdish Independence

- Jordan Sandman

As the only Middle Eastern power supporting the Kurdish Independence movement, Israel is seeking to capitalize on its historic relationship with the Kurds for geopolitical gain. The Kurds and the Israelis have had a longstanding relationship dating back to the establishment of the State of Israel. Though the Kurdish ethnic group is majority-Muslim, Jewish roots in Kurdistan extend back to the eighth century B.C. Following the persecution of Jewish Iraqis after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, some 200,000 Jewish Kurds moved to Israel, bonding the Kurdish region to the Jewish state. Israel maintained ties with the Kurds since then, abetting the Iraqi Peshmerga with humanitarian and tactical support in exchange for protection of Jewish minorities facing persecution in Iraq. While this rapport legitimates a narrative that the Israelis support self-determination from a moral perspective, in reality, the move is a part of a two-pronged strategy: to aggravate internal conflict among the competing states of Iran and Turkey, which each contain significant numbers of Kurdish minorities residing at their borders, and to stymie the creation of a contiguous swath of Shiite-dominated land through which Iran can easily resupply Hezbollah, its Lebanese militia clientele.

The Arab Gulf's Stance on the Kurdish Referendum

- Jalal H. Taleb

The rise of a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 raises concerns for Gulf nations about Iranian influence in Iraq. In the eyes of the Gulf, the only viable alternative is seemingly the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Presently, there are Saudi and Emirati consulates in Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, Irbil, at the objection of Iran. In 2015, Kurdistan's former leader, Mah-

moud Barzani, visited Gulf countries, including UAE and Saudi Arabia. The UAE is a large investor in postwar Iraq, with much funding going to the oil-rich Kurdish region, the Emirates carry strong economic ties to Kurdistan. Furthermore, Bahrain and Qatar have invested significantly in the region's burgeoning energy and infrastructure sectors. Barzani's Gulf tour in 2015 is symbolic of an enhancement in Kurdish-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) relations, garnering further support of the Kurdish independence referendum. •

Vladimir Putin's Revival of Russian Influence in the Middle East

- Middle East Region Contributing Authors

In September 2015, Russia began a military intervention in the Syrian Civil War, its first overt military mission outside of the former Soviet space since the collapse of the USSR. As the protracted conflict in Syria wanes, Russia has re-engaged with a host of old military and economic alliances in a region that has been more dominated by Western interests as of late. Some countries, like Iran and Iraq, have warmed up to Russia, while others, like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have sought out mutually beneficial agreements with no timetable on formal alliance making. Our writers examine the mechanisms of Russian overtures to key regional players and provide analyses on the prospects for long-term cooperation or conflict.

Russo-Persian Relations: A Generations Old Kinship

- Jalal H. Taleb

For generations, the Iranian-Russian relations were characterized less by economic and military cooperation and more by competition. During the Soviet era, Iran viewed Russia with great distrust. Today, both countries' economies are subject to Western sanctions. Furthermore, complicated global energy markets and a common interest in aiding President Assad in Syria has forged a stronger political and economic bond. In 1997, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) established agreements with Russian state-owned natural gas giant Gazprom to develop gas fields in Iran. In 2014, the two countries signed exploration, production, and infrastructure deals, worth more than ten billion dollars. This year, Gazprom and NIOC started construction on the Iran's first natural gas plant. In the face of Western opposition, Iran and Russian have grown closer. The implicit political baggage that comes with doing business with the West is virtually nonexistent for Iran as they conduct business with Russia. On this note, the Iranians have renewed rail lines designed to facilitate maritime and overland trade between them, Russia, and Central Asia. Despite their previously unstable relationship, Iran is eager to make the lucrative relationship with Russia work, both on battlefields and in oilfields.

A Russian Pursuit for Iraqi Oil, Military Might

- Maya Zreik

Iraq has been a key US ally for the past fifteen years, though American influence in the country is waning. In response, Russia has partially stepped in to exert influence over Iraq. This summer, former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki visited Moscow—the first trip to Russia by an Iraqi leader since 1981—and praised Putin's actions in Syria. Maliki had long been critical of excessive American influence in Iraq's internal affairs, and the meeting was seen as a move by Iraq to seek camaraderie with international powers other than the US. Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict, particularly in its siding with Shiite militias, such as Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah, demonstrates Russia's commitment to supporting the so-called Shiite axis in the Levant. From an economic lens, Russia has attempted to invest in Iraqi Kurdistan's oil. Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil company, reached a deal to control of Kurdistan's main oil pipeline. The deal is seen as an attempt by Putin to become more involved in Iraq's economy. Putin has encouraged dialogue between Erbil, the Kurdish regional capital, and the central government in Baghdad, and was the only major world leader to support Kurdistan's failed independence referendum in 2015. Putin is expected to continue developing economic relations with Baghdad as Iraq continues to stabilize.

Israel Scrambles as Russian Hegemony Advances

- Jordan Sandman

Israeli policymakers are keeping an eye on Russian influence as it related to Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria. Russia previously teamed up with Hezbollah, the IRGC (a branch of Iran's armed forces), and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to clear Syrian rebels from the major Syrian cities Aleppo and Raqqa. A resulting side-effect of this coordination has strengthened Hezbollah's paramilitary capabilities, emboldening the group in its post-Syrian conflict goals. Though Hezbollah has diverted attention from Israel since the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war, the militia is likely to reorient itself as the Syrian conflict tapers. Indeed, Hezbollah has signaled this intention with a 50% increase of its stockpile of largely Russian missiles, which have been funneled Iran and Syria. Intriguingly, Russia has an interest in inciting conflict between Iran, Hezbollah, and Israel as it seeks to advance its role as an indispensable geopolitical facilitator in the region, vying for influence against Washington. By manufacturing a Hezbollah-Israel conflict, Russia can increase the role of its Shiite clientele while maintaining the arrangement that lead regional players to seek foreign sponsors.

Russia and the Assads: A Decades-Long Friendship in Syria

- *Ayah Kutmah*

Russian influence in Syria dates back to 1971. Then-president Hafez Al-Assad and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev agreed on an arms deal allowing the USSR to build a resupply station in Tartous, a coastal city in Syria. The subtle bilateral alliance morphed into an active political and military alliance following the Syrian Revolution in 2011. Russia has facilitated the sales of thousands of arms to President Bashar al-Assad, and in 2015 began airstrikes against strategic rebel targets in Syria. In exchange, Russia was given two military air bases in the Syrian cities of Palmyra and Latakia, as well as a permanent naval base in Tartous. Russia's backing has been crucial to the stability of President Assad during the civil war. Rebel groups in Syria, particularly Western-backed moderate rebel coalitions, have been scathingly critical of Russian military intervention. They argue that its fight against ISIS is only a pretense held in order to target key opposition groups against the Assad government. It is inarguable that the Syrian government has benefited from this military alliance in its fight against terror and rebel groups.

Russia and Turkey: Mutual Exploitation or Genuine Friendship?

- *Tyler D. Coady*

As Putin exerts his military influence in Syria, he is taking advantage of a thaw in relations between Turkey and the West. President Recep Erdogan, not a favorite in Western capitals, has warmed up to Putin. This growing cooperation is one of the most salient manifestations of Putin's growing influence in the region, but it

does not signal a permanent Turkish regression from its Western allies. Throughout the Cold War, Turkey was a rather steadfast Western ally. In the 90s, Turkey became an active member in NATO and made overtures towards joining the EU. With Turkey's recent slide into autocracy, increased reliance on Russian imports, and worsening public relationship with the US and Europe, Moscow has proven to be a more popular diplomatic partner in Ankara. Turkey buys missile defense systems from Russia, cooperates with Russia and Iran on asserting the power of Assad's government in Syria, and demonstrates inconsistent commitment to NATO, an organization which Russia aims to undermine. As confusion builds up from President Trump's supposed betrayal of a Western, liberal order, this vein of thinking should not blur Western perceptions about Russo-Turkish ties. Erdogan and Putin are pragmatic, yet cunning, and are seizing on an opportunity to cooperate militarily and economically.

The House of Saud and the Kremlin: A Relationship at Odds

- *Madeline Hibbs-Magruder*

In October 2017, the Saudi leadership visited Mr. Putin, an unprecedented trip signifying a warming in relations. Moscow and Riyadh placed themselves on different sides of several conflicts across the region, including those in Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan. The uptick in relations is motivated on Russia's side by the potential economic gains of a Russia-OPEC agreement to increase oil prices. This aligns with Putin's long-term goals of pressuring the ties between the US and Saudi Arabia by moving closer to OPEC, exerting pressure over the cartel to increase oil prices. Russia's influence over Saudi Arabia, however, is limited by the bond between Russia and Iran. While the Saudis represent economic gains for Moscow, they are no match for the political inroads that Russia has gained in the region by positioning itself closer to Iran. For this reason, it is highly unlikely that Russia will overstep past precedent and move to drastically expand its influence in Saudi Arabia. King Salman's visit fits the mold of artful diplomacy,

but both nations are unlikely to modify their relationship, due to deeply entrenched relations between Moscow and Tehran on one side and Riyadh and Washington on the other.

Under the Cedars of God, Putin Prospers in Lebanon

- *Jalal H. Taleb*

Lebanon serves as a complex case in Putin's regional endeavors. As Lebanon's population is almost equally Sunni, Shi'a, and Christian, the politics of the country navigate around this notion. The rise of Hezbollah over the last few decades with more as a military force cannot be ignored, but Hezbollah's recent increase in political power is notable. Hezbollah carries twelve parliamentary seats and had significant influence in deciding the Lebanese presidency eleven months ago. This is linked to Putin's relations with the group, as both Iran and Russia have strongly supported Hezbollah and its allies with financings and weapons. This was particularly pronounced during the Syrian Civil War, in which Hezbollah solidified its relationship with Putin in their triumph over rebel groups in regaining Aleppo in December 2016. In September 2017, Russia went so far as to veto the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon's mandate in Lebanon if the UN defined the group as a terror organization – a label the Shiite group seeks to shed as it legitimizes itself as a political force in the region. Beyond Hezbollah, the US provides financial and military support to the Lebanese state, and intriguingly, Russia is also making efforts to uphold similar relations with the Lebanese government, in the form of Kornet missiles and T-72 tanks. In a rare circumstance, US and Russian support of the Lebanese military has worked to oust the Islamic State from Lebanese territories on the border of Syria. Overall, Putin's interests in Lebanon focus on Hezbollah, but as the Lebanese military and Hezbollah are inextricably linked, admiration for Putin throughout Lebanon lives on. •

The Youth Vote in the Tunisian Backslide

- Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

On December 17th, 2010, the immolation of a Tunisian fruit trader, Mohammed Bouazizi, sparked a cascade of protests that spread to eighteen Middle Eastern nations. While Syria and Libya collapsed into civil war, and Egypt's current leadership remains autocratic, Tunisia can be viewed as one success story of the Arab Spring. The former dictator, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, stepped down from power after a month of pressure from protesters, most of whom were unemployed or disillusioned youths under the age of 30. In 2014, the Tunisian people formed a new constitution which set in place democratic institutions and elections. Despite this progress, Tunisia has seen a backslide by President Beji Caid Essebsi's government. Youths have taken to the streets sparking violence and gridlock in the government. During the 2014 legislative and presidential elections, over two thirds of eligible youth did not vote in a boycott. The youth have rejected the system entirely, leaving to join extremist groups in Libya, Syria, and Iraq. Although they may disagree with the current government, by leaving or refusing to participate in the political process, Tunisian youth have created a feedback loop of misrepresentation in the government that has contributed to the current backslide. Tunisia will continue to struggle in its democratic transition, and the youth will become more politically isolated, unless youth-oriented civil society groups join forces with existing parliamentary groups to voice their opinions.

The first troubling action Essebsi's government took was the parliamentary reshuffle in September 2017. The decision replaced thirteen of 28 members of Prime Minister Youssef Chahed's cabinet, three of whom were former technocrats who served under Ben Ali and aided in what commentators have widely seen as corruption that has hampered Tunisia's economic development and increased unemployment rates. Three days later, Parliament passed a divisive piece of legislation known as the "administrative reconciliation law", giving amnesty to former civil servants convicted of corruption. The law narrowly passed and sparked a series of protests in the capital of Tunis, as the law overrides the constitutional authority of the Truth and Dignity Commission, which was officially tasked with transitional justice. After the law passed, the civil society group Manish Msemah galvanized thousands of protesters outside Parliament. Meaning "I will not pardon," the group is a voice of the

“By boycotting the polls, Tunisian youth have established a dangerous cycle of misrepresentation and unaccountability that exacerbate the very backslides they oppose.”

resistance and can indeed mobilize the youth.

Another blow to Tunisia's democratic development has been the postponement of municipal elections for a third time. Municipal elections were set for December but have now been delayed to March of 2018 due to political concerns. Municipal elections are one of Tunisia's last administrative hurdles toward fulfilling the terms of the constitution, and their absence nearly four years after the establishment of the constitution symbolizes the gaping hole between the promises and results of the Essebsi government.

These counter-productive measures are felt hardest by the youth. Tunisians under 30 grew up under the dictation of the Ben Ali regime and are predisposed to skepticism of government, especially when they feel it makes impossible promises. Despite assurances of liberalized economic policies, Essebsi's heavy regulations have inhibited improved economic prospects. Specifically, Tunisian youth make up a majority of the unemployed, which has gone from thirteen percent in 2010 to nineteen percent in 2012 and has stayed stagnant at fifteen percent since 2014.

The response to such government failures by the youth is at best despondent, and at worst, violent. Tunisia contributes the most fighters to the Islamic State (IS) per capita than any other nation, with over 6,000 young people leaving to join the terrorist organization since 2011. Tunisia's outsized contribution is encouraged by the proximity of training grounds in Libya and the growing number unemployed youth. Without prospects of employment or government support, young Tunisians are recruitment targets for groups like IS, whose recruitment measures prey on such vulnerabilities by promising income, identity, and recognition. Exodus by Tunisian youth abets the cycle of underrepresentation that has led to further destabilization.

Compounding the gap between Tunisian youth and the government is low voter turnout. During the 2014 presidential and legislative elections, two-thirds of Tunisian youth boycotted the polls, citing corruption in political parties, high unemployment rates, and a surge

in extremist violence. By boycotting the polls, the youth have established a cycle of misrepresentation and unaccountability that exacerbate the very backslide they oppose. Alternatively, a small percentage of Tunisian youth have been active in pervasive civil society groups. There are over 2,000 registered civil society organizations in Tunisia that advocate for single issues, but these groups lack the cohesion and resources necessary to effectively challenge Essebsi.

To prevent future backsliding, civil society groups like Manish Msemah need to join forces with minority opposition parties before the 2019 elections. Manish Msemah works to quickly organize protests, and has the potential influence increased government oversight, but lacks the cohesion and will to work within the political system. The most viable political partner for Manish Msemah is the Popular Front, a coalition of leftist parties that hold a minority of seats in parliament but have ties to the Ennahda party, the second of two major coalition parties opposing Essebsi's party. Although Ennahda is non-secular, a concern for most young voters, it has put forth the largest campaign to involve youth. Without coordination with established political parties, civil society groups will not be effective at resisting regressive measures taken by Essebsi. Tunisian youth have shown what they expect from their leaders through protests, but in order to enact real change, they must pressure their representatives by voting.

Although the actions taken by President Essebsi and his government are regressive in Tunisia's democratic transition, they are not irreversible setbacks. The path to recovery still lies with the revolutionary youth due to their passion and sheer size. This passion ought to be channeled into the democratic process rather than demonstrated by nonparticipation or extremism. Tunisians and the civil society groups they back should take this opportunity to become more involved via official channels before it is too late. A new Tunisia was born in 2011 because of the power of public protest, but public protest alone cannot sustain a democracy. •

Why the Gulf Must Look to Israel to Solve its Looming Water Crisis

- Tyler D. Coady

The population of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait has ballooned in the last fifty years. Vast oil wealth has brought a high-end lifestyle to these desert nations. Emiratis now consume more than 550 liters of water per person, per day, which is more than two to three times the global average. This sort of economic and societal change has placed incredible strains on freshwater resources and prompted massive investment in desalination technology, which is posited as the Gulf's silver bullet to solving its dearth of freshwater.

However, fellow Middle Eastern nation Israel, having also experienced tremendous population growth in a country more than 60 percent covered by desert, made desalination just one part, not the entirety, of its efforts to ensure long-term freshwater availability. Beyond its instillation of desalination plants, Israel instituted new water pricing schemes, recycled wastewater for agriculture, pioneered drip irrigation, and educated the populace about the necessity of water conservation. The Emiratis, Saudis, and Kuwaitis are wading into a risky future by placing such extreme reliance on just desalination for freshwater production. According to the Guardian, these nations plan to double their production of desalinated water by 2030 even as the Persian Gulf threatens to become too salty for the desalination process. Therefore, Emirati, Saudi, and Kuwaiti leaders must quickly institute Israeli-like water conservation policies in order to ensure freshwater supplies in a hotter and drier Arabian Peninsula.

Subsidies for gasoline, electricity, and water have long been entrenched in Gulf nations. Yet, oil and gas is abundant in the Gulf, while fresh water is scarce, meaning such excessive subsidization of domestic water consumption is extremely reckless. Such subsidies are a major reason why every Gulf nation ranks among the most water-scarce in the world. Thus, instituting a pricing system for water similar to the Israeli model would decrease consumption amongst the highest consumers and alleviate the costs for more responsible residents. Pricing water in this manner provides subsidies just to those who consume below or near the basic allotment of water while charging higher rates to those who exceed it. Meanwhile, it incentivizes large water users to lower their intake and accomplishes in



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reducing overall water consumption.

Furthermore, irrigation tactics pioneered in the last century, including spray irrigation and expansion of pipeline networks, made agriculture in the desert a reality. Yet, as Gulf nations aimed to decrease their reliance on food imports, they drained aquifers to alarmingly low levels while providing no time for subterranean water sources to recharge. According to National Geographic, Saudi Arabia depleted four-fifths of its subterranean freshwater resources in a little more than one generation. Israel, which possesses a large agricultural sector but deals with declining aquifer levels too, countered water scarcity by harnessing wastewater for its agricultural needs. Now, after years of government financing and cooperation with the private sector, Israel derives 55 percent of its water for agriculture from recycled and treated wastewater. The amount of wastewater used for agriculture in the Gulf is growing, but pales in comparison to that in Israel. Possessing plenty of financial capital and technological expertise, Gulf nations must continue to build greater wastewater recycling capacity and ensure agriculture becomes less reliant on aquifer depletion and desalinated water.

Additionally, in order to ensure greater water conservation in agriculture, Gulf agricultural producers must transition from the use of spray irrigation to drip irrigation. Drip irrigation, pioneered in Israel in the late 1950s, allows farmers to irrigate plants by directly routing water onto the plant's roots. According to respected Israeli newspaper Haaretz, drip irrigation saves 25 to 75 percent of pumped water compared to flooding techniques and requires less use of fertilizer, which lessens the likelihood that groundwater will be contaminated. Drip irrigation can be used in a wide variety of geographical locations and has a proven track record of boosting yields and saving water in desert terrains. For Gulf nations, it requires little capital investment,

strengthens the long-term viability of freshwater resources, and accomplishes their goals in utilizing more sustainable agricultural practices.

In the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, the royal families exert great influence over social norms, public opinion, and business dealings. In Israel, a vibrant-but-chaotic democracy endows disparate political movements and news organizations with opportunities to mold public opinion and bring about social change. It can be difficult for the government to bring about comprehensive change in a specific policy area. Yet, as the dangers associated with growing water scarcity became apparent, all elements of the Israeli political spectrum endorsed a water conservation media campaign. According to Alexander Kushner, chief of the Israeli Water Authority, the ad campaign was a resounding success and helped decrease water consumption by ten percent this century. Yet, in the Gulf monarchies, no barriers exist for comprehensive government public influence campaigns. Creating mass information projects that promote water conservation can be financed with full governmental support, be disseminated widely, and be influential in changing attitudes around water consumption.

Gulf nations are at a critical juncture when it comes to freshwater. According to NASA, future climate change scenarios envision a hotter and drier Middle East in which prolonged droughts become commonplace. Growing populations will increase pressure on freshwater resources even more. The guarantee that future oil and gas wealth can subsidize lavish freshwater consumption could deteriorate if the price for fossil fuels remains low and renewable energy sources are adopted en masse. It is necessary that the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait heed the lessons of Israeli water conservation. Doing so would improve their reputations in the international realm, as it would signal their commitment towards building more sustainable societies. Also, expanding their efforts for guaranteeing future freshwater resources beyond desalination is necessary, as desalination cannot be relied on as the sole source of freshwater. A comprehensive water conservation policy encompassing pricing, farming, public awareness, and desalination will do wonders to safeguard the region's tenuous freshwater supplies. •

The Salafist Perversion of Israeli-Palestinian Relations

- Jordan Sandman

The recent protracted conflicts in Syria and Yemen have diverted attention from the Israel-Palestine conflict among both nations in the Middle East and the broader international community. Since Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in 2014 against Hamas, the major fundamentalist governing organization in Gaza, the conflict has been at a relative standstill. At first glance, the two recent developments in Gaza that have dominated headlines appear unlikely to upend this standstill: First, the two dominant governing parties in Palestine, Hamas and Fatah, partially agreed to a reconciliation deal in mid-October. Second, there has been a rise of Salafist groups challenging Hamas on the right with violence and appeals to public sentiment. While these two trends are often reported separately in media outlets, they are intrinsically related, and, in combination, signal a departure from the current peace towards an uptick in violence that will be harmful for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Historically, and in the current case, Hamas has negotiated with Fatah in moments when Hamas is politically vulnerable. Though reconciliation efforts often fail over time, the process of negotiation tends to moderate Hamas' position toward Israel and produce mutual concessions from Hamas and Fatah over sovereignty and other points of contention. For instance, Hamas agreed to negotiate the latest reconciliation deal due to numerous factors that have weakened the group. First, the longstanding Israeli and Egyptian blockades on Gaza's borders have crippled Gaza's economy. Second, the Palestinian Authority (P.A.)—the central governing body of Gaza—has at times restricted electricity generation in Gaza and refused government salaries, which are both vital components of Gaza's economy. Additionally, the loss of Iran and Syria's support due to sectarian divides created in the Syrian conflict represent crucial losses of strong regional allies for Hamas. Finally, the recent blockade and embargo of Qatar, Hamas' sole remaining foreign patron, left the group especially vulnerable. This mix of adverse events forced Hamas to deal with Fatah. In an initial negotiation, Hamas agreed to integrate Gaza's police force with 3,000 P.A. officers in exchange for the P.A. allowing Hamas officials into the ranks of its ministries and agreeing to

release the current energy sanctions.

These negotiations signal Hamas' political fungibility as an organization with respect to its traditional extremist values—that is, Hamas is willing to moderate or augment its radical ideology in response to political circumstances. By revealing its political—as opposed to fundamentalist—nature, Hamas stands to alienate its most hardcore, extremist members. Reports out of Gaza suggest that Hamas has already begun to bleed members to Salafist groups that challenge Hamas' claim to solely represent the extremist right in Gaza.

Salafism is an ideology that advocates the establishment of a Sunni caliphate across the globe. Many Salafists are aligned with ISIS, and, as Hamas shifts toward the center, Salafi ranks are growing. In 2016, a Jihadi commander suggested that the number of Salafi militants in Gaza had grown to as many as 3,000 fighters. Specifically, four Salafist organizations have grown in influence in recent times: Jund Ansar Allah (Soldiers of God's Supporters), Jaysh Al-Islam (Army of Islam), Jaysh Al-Umma (Army of the Nation), and al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad). These Salafist groups consider Hamas to be an organization of infidels for recently accepting a two-state solution by amending its charter, for engaging with the P.A. in recent negotiations, and for participating in the 2006 elections, which Salafis deemed un-Islamic.

Salafists maintain that their primary target is Israel, but have ramped up violence and aggression toward Hamas. In August, a Salafist suicide bomber killed a Hamas commander at the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. These attacks are likely to increase as ISIS continues to lose sovereign territory in Iraq and Syria. The establishment of the Islamic State mobilized thousands of fighters to the Salafist cause by physically realizing the Salafi ideal of a caliphate. Though the physical sovereignty of the caliphate has been nearly extinguished, the dream of a caliphate has been converted into a violent ideology that remains incredibly dangerous and more volatile as ISIS fighters have less to lose by spreading violence outside of Iraq and Syria. Compared to Islamist terrorist networks, such as Al-Qaeda, which relies on isolated pockets of a few hundred ac-

tive commanders, ISIS managed to establish an army of thousands of fighters, some of whom remain radicalized and have returned to Gaza. According to Colin Clarke of the RAND Corporation, Salafists are likely to outflank Hamas, pushing the organization away from the reconciliation agreement by co-opting the group from the right.

Furthermore, the violence is unlikely to be contained within the Gaza strip as Salafists direct their attention towards Israel. Salafists are even more dangerous to the Israeli public than traditional Hamas militants because, as an outside fringe group, they are unconstrained by strategies that seek political gains through formal electoral and administrative processes. Salafist violence will play directly into the narrative of the Israeli right that claims Israel has no viable negotiating partner in Gaza. Those leaders, including Benjamin Netanyahu, his Likud party, and other Zionist organizations, will use the proliferation of Salafi groups to advance their fear-mongering narrative that leads the Israeli citizenry to feel insecure, thus promoting deeper entrenchment of the occupation that begets Palestinian violence. Likud will also likely lump Salafists and Hamas together, conflating violence perpetrated by Salafists as violence perpetrated by Hamas, therefore giving impetus for retaliatory action against Hamas targets that will likely provoke a violent response.

Thus, the increased influence of Salafi groups has the potential to perpetrate the cycle of extremism that exists between right-wing Israelis and Palestinians. The cycle, as Azzam Tamimi describes, occurs when “extremists on the two sides [become], in a very real sense, allies.” As Salafists become more influential, they will corrode negotiations between Hamas and Fatah and begin perpetrating terrorist acts against the Israeli population. The resulting violence will cause shifts to the ideological extremes in both Israel and Palestine, in turn causing more suffering for the Palestinians, less security for the Israelis, and more difficulty for Israeli and Palestinian moderates. Therefore, the faltering Hamas negotiations and rise of Salafist groups in Gaza are not separate events as originally interpreted, but rather, are inextricably linked and signify the emerging threat of Salafist groups outside of Iraq and Syria. •

Lebanese PM's Resignation

An Act of Resistance or a Condemnation of a Nation?

- Ayah Kutmah

The Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced his resignation in a speech on November 4th, sending shock waves across the Middle East. In a televised address from Riyadh, Hariri cited several reasons for his resignation, of most importance was Iranian interference in Lebanon through their support of Hezbollah. The catalyst of this resignation was, according to Hariri, a perceived threat against his life and an atmosphere of fear that mirrored “the atmosphere that prevailed before the assassination of martyr Rafik Hariri.” The abrupt resignation bewildered all and upends the tenuous coalition made in 2016 that ended the two-year long presidential vacuum. Notwithstanding the validity in his claims of Iranian interference and Hezbollah's growing power, Hariri's resignation was not one made out of patriotism; it only serves to drastically cripple an already weak government and embolden external hegemonic powers, including Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The timing of the prime minister's resignation was quite surprising, yet it reflects an escalation of Saudi rhetoric against Iran. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has grown more hegemonic over the past few years, and its willingness to confront Iran has intensified, often at the expense of other Arab nations. This emboldened approach is depicted in Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen against the Iranian backed Houthi rebels, the recent Gulf Crisis that isolated Qatar, in part, for its association with Iran, and its heightened addresses to its regional counterpart. The location of Hariri's speech in Riyadh is intriguing in itself and does nothing to discourage perceptions of Saudi influence. Both the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi and Hezbollah Secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah have scathingly characterized this resignation as one decided by the Saudis and forced upon the prime minister. Hariri's caustic and flagrant critiques of Iran and Hezbollah were unconventional of a leader of a country deeply polarized between different factions, and his escalatory accusations was more akin to the country he was visiting than the one he ruled.

That is not to say that his claims of increasing Iranian hegemony and Hezbollah's growing clout in Lebanon are unfounded. Iranian influence and interference can be seen across the Middle East, whether it be their political and military

support of President Assad in Syria against rebel groups, their backing of the Houthi rebels in Yemen, and of most crucial to Hariri and Lebanon, Iran's financial and arms support of Hezbollah. US estimates that Iranian financial aid to Hezbollah amounts to over \$60 million per year. The Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, himself publicly confirmed that his group received monetary and arms support from the Iranian government. This aid is of particular concern to Saad Hariri as Hezbollah's growing influence threatens the two other major players, the Christian faction headed by President Aoun, and more directly, the Sunni faction headed by Saad Hariri. These growing tensions between the three major players, leads to amplifying fears of a replay of Hezbollah's armed takeover of the streets of Beirut in 2008. The prime minister also cited a fear for a plot against his life, similar to the one that assassinated his father Rafik Hariri in 2005, and which a U.N. tribunal incriminated Hezbollah operatives. While an unnamed Saudi source confirmed the assassination plot, the Lebanese army and Internal Security Forces (ISF), deny any knowledge of this plot.

These fears and accusations were central to Hariri's speech and subsequent resignation. To an extent they are valid, yet the aim of his resignation does not invoke unity. He framed his resignation as one of protest and patriotism, one that would instigate greater unity and strength. Yet, the catastrophic consequences of such a political move are only too obvious. The resignation rescinds the delicate coalition that brought the Lebanese government together in 2016. This coalition government between now-President Michel Aoun, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, and Hezbollah filled the two-year vacuum that left Lebanon without a president and functioning government. It was presented, and hailed then by Hariri, as a coalition to bring “unity” to Lebanon. His sudden protestation of this job, only one year later and before highly anticipated parliamentary elections, through such a dramatic political gesture only plunges the nation into greater uncertainty and heightened sectarian tensions. It reneges on the original coalition deal



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and creates strife for the benefit of regional hegemonic powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as other regional players.

Amid the elevated tensions within the Lebanon, the gap in power will only serve to benefit external powers at the expense of the internal nation. Saudi Arabia is most likely to benefit from this escalated rhetoric towards

Iran and Hezbollah, and likely to use them to excuse its encroachment on other nations' sovereignty, such as Yemen. The resignation and caustic remarks will also escalate Iran's conflict with Saudi Arabia, as seen by the foreign minister's reaction, while excusing and advancing Iranian interference in the region, and boost Iranian aid to Hezbollah. In return, Hezbollah will benefit from the instability by attempting to fill the void Hariri leaves, increasing its own military and political clout. Other major external powers, such as Israel, will most certainly gain from Hariri's resignation by using it as a pretext for any future military conflict against Hezbollah. Israel has already threatened in recent months to go to war against Hezbollah, and welcomed Hariri's resignation as “a wake-up call to the international community to take action against Iranian aggression.” In this sense, Saad Hariri created a temporary state of instability that opened up his country for greater external interference by Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel.

Saad Hariri came to prominence in the aftermath of the assassination of his father Rafik Hariri, and the subsequent Cedar Revolution. The Cedar Revolution was a popular movement that provoked unexpected national unity and was integral to the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005. It is interesting to wonder if Saad Hariri believed that his resignation in protestation of a foreign power, similar to his father's reason for resignation in 2004, would instigate the same unity. The deliverance of Saad Hariri's resignation, one made in a foreign country and played into the hands of Saudi interests, have the exact opposite effect. The legitimacy of his concerns are undermined by the position he puts his country in: one ripe for internal divisions, political quagmire, greater external interference and heightened security risks.

A Hazardous Standard

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' Failure in Syria

- Sanuri Gunawardena

An official United Nations report published by Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in late October 2017 provides new evidence that the Syrian government was behind a deadly chemical attack on a rebel-controlled town in the northwest of the country. The attack took place in April, and the UN now confirms that a sarin nerve agent was used in Khan Sheikhoun, resulting in the deaths of more than eighty people. Syria's foreign ministry denies the conclusions brought forth in the report, accusing the United Nations of attempting to exert further political pressure on Syria, while simultaneously undermining the atrocities of the so-called moderate opposition.

While the OPCW was right to issue a report that condemned the Syrian government, its failure to prevent the usage of chemical weapons in Syria is emblematic of its highly political nature and fragmented membership. Furthermore, since the world first learned of chemical weapons being used in Syria, the OPCW has produced reports that are largely toothless and inconsistent in who they choose to condemn, which has sapped the group of legitimacy and undermined its mission.

The findings of the report were stated by the OPCW and the UN's Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). As battling between the government and rebel groups led to grave destruction in Syria, it was the responsibility of the international community to unite and hold the Syrian government, as well as rebel factions, accountable for various war crimes. OPCW members like Russia should have held Syrian authorities accountable for the violations while foreign patrons of the so-called moderate opposition, including the United States and Saudi Arabia, ought to have condemned rebel factions for the attacks they unleashed on innocent civilians as well.

In cases where chemical weapons allegations have been made, the OPCW is permitted to conduct a fact-finding inspection. Another member state must request an inspection, along with providing verified proof, in order for the OPCW to undertake such an operation. However, over the last four years, the OPCW's

“The OPCW has produced reports that are largely toothless and inconsistent in who they choose to condemn, which has sapped the group of legitimacy and undermined its mission.”

involvement in the Syria has been incredibly inactive, which is largely symptomatic of the agency's lack of experience in conducting investigations; since the OPCW's establishment in 1997, no member state has requested an official inspection. While the organization has been a part of a previous UN mission to investigate chemical weapons use in Syria, its reports have been undermined by the internal dynamics and political infighting that takes place among member states.

While the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize given to the OPCW may have endowed it with a bit of temporary credibility, its authority has further dwindled since then. This is evident in the Syrian government's ability to again use chemical weapons, with little international resistance or suspicion. Measures that could be taken to improve the OPCW seem few and far between, as an empowered OPCW is not in the interest of militarily strong international powers that tend to disregard OPCW reports whenever it suits them.

To compound matters, the ability of the international community to curb the power which the Syrian government throughout the civil war has largely evaporated. In June 2017, newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron said, “nobody has shown me a legitimate successor” to Assad. The United Kingdom seems more reluctant to publicly change its stance on the Syrian leader, but it is taking no tangible action to support opposition groups. Turkey, meanwhile, has continued to work with Assad's allies Russia and Iran through the Astana peace process. And although Turkish troops are intervening in northern Syria, they avoid Syrian government positions and have banned their rebel clients from fighting Syrian government forces. Further south, Jordan is pushing its rebel clients to maintain a ceasefire with the Syrian government while trying to broker a

resumption of Jordanian–Syrian border trade. The Saudis and Qataris have not stopped hating Assad, but they can do little without Jordanian, Turkish, and American help. It does not help that since June 2017, the Saudis and Qataris have been busy fighting each other. “The Saudis do not care about Syria anymore,” a senior Western diplomat recently told *The Guardian*. “It's all Qatar for them. Syria is lost.”

The OPCW has failed spectacularly in its duties. The OPCW produced reports, conducted investigations, and oversaw the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, but Syrian citizens are still victims of chemical weapons years after they were reportedly destroyed. What can be done to rectify the issues that plague the agency are unclear, but it is clear that when it came to limiting chemical weapon use, the OPCW failed. In that capacity, the OPCW and similar organizations ought to strike a balance in their assessment of wartime atrocities and human rights violations, irrespective of geopolitical interests. •

Testing the Resilience of Qatar

Striking a Balance in Arab-Persian Gulf Relations

- Baibhav Panda

In June 2017, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and the Maldives announced that they would cut diplomatic ties with Qatar. Immediately, Saudi Arabia and the UAE notified ports and shipping agents not to receive Qatari vessels, closed Qatar's only land border, restricted its airspace to Qatar Airways, and advised against trading with Qatari banks. Yet, for such a drastic cut in diplomatic ties, Saudi Arabia and its allies provided complex and, in many ways, paradoxical reasoning for their decision. According to the Saudis, Qatar's media outlet, Al Jazeera, was too critical of the Gulf Arab states, and insufficiently critical of Iran. Furthermore, the Saudis could not digest Qatar's military pacts with Turkey, as well as Qatari ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, a source of antagonism to the Egyptian government. The core issues driving this wedge between the Arab World and the Gulf nation, however, is likely Qatar's relationships with Iran and its attempts to challenge Saudi hegemony. Historically, the Gulf nation has been politically and economically dependent on Saudi Arabia, which has since dictated its foreign policy priorities and diplomatic relations in the region. However, Qatar's efforts to expand its interests and extend diplomatic relations with traditional adversaries represent a break from this relationship based on Qatar's changing national interests. Thus, rather than dwell on historical Saudi dependence, Qatar has a right to move toward more inclusive, holistic diplomatic policies with the region.

The sparks that set off this diplomatic breakdown have persisted for decades. In 1995, Qatar saw a bloodless coup, and the rise of a new emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa-al Thani. Hamad believed that Qatar must alleviate itself from being an appendage of Saudi Arabia to become a major power in the region. Most of Qatar's diplomatic strategy still derives from the days of Hamad's tutelage. Renowned political scientist Marc Lynch describes Qatari foreign policy in the late 1990s as rooted in a combination of two main questions: "What can we do to get ourselves on the map?" and, "What can we do to annoy the Saudis?" This era saw the creation of Al Jazeera and bolstered relations with the United States, which later used Qatar as its base of operations in the Gulf War and other opera-

“Given an unconventional expansion of relations with Iran and Russia and ambitious plans in hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022, Qatari progress cannot be discounted.”

tions in the Middle East. Qatar also developed trade relations with most of the Gulf, Iran, and even Israel, expanding their importance with other regional states. Furthermore, the 1990s also saw technological and economic developments that created a global market for Qatar's large gas reserves, liquefied natural gas. Thanks to these innovations, Qatar's economy expanded from \$8.1 billion in 1995 to an astonishing \$210 billion in 2014, relieving their dependence on Saudi Arabia. Because of these policy and technological changes, Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador to Qatar in 2002 until 2008, signaling an all-time low in relations between the two states. Thus, to fully digest the current division in Saudi-Qatari relations, appreciating the historical context of Qatar's rise is crucial.

Saudi animosity toward Iranian-Qatari relations persists on the global stage. In 2006, Qatar was the only UN Security Council member to vote against Security Council Resolution 1696, which called on Iran to halt its nuclear enrichment program. From an economic lens, the Saudi Arabia feels threatened by Iran and Qatar's collaboration on their shared interests in energy, specifically their shared ownership of the South Pars/North Dome Gas-Condensate field, the world's largest natural gas field. Together with Russia, Iran and Qatar own around fifty percent of the world's oil reserves and have used this vast advantage as common grounds for building bilateral ties, as well as an intricate Qatari relationship with the Russians. These strengthened economic and diplomatic ties are substantial, and considering they are with traditional Gulf adversaries, represent a challenge to Saudi leadership in the region.

Saudi Arabia sees its regional hegemony threatened to this day, as Qatar is increasingly presenting itself as an economic and political powerhouse in the Gulf. Given an unconventional expansion of relations with Iran and Russia and ambitious plans in hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022, Qatari progress cannot be

discounted. However demands from the region, including the UAE's criticism of Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup and heightened accusations from the Saudi right-wing alleging Qatari collusion with Iran in Yemen, are simply rhetoric and Qatar ought not to succumb.

While most of the Gulf aligns with Saudi Arabia rather than Qatar in the diplomatic blockade, Qatar has its allies in two of the region's biggest powers—Iran and Turkey. Turkey is a major source of support for Qatar during the blockade, serving as its greatest food supplier as well as providing diplomatic and military support. Indeed, on June 7th, 2017, the Turkish parliament passed a legislative act first drafted in May allowing for the deployment of troops to a Turkish military base in Qatar. Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the isolation of Qatar as "inhumane and against Islamic values" and stating that "victimizing Qatar through smear campaigns serves no purpose". Thus, Qatar has the regional allies and resources to continue its just pursuit of influence in the region. Thus, it should continue this crusade contrary to Saudi interests.

Saudi Arabia and its allies may have hoped for quick Qatari subjugation after the imposition of its diplomatic and economic blockade. However, with Qatar managing to show resilience by defying Saudi Arabia's demands, the blockade may prove to be one of the best opportunities for development between Qatar and Iran, Turkey, and Russia. With no near end in sight, the diplomatic breakdown between Saudi and Qatar is not a cause for hesitation. Rather, Qatari resilience offers a chance for heightened economic and political development between parties in the region and increased strength for the formerly dependent nation. Thus, Qatar is justified in its national pursuit for increased independence and influence in the region rather than a country guilty of destabilizing important alliances. •

Abandon the Iran Deal? Think Again

- Maya Zreik

On September 19th, 2017, President Trump delivered a speech to the United Nations in which he lambasted his nation's 2015 nuclear deal with Iran as an "embarrassment." Days later, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani fired back at Trump by stating "it will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics." A month later Trump refused to certify the deal, making it more likely than ever that the White House will withdraw from the agreement in the near future. If they do, it will weaken Iran's moderate leadership, push Iran closer to Russia, and isolate the United States on the international stage, all of which could further destabilize the Middle East.

The Iran nuclear agreement—officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—was reached in 2015 by Iran, the permanent members of the UN Security Council, and the European Union. It limited Iran's capabilities to enrich uranium in exchange for relaxing harsh sanctions against the country. It was signed after years of concerns over the possibility that Iran could develop a nuclear weapon. President Trump made his distaste for the deal a central part of his campaign rhetoric and vowed to "tear it up" if elected.

On October 14th, Trump refused to certify that Iran was complying with the deal despite evidence that they are, and requested that Congress include new clauses in the agreement that address Iran's alleged support for terrorist groups in countries such as Lebanon and Yemen. He also asked Congress to re-impose sanctions against Iran and gave it until December to decide whether to do so or not. President Trump spent much of his statement arguing that his decision was due to Iran's human rights abuses saying, "Given the regime's murderous past and present, we should not take lightly its sinister vision for the future."

However, the JCPOA is a deal designed only to address Iran's nuclear program—there are separate US deals and sanctions imposed on Iran as a response to its human rights' abuses. Therefore, to strike down the nuclear deal due to issues outside of its subject is unfounded. Furthermore, by censuring Iran on the basis of not complying with the JCPOA despite indications of compliance, Trump risks fracturing international unity and undermining the United States' global standing with its own allies.

The nuclear deal was negotiated and signed by the government of Hassan Rouhani, the current president of Iran. Rouhani is known for his moderate policies and his desire for warmer relations with the West. The deal was unpopular with the conservative political parties of Iran who saw it as a submission to international pressure. They believed that the deal was "an American plan" to control Iranian domestic policies and interfere with their nuclear program. The conservative parties want the deal to fail—they almost succeeded in preventing Rouhani's government from signing it in the first place. If the agreement collapses, it will be seen as a failure of the moderates. Such a failure will send the message to the Iranian people that even when their government practices diplomacy and elects moderate leaders, the West will still never accept Iran.

Iran also experienced a recession before the JCPOA due to the sanctions imposed by the West, which significantly hurt the lower classes. Another recession will only further sour the public's opinion of the moderate government. This type of disillusionment could prove dangerous. It would provide an opening for the conservative parties of Iran to rally the people towards its cause and choose to replace Rouhani's current government with a more staunchly conservative and anti-Western one. This would only aggravate things further in Iran. Conservatives ran the country for eight years under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and during this time period the economy tanked and relations with the West were colder than ever.

An abandoned nuclear deal will likely see Iran seek even closer relations with Russia. An Iranian official told Reuters, "Both Russia and Iran are under American pressure... Tehran has no other choice but to rely on Moscow to ease the US pressure." Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has already begun cultivating warmer relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin since Trump decertified the deal. The two leaders met on November 1st to discuss cooperation between their nations in fighting "regional terrorism." The move is similar to a visit from Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin to Iran in August, when the two countries increased their military cooperation three days after the US passed new sanctions on Iran. This level of coopera-

tion between Russia and Iran has not been seen since before the JCPOA was enacted, when Iran turned to Russia for military supplies as a result of the sanctions. Iran was not permitted to replace their aged aircrafts as a condition of sanctions, so they turned to Russia for airplane parts and fuel.

Today, Iran has considerable influence in the Middle East, and a US attempt to isolate Iran by withdrawing from the deal could have broad and dire implications for the region. Iranian support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was instrumental in aiding the central government to win the civil war, and strengthen its own influence in Syria. In Iraq, various militias operating as part of the popular mobilization forces established to defend Iraq against the Islamic State are supported and often funded by Iran. Today, some of those same militias are vying to control key border crossings near the Kurdistan region. The Yemeni Houthis, who control the government, are also now aided and funded by Iran.

Tehran's influence in the region is also substantial to the point that undoing mechanisms to oversee Iran's nuclear manufacturing capacities could plunge the region into a deeper spiral of instability as tensions between it and the West increase. Currently, American and Iranian allies are involved in a standoff in Syria and could possibly enter into direct confrontation should the deal be abandoned. A delicate peace has been achieved between the US and Iran in Iraq in order to fight the Islamic State, but this could shatter should hostilities resume. In such a context, Iran could use its local proxies to hinder efforts by the Iraqi government to achieve an inclusive political arrangement.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has had considerable influence on international issues beyond Iran's nuclear program. If Donald Trump decides to withdraw from the deal for the sake of pursuing the United States' anti-globalist agenda, the consequences will prove grave for Iran, the Middle East, and for the United States. The status quo of the region today makes it impractical for the US to pursue policies to isolate Iran. Rather than causing irreparable damage to the US's standing and its ability to navigate a precarious international scene, the administration should capitalize on the achievements of this agreement to prevent further instability in the Middle East. •

The Iran Conundrum

Finding a Pragmatic Approach in Unconventional Wisdom

- Jalal H. Taleb

Often, Iran is perceived as innately hostile to the interest of the West and its regional allies. Thus, conventional wisdom dictates foreign policy to shy away from proper reconciliation with Iran. This school of thought falsely conglomerates moderate and hardline populations of Iran as one extreme, anti-Western group. While Iran's involvement in hardline politics cannot be undermined: Iran helped solidify President Bashar al-Assad in Syria during Syria's civil war, they finance Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthi forces in Yemen, and various Shiite militias across Iraq, Tehran's regional provocations must be pragmatically assessed to improve the state of Iran's relations with the West.

Recent conventional wisdom has centered on isolating Iran with a series of alliances centered on Saudi Arabia, in conjunction with a US-led economic and military sanctions. More recently, United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson implicitly argued for a "regime change" in Iran – suggesting that an intensification of Western sanctions on the country will force Iran to capitulate to Western interests. The irresponsible talk of regime change neglects previous foreign intervention in Iran's domestic affairs in 1953, when the popularly elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup. A quarter century later, in 1979, Iranian revolutionaries cited that grievance more than any other as the motive for their 444-day occupation of the US embassy in Tehran. The embassy takeover was condemned around the world, but many Iranians viewed it as acceptable retaliation.

There are few compelling options with regard to diplomatic relations with Tehran. First, there is the continuation of sanctions. Secondly, there is a talk of "regime change". Most unconventional is to maintain the regional balance of power through détente. This challenges the status quo and necessitates a longer-term commitment, but there are indeed long-term economic and political implications.

Various conditions are necessary to contain Iran with the current status quo of sanctions. First, Sunni Arab states must unite, yet Iran's economy would further suffer economically. Given these constraints, this status quo is rooted in false idealism. For example, the Saudis could feasibly lead this coalition, but they are occupied

with the conflict in Yemen and a shift away from oil exportation. Secondly, Saudi leadership is insecure in the country's oil-rich northeast, which happens to be where its Shiite minority is located. Furthermore, Turkey is aligned with Iran against Kurdish separatists, so they would be at odds with a Sunni coalition. In addition, reformists in Iran, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif and President Hassan Rouhani, are consistently open to negotiation with the West compared to previous leadership. Indeed, further sanctions are counterproductive and will play into the hands of hardliners, who see opposition to the West as their *raison d'être*.

The second option is coercing a leadership change. Overthrowing Iran's theocracy for a secular government requires three pillars: the support of dissident forces; fueling ethnic unrest in Sunni-majority provinces; and creating opposition by mobilizing the youth. The only serious dissident force is Mujahideen-e Khalq, an organization of resistance with roughly 10,000 members. With most members outside of Iran, many Iranians dislike them due to former connections with an Iranian foe, Saddam Hussein. Next, producing an ethnic uprising undermines Iran's history. Iran's territories are not connected through artificial, sectarian boundaries similar to its neighboring states. There is historical cohesion between the dozen different ethnic groups dating back millennia. Ironically, President Rouhani won all major Sunni-populated provinces by an overwhelming margin this year, with voter turnout in those provinces exceeding the national average. Amongst the youth, there is a population resistant to revolt. Iran's youth recognize the massive chaos associated with civil uprising and 'regime' change – they can look no further than Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Given this dynamic, regime change is unlikely to succeed.

Thus, the final option in dealing with Iran is the most unconventional, yet pragmatic. To stifle the tension embedded within the Iranian-Saudi rivalry, international players should encourage a more responsible Iran by working with Tehran to increase strategic partnerships with global players. For this option to succeed, the power balance must serve in the best interest of all, Iran must be convinced to comply given the proper accommodations, and Iran's nuclear program should be reassessed.

Several current trends suggest this would be universally beneficial. First, economic hardship is rampant and war is widespread in the region, creating the perfect breeding ground for Islamist groups and nationalistic autocracies. Furthermore, the Iran's stability depends on economic growth. Access to international financing is crucial, and requires Tehran to enforce an accommodating international agenda.

Then, there is the question of Iran's ballistic missile program. Tehran's insistence in maintaining this program dates back to the Iran-Iraq war, when Saddam Hussein bombarded the country with ballistic missiles and chemical weaponry while Tehran was inhibited largely by US-led sanctions. Importantly, rival Saudi Arabia outspent Iran on defense by a factor of 6.7 in the last three years (\$300 billion vs. \$45 billion). At a time when détente can be seriously explored with Iran, Tehran's insecurities are rooted in the past and present. With this unconventional approach, Iran must be granted a seat at the table when discussing its military arsenal. The nuclear deal struck multilaterally in 2015 is an optimistic beginning.

Henry Kissinger observed that Iran had to choose "whether it is a nation or a cause." To the extent that Iran continues to see itself as a cause—or insists that it can be both a cause and a nation—there is little prospect for regional stability. Expectations about the pace of change in Iran need to be tempered. The internal debate around Iran's future could continue without a clear resolution for another decade or more, and its domestic situation could worsen. As more Iranian citizens debate their country's destiny and more of Iran becomes connected to the rest of the world, prospects for political moderation will increase. In the meantime, international players should assess their long term options with the current restraints, and focus on easing Tehran into the larger global economy. Such a policy requires patience and courage, because it would likely be politically unpopular. But none of the popular alternatives are in the long-term interests of the region. Influencing foreign policy with conventional wisdom emerges with particular ease, and it often fails the Middle East as a whole – in resetting Iranian relations, it is time to employ more unconventional wisdom. •

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