

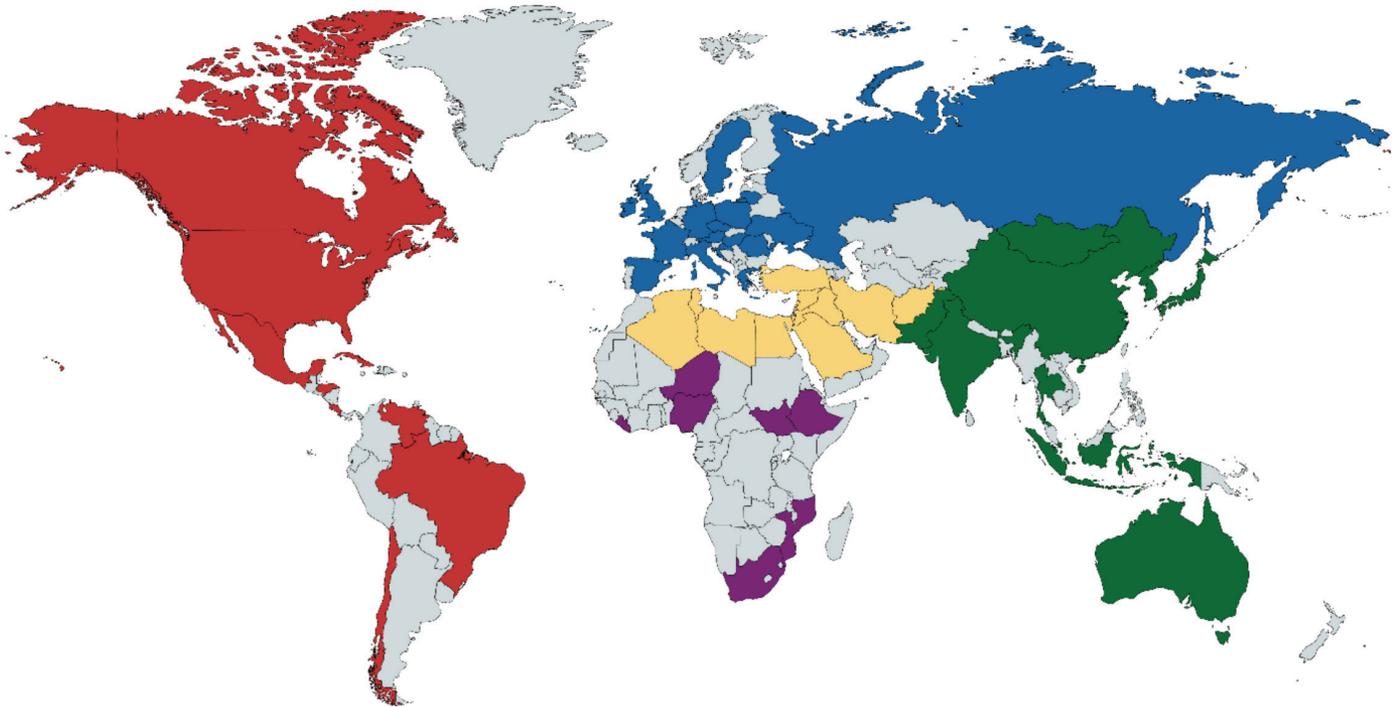
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COLD FRONT

LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD



The first months of 2018 have been marked by an onslaught of attacks on governing institutions and aggressive moves on the part of authoritarian strongmen. In this edition of the *Michigan Journal of International Affairs*, we therefore note a handful of these instances and present evidence of a fundamental backsliding in the state of democracy and representative governance around the world.

Lauren Camp and Sebastian Leder Macek consider corruption as an overshadowing issue in the past, present, and future of Liberian politics. Ms. Camp notes that, though former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's administration was hailed as a time of great prosperity and hope, it was nonetheless marred by allegations of corruption. Mr. Macek argues that President Sirleaf's successor, George Weah, has an opportunity to correct for this systematic issue, but that the road ahead is long and riddled with institutional obstacles.

Director of External Affairs Grace Bristol discusses the future of Cuba in a post-Castro era. Despite President Raúl Castro's impending formal exit from office, Ms. Bristol argues that the influence of Castroist doctrine on the island, both in the form of personal loyalty to the Communist Party and the lasting impact of the Cuban Revolution, is poised to remain.

Editor-in-Chief Vineet Chandra discusses the shocking lack of formalized, institutional objection to China's recent abolition of presidential term limits. While Communist Party members insist that the change is only for consistency's sake – and that President Xi Jinping has no intention of clinging to power beyond the traditional two terms – the ease and enthusiasm with which the Chinese government allowed and enabled the dismantling of this political safeguard should be cause for alarm.

In Europe, our regional staff writers examine the impact of recent elec-

tions, given the wave of populism currently sweeping the continent. B.A. Bacigal analyzes the unclear results of the Italian parliamentary elections: no single party garnered a clear majority, following a strong performance from the far-right Five Star Movement. Managing Editor Meghan Rowley covers Vladimir Putin's unsurprising victory in the Russian presidential elections, after his primary competitor was thrown in jail.

Finally, Konrat Pekkip describes the intimidating tactics of the Turkish government in cracking down on journalism in the country. While President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was initially quite accepting of a free press, his politics have turned more authoritarian in recent years. During his rule, Turkey has dropped an unsettling 54 places in the Press Freedom Index, becoming the country with the highest number of imprisoned journalists worldwide. Mr. Pekkip argues that the future of journalism in Turkey is "far bleaker than it is positive."

"Cold Front" bears witness to the chilling effect on democracy spreading around the world today. The rise of strongmen, the assault on democratic institutions, and the effect that these trends may have on international relations is indicative of a weakening in democratic and cosmopolitan values – one not seen on such a wide scale since the Cold War.

Michigan Journal of International Affairs,
Editorial Board

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African Leaders Make Positive Steps Toward Harnessing their Collective Economic Power

- Max Goldman

In March 2018, representatives from 44 member states of the African Union (AU) signed on to join the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The AfCFTA is projected to be the largest single trade agreement signed since the World Trade Organization was established in 1995. Africa has long been exploited for its resources and largely ignored on the international stage, but developing the continent into a cohesive trading bloc has the potential to empower African states to grow their economies and better their societies materially. Although AfCFTA is only in its formative stages, it represents a potential first step for African leaders to harness the collective economic might of their countries. If the lofty plans the AU has for AfCFTA come to fruition, it could mark a seminal moment in African history, one in which African countries become the agents of their own economic development and prosperity. Though challenges certainly remain, African nations, especially holdouts to the deal like South Africa and Nigeria, must commit themselves to AfCFTA and put their full support behind the agreement.

The AU has ambitious plans for AfCFTA. If it is ratified by all 55 AU member states, it will represent a trade bloc of around 1.2 billion people, more than twice the population within the European Union (EU). The combined GDP of the zone in Africa would be more than \$2 trillion. The opening of inter-African borders would lower barriers for African firms who want to do business across the continent. Currently, only sixteen percent of trade in Africa takes place between African countries. Estimates say that this could jump to 50 percent once the agreement goes into effect. By cutting tariffs, local African firms would be able to serve multiple markets through a single manufacturing base. For example, as of now, a firm that manufactures goods in Ghana but wants to sell those goods in Benin would have to pay tariffs on its goods or manufacture them in Benin. AfCFTA would eliminate such difficulties, allowing for the growth of multinational African corporations that would be able to generate wealth in Africa, instead of letting it continue to flow into the coffers of its former colonizers in Europe.

One important aspect of many African economies is an overreliance on exportation

“Though challenges certainly remain, African nations...must commit themselves to AfCFTA and put their full support behind the agreement.”

of natural resources. Currently, many African nations rely on the natural resources within the borders drawn by European powers. Natural resource endowment is both a blessing and curse. These resources bring in critically important hard currency from the global market, but a country can also become over-reliant on such resources for its economic livelihood. Demand shocks in the global economy, for instances, can devastate such a country's economy. Moreover, natural resource wealth often supplies African governments with a practically endless supply of non-taxed income. Since rulers are, therefore, not reliant on taxes for their countries' economic well-being, they are not beholden to the wishes of their tax base: the people. This aspect of the so-called 'resource curse' effectively inhibits the development of democracy, and also enables dictators to remain for power in decades. Many dictators in Africa, such as those of oil-rich Angola and Equatorial Guinea, spread resource wealth amongst the ruling elite in return for political favors. With the ratification of AfCFTA, African economies would be less volatile, allowing investment in economic sectors that can deliver continued and stable economic prosperity, such as the goods and services sectors. This would, by extension, empower African democracy movements.

Out of the 44 countries that signed on to establish a free trade zone, 27 also signed an agreement to eventually allow the free movement of people through their borders. By allowing people to move freely through the continent, countries with higher growth rates can alleviate high unemployment in other economies. Once the initial surge in migration occurs, there will be an overall drop in unemployment continent-wide, as the supply and demand for labor will find an equilibrium. As time progresses, free movement would not only grow, but also help stabilize Africa's economy. This could revolutionize the way the African map is thought of, as artificial borders drawn without regard for ethnic makeup within would become more

malleable under these agreements.

Although 44 countries signed on to AfCFTA, two holdouts threaten the success of the trade bloc: South Africa and Nigeria. These two countries represent a third of the proposed bloc's GDP. South Africa, for one, is arguably the most developed country in the AU. Joining the AfCFTA would allow South African companies direct access to over a billion consumers; the nation boasts various pre-existing companies which can establish inroads across the continent. Joining would also make South Africa the economic leader of the bloc, similar to Germany's position in the EU. As the African middle class grows continent-wide, these firms would be in prime position to claim a portion of their newly-acquired disposable income.

Nigeria is also one of the fastest-developing economies in Africa, with a population of over 186 million people. The Nigerian cabinet admits that joining AfCFTA would create jobs, but the Nigerian President does not want to sign an agreement if it undermines local Nigerian manufacturers. Nigeria must think for the long term, though, and join the bloc. The country was once in the position of its neighbors; once it joins AfCFTA, it would trigger greater moves towards completing their transformations into developed nations. This would help to ensure greater economic development across the continent.

With AfCFTA, the African continent has an opportunity to establish itself economically on the global stage. AfCFTA would lead to unprecedented economic growth and political stability for the continent as a whole. African states, including holdouts South Africa and Nigeria, must not lose focus and continue to make progress on establishing a continent-wide free trade area. African states has been taken advantage of for too long. AfCFTA presents African economies an opportunity to flex their muscle and to show the world that African states are on their way to becoming power players in the global economic arena. ■

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Leaves Behind a Respectable Legacy in Liberia

- Lauren Camp

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf declared corruption as “Public Enemy #1” at the beginning of her presidency in efforts to gain the trust of Liberia, a nation accustomed to broken promises. Ironically, accusations of her own corruption, along with dissatisfaction amongst her party, contributed to her presidency coming to a bittersweet end in January. Her accomplishments have been praised, but there has been disappointment with the institutional change she promised but did not deliver. While she leaves behind a checkered reputation, her successes ultimately outweigh her shortcomings. Liberia made significant progress under her administration that should not be derided, but instead celebrated.

Sirleaf is the first woman democratically elected as head of state in Africa; her electoral victory provided a symbol of hope for women both within Liberia and globally. She carved out a space for Liberian women in government that did not exist before, and successfully rallied the support of women in Liberia with the slogan “Vote for Woman!” She embraced her role as a female candidate, and obtained support from all Liberian women, the most harmed population during the Liberian civil war who were determined to see institutional change. Women showed up to the polls in unprecedented numbers; scenes of women voters passing their babies to one another in voting lines, as nursing mothers were allowed cut to the front to vote, dominated the news cycle. Sirleaf’s candidacy promised a new direction, though she may have fallen short on making all the concrete policy changes to ensure the long-lasting involvement of women in Liberian politics. Her ability to rally women to achieve electoral victory is a clear step in the right direction for the nation and region.

Sirleaf entered office facing a nation devastated by years of violent civil war and instability, with few financial resources at her disposal. In fact, the situation was so dire that statistics like the unemployment rate were not compiled. Sirleaf negotiated \$4.6 billion of debt relief with both the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which speaks volumes to her economic expertise. She was also able to secure \$16 billion in foreign investment, and boost the government budget from \$80 million to \$516



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

million. She made other strides for national growth, including rebuilding infrastructure, restructuring the military, reforming the police, and restoring democratic values. She guided the country through the worst Ebola crisis in its history, while simultaneously maintaining these aforementioned developments.

In January, Sirleaf was succeeded by George Weah in the first peaceful democratic transition of power in Liberia in 73 years, restoring the precedent of term limits and furthering the confidence of Liberians in their democracy. Her efforts revitalized Liberia and should be regarded as a great political success. Considering the immense number of the issues that Sirleaf faced, her inability to raise Liberia completely out of poverty does not mean that she has failed as a leader.

Sirleaf has been rightfully praised on the international stage as an outstanding leader. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 and in February was awarded the 2017 Ibrahim Prize. This esteemed award, which celebrates excellence in African leadership, is given to leaders who are democratically elected and leave office peacefully after their mandated term. She is the fifth recipient of the award, which has not been given to any leader since 2014. She is also the first woman awarded the prize.

It is at home in Liberia where many are unimpressed by her performance. Many of Sirleaf’s triumphs are tainted by allegations of corruption within her administration. She ap-

pointed twenty family members to positions in her administration, including her three sons. This nepotism in her government’s ranks does not necessarily indicate a corrupt motive, but some view it as such nonetheless. Sirleaf has acknowledged personal frustration in her failure to meet her anti-corruption pledge. She continued to prioritize fighting corruption until the end of her presidency; however, she has proposed the establishment of a corruption court, and stated she knows that there is still work to be done to achieve her lofty goals. Her reputation at home has also been tarnished as the Unity Party recently expelled her for supporting Weah over her own former vice president and fellow party member Joseph Boakai in the 2017 election. Liberians continue to be frustrated by the slow progress of jobs and economic development, but should commend the advances made under Sirleaf. It is justifiable for Liberians to be frustrated with the continued state of their country, which makes it difficult to see the positive change Sirleaf brought about.

While Ellen Johnson Sirleaf’s legacy is debated, she should continue to be appropriately credited for the progress that she made for the nation of Liberia and for women’s rights in Africa. She is extremely deserving of the Ibrahim Prize, and her efforts have begun the process of rebuilding a nation devastated by civil war. While she leaves behind a country that has much rebuilding to do, Sirleaf was the force that provided Liberia with momentum for further growth and progress under her successor. ■

George Weah's Golden Opportunity

- Sebastian Leder Macek

From playing soccer in the streets of Liberia's capital to winning the Ballon d'Or, one of soccer's highest honors, George Weah has consistently overcome adversity. Since retiring from soccer, Weah has committed himself to a career in politics and helping the Liberian people. He was not discouraged by electoral defeat for the presidency in 2005, or as a vice-presidential candidate in 2011, and was eventually overwhelmingly elected to the Liberian Senate in 2014.

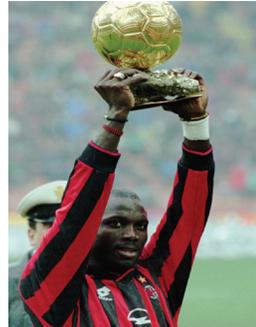
This is the story of perseverance that Weah spoke of in his successful 2018 campaign for president. He defeated incumbent Vice President Joseph Boakai in January with a landslide victory by obtaining the youth and lower class vote based on appeals to his popularity such as his national sporting persona, his poor upbringing, and his work ethic. Furthermore, he offered an alternative to the establishment political class in Liberia, which prospered even as Liberia made only minimal progress in societal development under former president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's twelve-year rule. Liberians were swayed by his promises to usher in change and improve economic development. But now that he has taken office, Weah must act quickly to keep himself from falling short on his promises to avoid falling into the same traps as former establishment presidents. Thus, his first priority should be combatting Liberia's serious corruption problems in both the public sector and with foreign multinational corporations.

Corruption is an institutionalized issue in the Liberian government, affecting nearly every sector of society. Although former president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf declared the issue a "major public enemy" in 2006, she largely failed to address it during her presidency. Transparency International gave Liberia a 3.2 out of ten rating in corruption, making it one of the worst in West Africa. Given the scale and scope of corruption in Liberia, confronting this issue is necessary to implement any significant future progress and gain the trust of Liberian voters. In Liberia specifically, combating corruption can be accomplished through impactful reforms such as raising public sector wages and renegotiating contracts with foreign companies. But more importantly, Weah's solution must be built on policy action, as Liberia's corruption problems

are not necessarily due to the absence of laws, but a lack of political will to enforce them. A slew of corruption laws passed by Sirleaf's administration have yet to make significant change within Liberia; Weah now has the responsibility to pick up the slack.

First, he must focus on increasing public salaries. Currently, low wages incentivize public-sector workers to supplement their incomes with bribes, a fairly common practice among policemen, tax collectors, and even legislators. Unfortunately, enforcement laws that would combat such habits are unreliable, given that the legislative process is highly opaque. The Open Budget Index gives Liberia a 40 out of 100 for the transparency of its budget process. As such, many executives manipulate the law or ignore enforcement provisions. Thus, Liberian legislators cannot rely on consistent revenues or reasonable penalties for bribery. In turn, this incentivizes them to accept payoffs from companies, which undermines the rule of law and contradicts democratic principles. To combat such corruption, Weah should increase public salaries so that officials are not incentivized to stoop to corrupt sources of income. Furthermore, he should require public officials to declare their assets. While already a norm in Liberia, there is no punishment for officials who do not comply. He therefore must strengthen existing institutions put in place by Sirleaf, such as the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), which currently only has oversight authority. Weah could add prosecutorial power to the Commission to allow for greater punishment of corrupt individuals. He can also unilaterally establish independent corruption courts to avoid politically-motivated litigation of corruption. Both measures should disincentivize and properly prosecute corruption in the public sector.

In the private sector, Liberia's substantial mineral wealth has perpetuated an exploitative relationship with foreign multinational corporations. Resources are extracted by these companies and Liberians have yet to see any substantial financial returns. These sweetheart deals with powerful businesses limit the benefit of



Liberian soccer star George Weah holding the Ballon d'Or. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

spending initiatives, as Liberian employees of international corporations have limited income to spend. Furthermore, multinational corporations will often set unfairly high prices for goods and services within the country, meaning corruption practices are indirectly eating into the incomes of everyday Liberians, wasting money that could otherwise be better invested in other resources. Renegotiating business contracts with the public interest of Liberia

in mind, rather than simply signing unilateral deals with foreign corporations, would ensure that profits stay in Liberian hands.

The current bidding process for resource rights and state contracts is mired in secrecy and corruption, as both are heavily influenced by bribes. Therefore, a competitive bidding process needs to be implemented. Similar to mandating that public officials declare their assets, Weah must require that all information related to bids be published and publicly accessible. Creating an online public government database would fill this role with minimal costs to taxpayers or officials. Still, such measures may be unpopular with legislators guilty of accepting bribes, especially given that the Liberian Congress is dominated by Sirleaf's establishment Unity party. Yet, Weah's CDC won ten seats with his election, and is growing in popularity. While Weah may only be able to enact temporary change through executive order for the time being, in the near future it is likely the CDC could achieve the congressional majority necessary for approving permanent anti-corruption measures.

After twelve years of stagnation, Weah has an opportunity to bring about much-needed economic reform. But to do so without rooting out corruption would be unsustainable and hinder potential growth. Anti-corruption measures are thus a necessary prerequisite for any meaningful long-term reforms. The path to fulfilling his campaign promises, and to substantial economic development, all begins with anti-corruption reforms. With the support of his party and the people, Weah has a real opportunity to pass such legislation. ■

In Niger, Counterterrorism Comes at Development's Expense

- Kieran Byrne

On October 4th, 2017, four American and five Nigerien soldiers were killed in an ambush in the Tongo Tongo region of Niger while taking part in an antiterrorism operation. U.S. President Donald Trump's insensitive call to one soldier's widow and the ensuing media firestorm took much of the attention away from the more serious issue: what is the US doing in Niger in the first place? In our December 2016 edition, Boiling Point, I wrote an article on the US building a military base in Niger. At the time, militant movements in neighboring Mali and Nigeria had not begun to spill over the borders, but the situation has changed. As the security situation in Niger and the Sahel deteriorates, both Western governments and Nigerien authorities alike must ensure the root causes of terrorism, a weak state unable to offer adequate services to its citizens and a population without hope for its own prospects, do not cause similar situations within its borders. The focus of U.S. policy so far has primarily been military aid and resource extraction, but this will not create a more peaceful or stable Niger in the future; instead, the Nigerien government must work with its Western partners to attract foreign investment in non-resource sectors in order to better the lives of ordinary Nigeriens.

The U.S. government has been cooperating with Niger on counterterrorism since 2002, while the French government has been involved since Niger's independence in 1958. The U.S. considers its priorities in Niger to include "supporting the professionalism of Niger's military" and improving the management of their conventional weapons. While it is vital that the Nigerien state be supported in order to ensure the security of its citizens, the military-focused support method has been a catastrophic failure in neighboring Mali. The Malian military, which had been trained by French and American forces, led a coup against its elected president in 2012; in the ensuing chaos more than half of Mali was briefly controlled by Islamist terrorist groups. Considering both Niger's precarious current situation and past examples from neighboring states, the best-case scenario of a military-aid-only policy is one where the military can control the country through de-

“In discussions of counterterrorism, those most frequently forgotten are the inhabitants of the country themselves.”

fense while doing nothing to address the root causes of regional terrorism.

In discussions of counterterrorism, those most frequently forgotten are the inhabitants of the country themselves. Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. The Nigerien people have little economic opportunity, as only 29 percent of the population is literate and the vast majority are subsistence farmers. The government of Niger offers rural people little in the way of education and services, and local militants are typically well-integrated into their communities, making it easier for them to recruit.

Despite facing such considerable challenges to development, the Nigerien economy has been growing for almost a decade: the consistent policies of President Mahamadou Issoufou's government have allowed the economy to expand steadily, and youth unemployment is declining. Because the Nigerien government is friendly with Western countries and organizations like the IMF, it receives a great deal of aid and has manageable public debts. The country is rich in resources like uranium and gold, but the income from material exports goes primarily to the businesses that pay to extract the minerals, both foreign and Nigerien. The area surrounding the capital, Niamey, is among the most prosperous and safe in the country, because the Nigeriens who live there are integrated into the national economy, have higher literacy rates, and are not struggling to eke out a living farming in the Sahel. But to spread this budding economic wealth and ensure Nigeriens don't join terrorist groups, the Nigerien government, the United States, and France must take concerted action to boost livelihoods of rural Nigeriens. It can do this by making agricultural processes more efficient and sustainable. As climate change threatens to make farming in the Sahel more difficult, investments in the most water and energy efficient processes is necessary. This entails buying new machinery, educating

farmers on new methods, and growing crops that don't require exorbitant resource inputs. For example, drip irrigation, as pioneered in the deserts of Israel, has shown promising results in combating desertification and ensuring the viability of productive farmland.

Rural development can be further boosted in this large, famine-prone country by investing in infrastructure. A good starting point is improving roads in the southern portion of the country. This area contains most of the population and is thus a less-daunting challenge than connecting the barren stretches that mark Niger's north. Building and refurbishing roads will create more opportunities for economic connectivity, boosting the ability to transport resources around the country and build societal resiliency.

As the Nigerien government implements economic policy under the guidance of the IMF and World Bank, and forges ahead with aggressive counterterrorism measures buttressed by American and French support, it must remember that the stability and safety of the country is dependent on the economic security of its citizens. Improving Nigerien agricultural yields and revamping the country's infrastructure promises to not only boost the livelihoods of individual Nigeriens, but make the country more resilient in the face of external and internal terrorism threats. ■

African IGOs Take Leading Role in South Sudan

- Jeremy Waxman

In early February 2018, thousands of South Sudanese converged on the streets of the capital, Juba, in violent protest against the Trump administration's recent announcement of an arms embargo on the young country. The United States played an integral role in the creation of the South Sudanese state in 2011. However, since civil war broke out again in 2013, the US has slowly distanced itself from the new country. The announcement of the embargo seems to make the separation official. Moreover, it is expected that many allies of the US will now follow suit.

The embargo is largely symbolic, as the US has never actually sold weapons to any of the warring factions in South Sudan. Nonetheless, many South Sudanese cannot help but feel that they have been abandoned. The distressed population now sees no end to the brutal civil war. This puts new pressure on African intergovernmental organizations, such as the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to take a greater role in ending the conflict. These entities have stronger geopolitical and economic ties to South Sudan than the US and its allies. Thus, these African forces can be far more effective in ending the South Sudanese civil war than Western powers.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development is spearheading the current negotiation efforts. IGAD is comprised of eight countries in the African Horn and the Great Lakes region. Its power does not compare to that of other African intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the AU, but its jurisdiction over the conflict is legitimate. As soon as the US announced its embargo, IGAD reinitiated peace talks at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, allocating the warring parties ten days to come to an agreement. The effort was ultimately unsuccessful. Even so, the rhetoric of IGAD is forceful and robust, manifesting a newfound resolve in their quest to end the conflict. This language is essential in conveying to the warring factions in South Sudan that the bloodshed must stop.

The arms trade remains one pivotal problem preventing the end of the war. While the US imposed an embargo on a non-existent weapons trade, some sort of consequence must be im-



Refugees at a camp in South Sudan. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

posed upon those actually supplying weapons sustaining the conflict. The weapons funneled into South Sudan move through the porous borders of its African neighbors, oftentimes coordinated by their respective governments. Uganda and Kenya have been named the chief perpetrators by various UN reports. Both countries are founding members of IGAD and hold significant power within the organization. The two have even been rumored to be taking sides in the regional conflict, further dragging on the civil war and creating a clear conflict of interest.

But now, in the wake of the US embargo, AU chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat declared "the time has come to slap sanctions on those blocking peace in South Sudan." In the past, the AU played a distanced, supporting role in the negotiations and relied on the international community to do the dirty work of reprimanding states responsible for the fighting. But now with little possibility of intervention from outside the continent, it appears that the AU will no longer tolerate the duplicitous acts of Kenya and Uganda. The AU has the power and the impartiality necessary to control the situation. A more aggressive tone speaks to it taking a definitive role in the effort to bring peace to the shattered country and providing the necessary oversight IGAD needs to be successful in the negotiations.

While threats and talk will likely not bring the war to an end, a number of aggressive tactics remain in the African IGOs' arsenal. For example, IGOs could coordinate the placing of debilitating sanctions on industry, assets, and key individuals in the warring parties, forcing them to come to the table and strike an

agreement. This is similar to the strategy that was utilized by the US when forcing Iran to the negotiation table in 2015. With cooperation from the surrounding countries, this strategy can be very effective. There also is the possibility of establishing a criminal court, prosecuting those individuals who have committed war crimes. Recently the UN

released a statement claiming 40 military officers in South Sudan should be prosecuted for war crimes committed during the latest wave of gender-based violence. Bold strategies like these would seem nearly impossible without the influence and involvement of the AU. With the newfound commitment by African IGOs in ending the conflict, strategies like these can be implemented in the future.

The recently revamped peace talks ended in a stalemate, with the South Sudanese government boycotting several issues. Nonetheless, signs of concrete progress are evident. According to the South Sudanese ambassador to Ethiopia, James Morgan, "the [South Sudanese] government has agreed to incorporate armed and non-armed groups in the Transitional Government of National Unity, whose term ends in October, as soon as the talks close on February 16."

The recent stalemate is not a failure; it is a beginning. After the US embargo, more capable parties have stepped up to the plate, taking a substantial role in the South Sudanese peace process. African IGOs recent actions have displayed commitment to ending the war and taking the necessary steps to do so. This is a significant opportunity for the African continent to come together and work towards establishing peace in the new nation, without external intervention or aid. ■

Prime Minister's Resignation Presents New Opportunity for Ethiopia

-Aaron Orelowitz

On February 15th, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn, submitted his resignation amid political tension and violence throughout the country. The decision was a shock to the international community, as the move indicated that Ethiopia's officials have not been able to handle the growing resentment towards the government among young Ethiopians and marginalized ethnic groups. In response to the prime minister's actions, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) reinstated a state of emergency less than six months after the last state of emergency ended. The party justified the decision as a preemptive measure against the instability brought on by the crisis of succession. The EPRDF is so dominant that this unpopular measure passed, with only 88 of the 547 parliament members opposing. Similar to the previous states of emergency, this upcoming state will be ineffective and likely to further ignite tensions throughout the country. The challenges facing Ethiopia, primarily economic growth and political stability, must be addressed through expanded political freedoms that include all of Ethiopia's minorities.

The 88 legislators who opposed this ruling make for the largest pushback on anything the parliament has passed. In the streets, there is even more resentment toward these measures, with memories of past arrests and violence still fresh in people's minds from the last state of emergency. Protests erupted across Ethiopia in 2016 as young people and minority groups express their disdain for a regime bent on obstructing human rights. The ensuing state of emergency, instituted that October, was largely ineffective, leading to more than a thousand deaths and many more imprisonments. These emergency measures served to impede the ability of young people and underrepresented ethnic groups to protest the government and freely voice their beliefs.

Now, regardless of its historical implications, maintaining the state of emergency still has enough support in the government to take hold for a while longer. The ruling EPRDF is a coalition of different political parties which align along ethnic groups. Of these parties, the TPLF is most powerful and represents the Tigray mi-

“The challenges facing Ethiopia, primarily economic growth and political stability, must be addressed through expanded political freedoms that include all of Ethiopia's nationalities.”

nority. This group, making up only six percent of the population, became dominant both militarily and economically after overthrowing the previous regime. Since 1995, every Prime Minister has been Tigray, despite the Oromo group making up 35 percent of the population and Amhara group making up 27 percent. This overrepresentation, alongside laws forbidding protests from minorities, is one of the main sources of discontent in the country. Such a vast disconnect between the interests of the government and its underrepresented citizenry makes peace in Ethiopia all the more tenuous. No doubt this measure will be added to the list of grievances that minority groups harbor toward the government, potentially spreading discontent and violence to other parts of the country as well.

Ethiopia has tried unsuccessfully to repress protests before. Instead of regressing back into the same tactics, the EPRDF can use this transitional period as an opportunity to institute reforms or offer an olive branch toward groups which it has marginalized in the past. By simply reinstating emergency measures, the government is delaying a conversation that the country desperately needs to have. Real stability can only come after the government identifies how large ethnic groups became marginalized and enacts the most consensus-driven reforms to diffuse tension.

The international community may also want to take part in denouncing the government's response to the resignation. Ethiopia is a huge regional player both economically and politically, and its stability is an asset in creating peace in the surrounding areas. If organizations like the United Nations and African Union feel as though Ethiopia's government is being myopic, they should voice these concerns to further pressure Ethiopia's parliament into an inclusive discourse.

Most concern is raised over the fact that the inevitable appointment of another Tigray

leader will spark more protests. Although this will probably be the case, such a set of events do not necessitate a state of emergency. Instead, the government may want to attempt to accommodate protests that are peaceful by repealing repressive laws and provide an avenue for voices to be heard if they remain non-violent. This will entail loosening restrictions on expression and may also require that the judiciary is given more independence and a less instrumental role in the party.

The government of Ethiopia argues that these restrictive measures had the benefit of sustaining Ethiopia's impressive eight percent growth even through political turmoil, but failed to address how that turmoil originated. The EPRDF has prioritized lowering urban youth unemployment and bolstering growth, but has not lifted restrictions on expression. Economic gains will not create lasting peace. The current emergency measures have no reason to be different. The country may continue to experience growth, but popular discontent will not subside. Other, less populous ethnic groups may even join the agitated Oromo and Amhara group as movement toward political inclusion and social justice stagnates.

Although all these choices may seem out of character with the government's authoritarian nature and constant reliance on emergency restrictions, continuing in the same vein is not effective. It has failed in the past and weakens with every repeated use. The current strategy can only temporarily suppress protests and will do nothing to eliminate their causes. Although the government may shy away from the idea, The EPRDF has the potential to build a more stable Ethiopia. It will require international support and a shift away from party loyalty, but lifting the state of emergency and liberalizing peaceful protest will have much more beneficial effects for Ethiopia. ■

Chinese Investment Provides Opportunity, Risk for Mozambique

- Kieran Byrne

While spending this past summer in the port city of Beira, Mozambique, a few things caught my attention. The first was the poor conditions of the roads both within the city and connecting various parts of the country. Due to this, I was unable to travel throughout the country to famous coastal enclaves because of the danger and delays associated with driving. The second was that work was constantly being undertaken to improve roads in and around Beira. The scene was nearly always identical: a Chinese foreman or engineer directing and overseeing the work being done by Mozambicans. The road work, however, seemed to primarily focus on connecting inland areas to the coast rather than improving interconnectivity along the coast.

Much has been made of China's prominent role across Africa. Now the continent's largest trading partner, China invests heavily in infrastructure and aid while importing oil and other mineral resources. While it is important to recognize that African countries need not depend on external sources to fund infrastructure, it would be foolish not to accept Chinese offers to finance infrastructure projects that can directly boost economic growth. Claims that China has no business being involved across Africa completely ignore the autonomy exercised by the many African nations to accept Chinese investments. Mozambique needs to continue engaging in bilateral trade and development agreements with China and use this investment as a platform for boosting long-term economic growth and improving the lives of Mozambicans.

It is crucially important to view China's role in Africa with appropriate perspective. Clearly, Chinese investments and aid to Africa are not acts of charity; the Chinese government and associated companies fully intend to turn their involvement into economic profit. But China is not the sinister power looking to exploit Africans and purely extract resources that it is seen as in the West. Comparisons to former European colonial powers are wide off the mark. As long as China is benefiting from its various relationships across Africa, it will continue to invest in it. Therefore, it is imperative that Mozambique and other African countries are able to ensure productive relationships with the Asian superpower.

“The West's only legitimate role with respect to determining Chinese involvement in Mozambique ... should be to serve as a cautionary tale following centuries of propagating slavery and engaging in brutal colonialism.”

Additionally, many of the most vociferous critics of Chinese involvement in Africa are from Western countries that stand to lose economic opportunities as the result of their potentially diminished influence. To be clear, the West's only legitimate role with respect to determining Chinese involvement in Mozambique, and across Africa more generally, should be to serve as a cautionary tale following centuries of propagating slavery and engaging in brutal colonialism.

Mozambique has been the recipient of massive amounts of Chinese investment in recent years, which intensified in 2016 after the two countries established a comprehensive and strategic partnership shortly after both the International Monetary Fund and a G14 group of countries chaired by Portugal suspended funds to Mozambique due to its debt crisis. China invested heavily in infrastructure all over Mozambique from electrification projects to roads to improved ports. The recent discovery of oil off the coast of Mozambique has increased efforts aimed at potential extraction. While the relatively low price of oil makes it unlikely that oil exportation is a long-term platform off of which the Mozambican economy can be repurposed, this discovery could provide a necessary income source for a country that ranks 181st out of 188 countries on the UN Human Development Index. As noted in the report, all the laborers who work on these projects are, by law, Mozambican. This decreases unemployment, while also spurring further economic growth by increasing the wages of citizens. This leads to increased consumption and investment. Crucially, 65 percent of Mozambicans surveyed by Afrobarometer viewed Chinese investment positively, compared to nine percent who viewed it negatively.

Given Mozambique's beautiful natural landscapes, the government should focus its efforts on attracting tourists from neighboring countries as well as from Europe and Asia. To do so,

the recent renovation and expansion of the Maputo airport must be followed by improvements to the Beira and Nampula airports in order to make all of the country's beautiful coastline easily accessible. Furthermore, the highways along the coast need to be resurfaced to allow greater movement along the coasts from any of the three main airports in Mozambique. Finally, hotels must continue to be expanded, renovated, and begin to offer greater services in order to attract more tourists. All of these infrastructure improvements could be implemented alongside increased promotional advertisements for trips to Mozambique.

Assuming these measures successfully attract a greater number of tourists to Mozambique, the economy will benefit in a number of ways and allow Mozambique to continue improving its internal infrastructure without relying indefinitely on Chinese capital. Increased tourism in Mozambique will lead to greater foreign currency reserves, which can help protect the country from supply and demand shocks that could negatively affect economic growth and destabilize the value of its currency. This is especially pertinent given that the Mozambican Metical lost over half its value relative to the US dollar from 2015 to 2016. But a more stabilized currency and a government flush with new tax revenues would endow Mozambican leadership to demonstrably improve the lives of its citizens.

While Mozambique is currently utilizing China's resources effectively, investing more money in the country's fledgling tourism sector could be a boon for long-term economic growth. This would decrease its need for Chinese capital as well as more effectively shield it Mozambicans from adverse income shocks. Mozambique's wealth of natural resources and opportunities for tourism give the country ample opportunity to engage with China in a way that can benefit both countries moving forward. ■

Out With Coal, In With Sun: How South Africa Should Manage Its Energy Transition

- Tyler D. Coady

In the struggle to confront global warming, the consumption of fossil fuels like oil, natural gas, and coal to meet humanity's energy needs is the main culprit behind the increasing rate of greenhouse gas emissions that threatens to make the Earth uninhabitable. But it is coal, that black, combustible rock that ignited the Industrial Revolution, which is deemed to be the dirtiest of the fossil fuels. When it is burned to produce energy, coal emits significant amounts of carbon dioxide and other pollutants that heat the atmosphere and significantly worsen air quality.

Although Western nations like the United States and Germany have weakening appetites for coal-generated power, a great deal of demand for it still exists in rapidly developing countries like China, India, and especially South Africa. According to the International Energy Agency, South Africa has the sixth largest coal reserves in the world. It also generates about 90 percent of its electricity from burning coal. But South Africa, cognizant of coal's contribution to global warming, has also aggressively developed renewable energy sources like solar and wind. While the recent construction of solar and wind farms elicits excitement as South Africa charts its sustainable future, coal will still be the preeminent energy source in the country for decades. This gives South Africa time to develop a necessary policy of worker retraining, economic diversification, and electric grid rehabilitation as the predominance of coal wanes in the economy. It requires South African political and economic leadership to create new opportunities in the renewable energy sector for coal miners and to revitalize an electric grid that leaves too many South Africans suffering from power blackouts.

South Africa is marked by stark inequality, high unemployment, and entrenched barriers to upward social mobility that leave a disproportionate amount of black South Africans mired in incredible material poverty. But the coal mining industry, though it has a history of grueling working conditions and palpable labor unrest, remains an important employer. More than 90,000 South Africans work in the coal mining industry, which is the largest number of workers in the country's mining industry as a whole. Plus, coal miners and supervisors

earn wages that usually outpace average wages in other economic spheres. Coal-mining jobs are primarily confined to the northeastern province of Mpumalanga. Yet, the majority of the nation's current and future renewable energy projects are located in the drier, more spacious central and western regions. The renewable energy transition could consign former coal miners to the vast ranks of South Africa's economically marginalized.

If former coal miners are to find work in renewables, retraining programs focused on wind turbine operator and solar panel installer positions require a comprehensive, state-backed operation. This means government agencies must work in conjunction with the renewables industry to improve the quality of technical skills education and provide resources for the relocation of thousands of former coal miners to new locales. Doing so would help offset the economic losses associated with declining mining employment and lessen the reliance of the South African economy on resource extraction, a volatile economic sector, given that mineral prices hinge on global pricing structures. Increasing the skills capacity of miners would not only create job opportunities in renewable energy, but would instill a level of engineering, construction and managerial expertise that would prove beneficial in the revamping of South Africa's electric grid. Indeed, the sorry state of South Africa's power plants and electrical grid cripples urban areas, hurts businesses, and hinders rural communities. Eskom, the national public electric utility, has long had a stranglehold over power generation. Due to aging infrastructure, inadequate revenue sources, and heavy reliance on coal, Eskom has been unable to cope with South Africa's growing energy demands.

In response, South African leadership created the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Program. This program incentivizes the creation of privately-developed solar, wind, and hydro-power projects, which then sell their electricity to Eskom. However, wide development of private-power projects has not coincided with the rehabilitation of the country's electric distribution system. Thus, Eskom must leverage its relationships with private energy developers and international engineering firms

to solicit their expertise and update the nation's dilapidated electricity distribution. Doing so would create job opportunities for South Africans in rural areas where transmission lines run through and serve as an impetus for the retraining of the workers in extractive industries like coal mining. Furthermore, with a rehabilitated grid, privately-produced solar and wind energy could be transmitted more quickly and more efficiently, helping Eskom deal with the intense energy demands that accompany both industrial areas and South Africa's hot summer months.

And while the development of independent renewable energy projects will lessen the burden on Eskom to generate power independently, the utility must also substantially invest in updating the efficiency and capabilities of the nation's coal-fired power plants if it is to provide South Africans with the energy necessary to eradicate widespread societal inequality. An updating of the nation's coal-fired power plants must entail the installation of technologies that decrease the amount of pollutants and carbon emissions being emitted. This will help mitigate South Africa's carbon footprint and improve the air quality for the often poor areas that neighbor power plants.

While the shining sun and whipping winds of South Africa promise a more sustainable future, the stark reality is that coal will remain the preeminent power source for decades. This requires South African political and business leaders to usher in an energy transition that takes into account the lives of those who make a living off of mining coal, transporting coal, and deriving electricity from coal. It requires substantial investment in upgrading current coal-fired power capacity, rehabilitating the electric grid, and ensuring renewable energy development creates economic opportunities for all South Africans. Only then will South Africa's clean energy transition help create a more equitable South Africa. ■

Seal of Approval

An Argument for Sealing in Canada

- Max Goldman

When then Canadian Minister of Fisheries Hunter Tootoo attended a state dinner at the White House in 2016, he wore a sealskin bowtie. According to Tootoo, who is himself of indigenous descent, “my collection of ties reflect my heritage that I am proud to display wherever I might be.” Tootoo’s decision to wear a sealskin bowtie was not just a symbolic statement, but also deeply political: 70 percent of Canadians oppose the seal hunt, and animal rights groups continually protest against the practice. However, Canadian society must accept sealing as an important cultural and economic piece of indigenous and First Nations’ culture.

There are only four nations in the world that allow the hunting of seals: Norway, Denmark (including Greenland), Namibia, and Canada. In Canada, seals are hunted for their fur, meat, and oil; notably, commercial seal hunting is only allowed between November to May, although indigenous people are allowed to hunt year-round in the Canadian Arctic. The seal hunt is highly regulated to ensure that the stock is not depleted. In fact, the Northwest Harp Seal population in Canada has still tripled since the 1970s, even though annual hunting of the population still occurs. There are also strict regulations on the age of the seals being hunted, which protects young seals still with their mothers.

Despite strict regulations, animal rights groups are trying to stop the seal hunt altogether. This is, of course, to be expected from organizations whose mission is to protect animals. However, they have used poignant informational blitzes to sway public opinion against an important part of the indigenous culture and economy in Canada. One such video shows seal pups being clubbed by a traditional hakapik club. Although appearing brutal, this method of killing is actually as humane as the methods used by traditional slaughterhouses every day. Nonetheless, public opinion when it comes to sealing is affected by such videos. According to the Independent Veterinarians Working Group, “Perception of the seal hunt seems to be based largely on emotion.” In sum, for the majority of the general public that eats meat, despite the uncomfortable realities around animal slaughter, it is largely irrational to oppose sealing solely

“For the Canadian at Whistler, enjoying a grass-fed, Albertan beef burger after a long day of skiing in his or her warm, fur-lined Canada Goose Jacket, it may be time to reevaluate his or her opinion on the seal hunt.”

on ethical grounds.

Symbolically, the seal hunt is an important bastion of indigenous identity. Indigenous peoples had been subjugated to the status of second-class citizens for decades by the Canadian government. It is public knowledge that the Canadian government forced the assimilation of indigenous youth through the residential school system. These schools operated from the beginning of the confederation until the mid-1990s. This re-education initiative took students from their families and forced them to adapt “Canadian” culture. Many were killed and countless more were abused. As indigenous Canadians lose their culture, they feel as if they cannot identify with their own people but still are marginalized from the rest of Canadian society. This leads to mental health problems and an increased risk of suicide. Currently, First Nations people still have some of the highest suicide rates in the world: the average indigenous Canadian is six times more likely to take their own life when compared to non-indigenous Canadians. Increased acceptance of indigenous culture is just one way Canada can address the issue of mental health in indigenous communities.

Seal hunting is one important portion of the indigenous and First Nations culture, as First Nations people have hunted seals for over 4,000 years. To oppose the seal hunt is to oppose the rights of First Nations peoples. Indeed, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that “indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.” With widespread coverage in the Canadian media of the past injustices to indigenous Canadians, it is safe to say a majority of Canadians today believe indigenous cultures should be preserved. If this is true, then, who are they to pick and choose what aspects of culture should be preserved and which ones are

considered ‘barbaric’ and unacceptable? In recent times, Canada has become a global model for the celebration of indigenous and First Nations peoples, and the seal hunt is another way indigenous Canadians celebrate this heritage.

Moreover, article three of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples gives indigenous people the right to maintain their economic institutions. The seal industry is one such important economic institution for northern Canada. Critics are quick to point out that the C\$16.5 million sealing industry is just a small fraction of the overall fishing industry in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. However, for thousands of indigenous people nationwide whose livelihood is based in sealing, the industry is essential. Paired with the overall decline of cod stocks in the northern Atlantic, the seal hunt is as important as ever.

Despite strong disapproval from animal rights groups and the general public, the seal hunt is in no danger of disappearing. Other than the Green Party, all parties in Canadian parliament recognize the importance of preserving the seal industry. The next step is the acceptance of indigenous traditions by the general public. In order to move past Canada’s long history of marginalizing and assimilating indigenous and First Nations peoples, Canadians must accept the place of indigenous culture, instead of relegating certain aspects of it as ‘barbaric’. The heritage of Canadians indigenous and First Nations peoples should not be challenged. The modern seal hunt is based in the principles of conservation. So, for the Canadian at Whistler, enjoying a grass-fed, Albertan beef burger after a long day of skiing in his or her warm, fur-lined Canada Goose Jacket, it may be time to reevaluate his or her opinion on the seal hunt. ■

'Free Trade' is Not Free, Just Ask Mexico

- Adam Udovich

After 24 years, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has proven beneficial for multinational corporations, but has done little to develop Mexico, where per capita GDP hovers around about \$9,000. Mexico should leave behind this conception of free trade, and instead pursue protectionist policies that allow its domestic industries to succeed. The United States should support Mexico in this process so that both countries can be more than just trade agreement partners, but actually on equal economic footing. This will lead to real, beneficial competition in the form of technological and academic advances instead of competing to pay workers the least.

NAFTA was originally signed in 1994 as an agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico to eliminate tariffs and other protectionist policies between the three nations. The agreement was trumpeted by politicians and free-market economists for reducing economic protections that would in turn allow for greater competition and equal positive economic growth. This did not work due to the US's preserved subsidies and protections in certain sectors. In addition, it does not help that an underdeveloped country like Mexico cannot compete fairly in free markets with highly-developed economies in the US and Canada. One manifestation of NAFTA's negative economic consequences for Mexico is in the manufacturing industry.

Mexico has a long history of labor unions and workers' rights and in the early on in the trade agreement, Mexico benefited from an influx of factory jobs in border cities. However, due to restrictions stemming from International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and the prioritization of profit by multinational corporations, Mexican leaders did nothing to promote regulation or workers' rights. Competition in the form of lower wages abroad means Mexican leaders were spurred to compete with these international trends by lowering domestic wages and deprioritizing environmental regulations. A report from the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations shows that that workers have been paid as low as \$30 a week while working well over eight-hour work days in industrial centers such as the border city of Juárez. Additionally, the Sierra



Mexican farmers in Ciudad Juárez near the US/Mexico border. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Club published research that shows that the environmental damage resulting from new factories built after the signing of NAFTA has not been justified by increased economic growth. The report claims that, in the late 1990s, environmental damage from Mexican factories cost over \$36 billion per year, while trade from them only generated \$14 billion per year.

Aside from pollution by under-regulated factories, NAFTA created a market for the acquisition of small farm lands by foreign investors. Previously, this sort of land could not be purchased and was instead deeded to Mexican farmers under the Mexican Constitution. However, Mexico was forced to change this when it signed NAFTA, allowing for the creation of more private agricultural lands across the nation. This privatization of rural land displaced over two million Mexican farmers. This is nearly double the less than one million new factory jobs created in Mexico since NAFTA.

The rapid loss of jobs in the farming industry helps to explain the mass immigration that resulted from the economic hardships that NAFTA created in Mexico. With less agricultural jobs in Mexico and limited local opportunities in the industrial sector, many Mexican workers immigrated to the United States, oftentimes illegally, as low-paid laborers. The sheer number of immigrants poses a myriad of problems. The Pew Research Center estimates there were about two million unauthorized immigrants from Mexico in the United States in 1990. That number has spiked to 5.3 million unauthorized immigrants from Mexico in 2016. These immigrants often don't know English, and do not have the technical or professional skills necessary to obtain jobs in the US that pay a living wage. Therefore, millions of

people who have little chance of upward social mobility live in the United States, and there are few government programs to help them; they live in a society that is seemingly unaware of their suffering as field laborers and does little to help them.

Low wages, coupled with the lack of social programs due to IMF restrictions and a neoliberal agenda, created mass poverty in many Mexican communities. This is one reason for the

increased amount of drug trafficking and kidnapping which plague Mexico. A Council on Foreign Relations report about cartel violence claims over 27,000 people have gone missing in Mexico since 2006. The report includes that Mexico's homicide rate has not dropped below 17.5 homicides per 100,000 since 2009, with a peak of 24 homicides per 100,000 people in 2011. For reference, the United States homicide rate was just 4.7 homicides per 100,000 people in 2011 and has since decreased. As a result, violent and powerful cartels formed and still wield tremendous power to this day. These cartels generate billions of dollars a year in drug sales and have resisted both US and Mexican attempts to eradicate them in their so-called "War on Drugs".

NAFTA has devastated Mexico by unjustly decreasing the number of local jobs and abusing workers to generate profits for multinational corporations. The trade garnered by the agreement also allowed US subsidies to continue, whereas Mexico has struggled on the global economic stage without the support of protectionist policies to safeguard its domestic industries. Mexico needs to develop policies that prioritize the strengthening of existing domestic industries and safeguard Mexican workers from the volatility and uncertainty that came with NAFTA. The United States and the international community needs to understand that 'free trade' is never truly free. Countries should be supportive in the growth of their neighbors so that they can level footing within the developed world. Currently, these nations, like Mexico, are subjected to market forces that always favor developed nations who have the money and power to remain on top. ■

End of an Era

The Castro Family's Historic Departure

- Grace Bristol

For the first time in nearly six decades, Cuba will be led by a man not bearing the Castro name. A Castro has ruled the island nation since 1959, beginning with Fidel, who was then succeeded by his brother Raúl in 2008. On March 11th, 2018, Cubans headed to the polls to cast their vote for the 605 deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power and the 1,265 delegates to the fifteen Provincial Assemblies of People's Power. Even though all candidates were supported by the Communist Party of Cuba, the vote was nonetheless a historic and exciting change for the country. The vote marked the second step in Cuba's national elections, which will culminate with a final vote by the National Assembly to elect the President in April 2018.

The expected winner of the presidential vote in April is current First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel. Although still a member of the Communist Party, Díaz-Canel symbolizes a new and modern era for Cuba, which many are hopeful will bring change to the Communist-ruled island. Díaz-Canel was born after the Cuban Revolution, and, unlike the Castro brothers, he has no military background. While the Castros have claimed their right to power in part because they led the revolutionary movement, Díaz-Canel cannot draw from this same claim to authority. His anticipated election will place a spotlight on what the future could hold for Cuba, but it could also further enshrine the ways Cuba has conducted itself for decades.

While these elections are far from democratic, as the Communist Party is the only legal political party in Cuba, the elections mark a positive change in the country and a chance to revitalize it under new leadership. If elected, Díaz-Canel will face the challenge of a severely distressed Cuban economy. The nation's economy has suffered by the recent lackadaisical support from its longtime ally, Venezuela, worsening relations with the United States, and crop depletion due to Hurricane Irma in 2017. Cuba's economic growth has been slow in recent years and even negative, as the economy contracted in 2016 for the first time in over twenty years.

Revitalizing Cuba's economy will undoubtedly be an uphill battle for Díaz-Canel, and the eyes of the world will be on him if he takes

“With the revolutionary generation fading out, now is the time to prove that Cuba can still thrive with a new spirit of leaders.”

office. There is great pressure to prove his legitimacy through policies that actually improve living conditions in Cuba. In an interview, Díaz-Canel told reporters that, “There has to be a focus on ties to, links with, the people, to listen to the people, deeply investigate the problems that exist and inspire debates about those problems.” His rhetoric emphasizes giving more control back to the people, even stating that they have the right to “recall someone who doesn't fulfill their responsibilities.”

Despite his optimistic calls for change, there is reason to be cautious of the election and what it will mean for the people of Cuba more broadly. Raúl Castro, unsurprisingly, will not leave the political scene after his term ends, as he will remain the head of the Communist Party. The Party has the real power in Cuba, and with Castro still at the helm, change is likely to be painfully slow. Díaz-Canel is a close ally of Castro and has supported continuity and stability in the party, while maintaining Cuba's centrally-planned economy. The government also continues to monopolize economic activity, which results in sluggish growth and a lack of opportunity for citizens. If elected, Díaz-Canel will technically be in power, but all policy will be made within the Communist Party, and therefore influenced by Castro. Even after Castro dies, his legacy and remaining loyal allies in the Communist Party will continue to control much of the political scene. In his speeches, Díaz-Canel has spoken carefully along Communist Party lines, and he will likely try to maintain calm control of the government in the foreseeable future.

If Díaz-Canel hopes to improve the economy of Cuba and living standards for the Cuban people, he must do a more than just maintain equilibrium in the party. While he is likely to adjust to the position with caution during the first part of his term, Díaz-Canel should embrace the younger generation's calls for change as soon as possible. He has often, as mentioned, spoken of “the people” and being responsive to

their desires, but he needs to be more specific and tailor his comments towards the younger generation, many of whom are unhappy with what they see as repressive government policies. The people want a competitive economy and more job creation, and if Díaz-Canel sticks with the trajectory the country is on currently, he will not be able to keep the promise of improvement he has made to them. With the revolutionary generation fading out, now is the time to prove that Cuba can still thrive with a new spirit of leaders.

The presidential election should be seen less as a radical change and more as a positive shift of a new generation arising in Cuba. While the absence of a Castro name on the ballot is significant on the surface-level, the changes needed to turn Cuba from a struggling nation to a prosperous one will take structural changes within the Communist Party itself. With Castro and what is left of the revolutionary generation still looming in the background, it is not clear if much change will happen soon. One can surmise that this is the beginning of a movement that will emphasize economic prosperity and rebuilding, rather than the ideology held by the Castro brothers, which has kept this small island nation stuck in the past. ■

Defending the Defenders

Deaths of Environmental Activists

- Margaret Johnson

In March 2016, Berta Cáceres, a prominent indigenous rights activist, was killed in La Esperanza, Honduras. She had previously won the Goldman prize for her work defending indigenous lands from both logging and dam construction against powerful corporations. Authorities arrested four men for her death, with two having direct connections to the company Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA). Initially, the company claimed that these actors were rogue employees. However, through a document released on October 31st, 2016, as well as released WhatsApp messages, it is clear that DESA executives and Honduran government officials coordinated to murder Cáceres. Two of the soldiers involved also trained at the School of the Americas, a controversial US military academy. Cáceres' story is a part of an alarming trend of increased deaths of environmental activists. Her story is only unique because it gained international attention, as most such deaths go unreported. To ensure that deaths do not continue, increased awareness and better legal definitions of environmental rights must evolve not just in Honduras, but across the Americas, in order to prevent destructive projects from occurring in the future.

The project Cáceres protested against, the Agua Zarca dam, has not been built due to mounting international pressure, and since the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and investors from the Netherlands halted their investment. The local Lenca people contend that the Honduran government did not consult with them prior to building, which is a legal requirement. Protests of this dam project continue, as the government has not rescinded the license to build the dam and associated warehouses. Since a 2009 coup d'état, Honduras has seen an increase in crackdowns on human rights, and a flurry of licenses to allow projects on indigenous land. The election of Juan Orlando Hernández in November 2017, regarded by many to be a coup in itself, has some activists fearing a further escalation of violence against activists; the Organization of American States (OAS) called for new elections in Honduras, but Hernández's government ignored this call.

An alliance between political elites and corporations exists in Honduras. This partnership

causes the deaths of environmental activists who threaten potentially-profitable endeavors for both parties. New agribusiness, logging, and hydroelectric developments often occur in rural or agricultural areas where federal presence is minimal. In these areas, far from the urban capital of Tegucigalpa, local political elites have total control over the use of land and new business developments in their respective regions. Corporations entice the local elites to allow them to develop, feeding into this vicious cycle.

Cáceres, like many environmental activists in Central and South America, was a member of the indigenous Lenca community. These groups often depend on a specific region's natural resources for subsistence. Encroachment by logging corporations limits access to food for these indigenous people. Agribusiness developments use herbicides, which enter the water supply and dissipate into the air, causing disease in a region with limited hospital access. Moreover, hydroelectric dams can also stem the flow of vital fresh water or cause flooding in the area these indigenous communities call home.

The numbers of activists who have died while seeking to protect the environment has skyrocketed since the early 2000s, but not until recently have reporters catalogued their deaths. Due to the global nature of the problem, reports found it difficult to find connections between activism deaths worldwide. That is beginning to change: The Guardian, in partnership with the international organization Global Witness, has begun systematically cataloging the deaths of environmental activists since 2015. The total recorded in 2017 was 188, and the two-thirds of these deaths occurred in Central and South America. Environmental conflicts will only increase as natural resources and undeveloped land become more scarce, and corporations desire to develop land designated for indigenous communities. The current crisis surrounding the deaths of activists like Cáceres, and the impunity of those who kill them, demonstrates that the current framework of human rights is unprepared to deal with these conflicts. In order to prevent violations of human rights, both the regional and larger international community must update the language of human rights to reflect the changing needs and threats to human dignity activists face.

In failing to address environmental and land concerns, the human rights language of the OAS and the larger international community does not protect indigenous peoples from exploitation. Article 29 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples includes language protecting land and environmental rights, but this is absent in the UN Declaration on Human Rights. International law should treat land and environmental rights as extensions of human rights, and not as a niche legal subset. Closer scrutiny from the press and stricter legal guidelines overall would curtail the impunity of both corporations and the political elite in the region. By creating a defined framework of international norms in environmental projects and eliminating legal gray areas, fewer investors will have incentives to put their money in activities that potentially damage the environment. Increased pressure can hopefully force organizations like CABEI to take harder stances on corporations and political elites operating in at-risk zones. After Cáceres' death, the CABEI did withdraw funding along with other investors, but only due to intense public pressure stemming from the unusually extensive coverage of her death. But it should not take deaths to stop the construction of dams that destroy indigenous land and ways of life. More oversight of projects with significant environmental impact can ensure regional laws respect indigenous communities like those of the Lenca.

While greater investment can help Central and South American states create jobs, if it is not done sustainably and in ways that respect indigenous ways of life, it is not worthwhile. With the increasing severity of climate change and resource strain on non-renewables, natural resources are becoming both more valuable and more contested. To avoid further bloodshed, individual states, the larger international community, and organizations like the OAS must work together to create a legal framework that protects indigenous and other communities from corporate interests by incorporating land and environmental rights into the greater conversation on human rights. ■

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

First Comes Love then Comes Marriage

- Margaret Johnson

Public support of same-sex unions in the Americas has grown in recent years, with progress in South America outpacing Central America and the Caribbean. Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Chile all support some degree of same sex marriage. Yet outside of South America, only Mexico offers any degree of protection for same sex couples, and no sovereign countries in the Caribbean offer any legal protections. But this might change, as, on January 10th, 2018, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruled on a case brought forward by Costa Rica. It asked if Costa Rica must allow same-sex marriage. The court gave a binding ruling in favor of same-sex marriage, a decision it also ruled as binding in all twenty member nations of South America, Central America and the Caribbean. This has caused controversy in Costa Rica and other member nations, as nations decry it as a violation of their national sovereignty and religious values. In Costa Rica's upcoming presidential election, a far right candidate, Fabricio Alvarado, vowed to pull out of the court to avoid the ruling. Given the lack of safety for LGBT individuals in some nations, the IACHR erred in making its decision binding, yet the court cannot reverse the decision. Member nations should accept the ruling, and take necessary steps to either implement the decision within the context of their nation, or provide a report as to why legalizing same-sex marriage is not the next logical or safe step for providing equality for same-sex couples.

The IACHR complements the Organization of American States (OAS) legal system as a part of the post-dictatorship democratization movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. It serves as the body that rules on the American Convention on Human Rights of 1978, and it served as the court that helped many countries cope with human rights abuses after long dictatorships. Unlike other supranational courts in Europe, it has the unique ability to, in theory, compel nations to change their constitutions: rulings are technically binding but they omit deadlines or rules for implementation. In countries emerging from dictatorships, this was a welcomed way to alter constitutions created undemocratically without undergoing the politically turbulent process of completely rewriting a constitution.



Pride marches in San José, Costa Rica following the IACHR decision. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Now, however, this function is controversial, as the state of certain human rights remains unequal though the dictatorships of past decades have fallen.

The pressure to put laws in place that counter public opinion in conservative nations has spurred some nations to threaten to leave the court in the wake of the most recent ruling. In Costa Rica, the country that brought forward the case, this decision has played a key role in the upcoming presidential election, propelling evangelical singer Fabricio Alvarado, formally a fringe candidate, to win the first round of elections in February 2018 and into the runoff election on April 1st. He has, in part, turned the election into a referendum on gay marriage and the IACHR by promising to withdraw from the court in order to render its decision void. Although he has since revised his statement, saying the country will not pull out of the body, he is still resistant in implementing its decision. No other candidate has threatened to withdraw or challenge the decision and, as the country that brought forward the claim, Costa Rica should abide by the ruling. In Costa Rica, support for gay marriage is around 45 percent, while 49 percent oppose it. Implementing the decision in Costa Rica, a traditionally socially progressive country save its modern far-right movement, would be less controversial and dangerous than in other places in the region. The latter half of the ruling, making it binding for all member nations, proves much more complicated.

While this case does pose a difficult question for other members, nations should choose to remain in the IACHR and keep the court intact. Legalizing same-sex marriage does not ensure safety of LGBT individuals, and with-

out adequate anti-hate crime and discrimination laws, its legality does not translate to equality. In many of these nations, support for gay marriage is under twenty percent in the general population. LGBT individuals who choose to take advantage of their change in legal status will still face extreme discrimination in some countries. Carrying out the decision is not possible or safe in some places like Haiti, where only six percent of

the population support gay marriage and public support for same-sex marriage is a crime. The court itself acknowledges that changes could be hard and countries should make changes "in good faith." As such, dissenting nations should make good faith efforts, but if they find that the changing laws would not adequately protect LGBT individuals, they must submit reports on why such changes are neither logical nor safe. The IACHR should accept this reality without forcing a law change that would hurt the very people they aim to protect.

While IACHR might have overstepped its bounds in making this decision binding to all member nations, the infeasibility of implementing the law does not mean that dissenting nations should leave the court. The function of submitting dissenting reports may be useful in resolving other human rights abuses. For this reason, member nations should choose to remain within the court to safeguard both human rights and national sovereignty. While LGBT rights belong in conversations on human rights at every level, guidelines for progress should fit the conditions of each country. The IACHR decision marks an important moment in human rights law, but it must be realistically evaluated and supplemented with awareness campaigns and safety laws before it demands that member nations implement the decision. ■

Venezuelan Refugee Crisis Calls for Outside Involvement

- Noah Kerwin

Unlike the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, the mass exodus of people from Venezuela has received limited international coverage and response. Although there is no war in Venezuela, nearly two million have already fled the country in recent years, with tens of thousands more leaving each month, escaping economic collapse and an increasingly authoritarian government. Venezuelans in massive numbers have fled to nearby countries, especially Colombia and Brazil, but also Panama and Trinidad and Tobago. These countries are struggling to support the burden of refugees and face a myriad of policy problems in this regard. As the situation in Venezuela continues to worsen, the possibility that neighboring countries close their borders altogether much more likely. Any solution of this refugee crisis must address two parts: first, Latin American countries and the US should increase aid to countries neighboring Venezuela, and second, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) should officially declare Venezuelans as refugees.

Since President Nicolás Maduro came to power in 2013, the oil industry, Venezuela's longtime economic godsend, has been in freefall. With the Bolívar losing 99.99 percent of its value since 2012, unemployment rates skyrocketing over 25 percent, and international credit agencies continually downgrading these national ratings, Venezuela's economy is collapsing. The whole population is suffering the consequences: economic plight has left people without food or medicine, resulting in mass malnutrition and disease. Compounding these issues, the government has become increasingly undemocratic politically. Following wide-scale protests in 2014, the Venezuelan government further limited freedom of the press, jailed protesters, and prevented opposition parties from running in elections. The biggest sign that the government had taken a turn towards authoritarianism came in 2017, when Maduro blatantly disregarded the constitution by stacking the government with members of his United Socialist Party and purging it of oppositional voices. It has become abundantly clear to many observers – both in Venezuela and in the broader international community – that the country is on a path to authoritarianism.

Neighboring countries are becoming over-

whelmed by the number of refugees they host. Brazil and Colombia in particular have received the largest numbers of Venezuelans. Although Brazil at first built shelters and hospitals at the border for refugees and pledged to accept more migrants, it is now militarizing its borders to better regulate the flow of people and has already declared a state of social emergency as a result of the refugee arrivals. While the country has agreed to keep its borders open for the time being, the outlook is bleak: violence against the new migrants is rising, as resentful Brazilians push to keep outsiders away. Colombia faces an even larger threat: over 600,000 Venezuelans are already in the country. Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans sleep on the streets in border towns, receiving their food only through donors. The Colombian government fears that violence and crime will rise, as migrants may be recruited by criminal organizations or become targets for human trafficking. As a response, Colombia has begun restricting entry passes for Venezuelans and placing troops on its borders to slow the rates of entry.

Action can and should be taken to reduce the disruptive effects of the mass exodus of people from Venezuela within both Venezuela itself and its neighbors. Given that Maduro has repeatedly refused to accept foreign aid – claiming it to be a form of imperialist intrusion – the focus should be on Venezuela's refugee-hosting neighbors. In particular, the first stage of an international response to the crisis must involve a coordinated effort by members of the Organization of American States (OAS) to substantially increase foreign aid to these front-line countries. Ideally, this aid would take multiple forms, including food and water, medical supplies, and assistance to local NGOs. Additionally, funds and personnel should be sent to Venezuela's neighbors to help build and maintain new hospitals and refugee shelters in the short-term. In the long-term, Latin American countries and the US should further help nations hosting refugees by providing the resources that they need to become integrated in their local communities and economies. Although multilateral coordination presents a significant challenge, the OAS provides an institutional framework for member states to deal with such issues of regional importance.

The second component to any response to the Venezuelan refugee crisis must include the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) streamlining the process for Venezuelans to apply for, and receive, refugee status. In instances where states are “unable or unwilling” to grant refugee status to an individual, the UNHCR should do so. UNHCR involvement in the process will become increasingly important, as overburdened host countries may be tempted to resort to considering Venezuelans leaving their homes migrants, rather than refugees. This is a grave fear, especially since the lack of typical warfare or targeted persecution could provide the justification for such a move to consider them migrants instead. Formal status as a refugee is critical, as all South American countries signed onto the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Refugee Protocol, legally obligating them to take in and protect refugees. Admittedly, this course of action would essentially force Venezuela's neighbors to take responsibility for these individuals and could create political tension or contribute to violence against refugees by local populations. Yet, despite these possible repercussions, UNHCR involvement represents a move towards long-term stability, especially if paired with aid, as described above, that provides funds to relevant authorities and helps integrate refugees into local communities.

The political and economic situation in Venezuela creating the humanitarian crisis there will most likely not improve any time soon. Thus, roots of the refugee problem are unlikely to be substantially resolved. As refugee numbers continue to swell in the region, action must be taken before major consequences to the region's security, economy, and health come to fruition. Increased foreign aid to host countries by other South American states and the US, in combination with the provision of refugee status to Venezuelans by the UNHCR, may prove to be valuable first steps in developing a more comprehensive and permanent solution to the Venezuelan refugee crisis and ensuring future stability for the region. ■

Corruption Accountability for Brazilian Politicians Could be Turning a Corner

- Margaret D'Antonio

Brazil's upcoming October presidential election is already mired in conflict. The contender favored to win, with an estimated 37 percent of the vote in current polling, is former leftist president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, commonly known as Lula, of the Brazilian Workers' Party. Lula's chance at the presidency, however, was seriously curbed in January 2018, when charges of corruption were upheld against him in an appeals court. If Lula is not allowed to run, the next favored candidate to win, with an estimated 21 percent of the vote, is Congressman Jair Bolsonaro, a far-rightist notorious for bigoted statements and rosy sentiments of Brazil's military dictatorship.

If Lula is permitted to run, it would be a huge setback for Brazil's anti-corruption efforts, but that would pave the way for a Bolsonaro win. Still, in an effort to protect this new commitment to accountability for politicians in Brazil, Lula should not be allowed to run for president. Yet, to avoid handing the presidency to Bolsonaro, Lula should throw his support behind another candidate who does not have legal troubles and embodies similar political persuasions.

A revered politician while he was president from 2003 to 2010, Lula was a favorite of the Brazilian people. As president, he was committed to alleviating Brazil's starving population: his Zero Hunger initiative was so successful that he pulled Brazil off of the UN's World Hunger list. Additionally, his social program, Family Allowance, distributed stipends to thousands of poverty-stricken families. He held an approval rating of 88 percent when he left office and many Brazilians remain loyal to him to this day.

Yet following his presidency, Lula's legacy of corruption has not improved, and other presidents have not been able to acquire his level of popularity. His protégé Dilma Rousseff was elected Brazil's first woman president in 2010, but she was impeached over corruption allegations in 2016. Michel Temer then took office as interim president, but is widely unpopular with his approval ratings lying in the single digits. He also faces ongoing accusations of obstruction of justice and accepting bribes, which has prompted calls for the beloved Lula to run in the 2018 election.

But in July 2017, Lula was implicated in

Lavo Jato, or Operation Car Wash, a massive corruption investigation incriminating thousands of high-level government officials for accepting bribes before awarding illegal government contracts to the oil giant Petrobras. Lula was arrested and convicted for obstruction of justice, money laundering, and bribery. The charges involved a charge of a bribe he accepted in the form of an apartment worth \$1.1 million, and he received a nine-and-a-half-year prison sentence. When he appealed his conviction in January, in front of a three-judge panel, they unanimously voted to uphold the corruption rulings, and extended his sentence to twelve years.

The judges' decision to uphold the rulings on Lula's case makes it more difficult for him to run for elected office. Brazil's 2010 Clean Slate law, signed by Lula himself, prohibits anyone convicted of a crime by more than one judge from holding any political office for at least eight years. To overturn his convictions, Lula can appeal to a higher court in Brazil, such as the Supreme Court. If these courts overturn the ruling, it could mean Lula may run for president. But if Lula does decide to appeal to a higher court, it is necessary that the justices not overturn his convictions.

Changing this decision would be a huge blow for the anti-corruption measures that Operation Car Wash has taken. Such a change would communicate to the public that impunity remains for top politicians. A poll taken by Dalia technology company in 2017 shows that Brazil's government only has an eight percent approval rating among Brazilian people. This demonstrates the widespread mistrust the citizens have for political elites. Furthermore, if Lula were allowed to run, this would be a breach of constitutionality. Barring Lula from participating in the presidential election would demonstrate to Brazilian people an actual commitment to the accountability of corrupt politicians.

If Lula is not allowed to run, Bolsonaro, a man who has spewed racist, sexist, and homophobic epithets and has said Brazilians were "totally free" under the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964-1984, is favored to win the election. He has also been quoted saying that the Chilean dictator Pinochet "should have

killed more people."

Bolsonaro's main political issues include crime and political corruption. To counteract Brazil's high violent crime rate, he has implied that he would support an increase in police violence, and stated that "a police officer who does not kill is not a police officer." Bolsonaro's political support comes from middle class people and religious evangelicals who support him in an effort to push back against what they feel is a too-liberal Brazil.

Although Lula should not be allowed to run as a convicted criminal, Bolsonaro's unapologetic and prejudiced rhetoric will harm Brazil if he is elected. To avoid this, Lula should use his considerable pull with the Brazilian people and campaign aggressively on behalf of another candidate. One possibility is Marina Silva, an environmentalist of her own Sustainability Network Party. If Lula were to support Marina, as she is referred to, this could be a step in the right direction to confirming a political culture of both accountability and rationality in Brazil.

Marina has been in the political sphere for over 30 years, and she has spent much of her time in politics as the environmental minister of the Workers' Party with Lula. She left the party in 2009 over a disagreement about the party's policy towards economic development of the Amazon region. Marina has strongly supported the Operation Car Wash investigation from the beginning, and her clean record and firm stance against corruption is a quality Brazilians should admire. In addition to her commitment to tackling corruption, Marina's aims as president would be to promote fiscal responsibility by targeting inflation, as well as sustainability and preservation of the environment. Marina has run in and lost two presidential elections already, though she did receive twenty percent of the vote in 2014.

If Lula can put aside his differences with Marina after her defection from his party and support her in this election, it is possible he could build a coalition strong enough to win the presidency against the bombastic Bolsonaro without sacrificing emerging anti-corruption standards the nation should look to uphold. ■

Valor

Chile, the World Bank, and Controversy

- Andrew Mitchel

A recent investigation by global experts found that the World Bank consistently and erroneously undervalued the Chilean economy in its annual Doing Business reports in each of the last four years, despite the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranking Chile as a high-income nation with a robust economy. This casts a deservedly critical light on how countries are judged by multinational organizations, especially since it is now clear that the rankings were so flawed that they warranted a public apology from the World Bank's chief, Paul Romer. Changes in the metrics utilized by the World Bank, rather than any dramatic change in the Chilean business climate, caused Chile's ranking to be so low. Indeed, this issue within the apparatuses of the World Bank is extremely problematic: it questions the overall ability of the organization to play such a leading role in evaluating global commerce.

The Doing Business report focuses on domestic business regulations in 190 economies around the world. Interestingly, Chile is not included in the Latin American and Caribbean regional report, but in the OECD High Income report, showing its position in the global economy as a developed nation with a diversified economy. The report says that most "indicator sets refer to a case scenario in the largest business city of each economy." Thus, this report is a measure of urban conditions of business operation; in the Chilean case, this means the business conditions of the capital city, Santiago, where 36 percent of the country's total population lives as of 2018. The report is used mainly on a more macro level, with larger investment groups and corporations looking closely at the figures. Chile's undervaluation worsened the internal investment climate within the nation and scared away potential international investment. To those simply looking at the report without context of why the changes in the rankings occurred, it would appear that Chile had recently changed its laws or performed extremely poorly in the economic sphere, things which simply are not true and did not occur.

One possible reason for Chile's changing position on these rankings is the political leanings of World Bank staffers. Chile's fall in the rankings coincided with the tenure of President

Michelle Bachelet, a socialist, while the ranking then increased under the tutelage of President Sebastián Piñera, a conservative, whose term was sandwiched between the Bachelet's two terms. Dr. Augusto Lopez-Claros, a former professor at the University of Santiago and a former World Bank staffer, is perceived a potentially source of the World Bank's apparent bias. Rebuffing such claims, he has said that insinuating any political bias on his part or in the report at large is "wholly without merit". He turned to the fact that Chile did not institute significant economic reforms over the four-year period, while other regional economic powers did; Mexico, for example, rolled out eight "significant reforms" under his definition, over the same period. According to Lopez-Claros, this inaction contributed to Chile's lower ranking. His firing back at the Chilean economic system as the one to blame for its own low ranking contradicts what Romer himself has said, and so his opinion is hard to take without skepticism.

The World Bank re-published, re-edited, and revised versions of the Doing Business rankings. This is not enough: although it is attempting to be transparent and right wrongs, it still has not disclosed the full formula the report utilizes. Romer, too, published some of the raw numbers on his personal blog that he looked at to discover Chile's ranking shifts, but said numbers are incomprehensible without economic training. An internal emphasis on nuance and attention to detail at the World Bank would likely have solved this issue. In short, the World Bank has embarrassed itself, created rumors of political bias within the organization, and created a scandal that heavily impacted Chile's economic well-being.

Ironically, the World Bank has, until recently, had a close relationship with the Chilean government. Just this past year, a World Bank research hub opened in Santiago. The World Bank, by not critically evaluating its methods, allowed for one of the countries it views in a positive light to suffer. Instead of working closely with Chile to help its economy flourish, the report instead stunted growth and gave Chile a bad name on the international stage. Politically, the ranking decrease was bad for Bachelet, the outgoing president who will once again be replaced by the conservative Piñera. This

explains her frustrations when she wrote that "the rankings ... of these international institutions should be trustworthy, as they impact ... the investment in and development of nations [like Chile]." Chile is a country the organization has worked with before; why would they target a country they had a productive relationship with, if not due to ignorance and oversight?

This phenomenon is triggering a larger conversation around the preeminent role that the World Bank and other groups like it play in maintaining global economies and informing international investment. The World Bank currently compiles the best measures of economic policy and regulation in existence, and its report is relied upon as the essential guide to how business functions globally. Because of such preeminence, a low ranking in its reports coincide directly with a perception of economic problems for international businesses; if there is a decrease in ranking for a particular country, international trade and expansion into that country will be less desirable, and corporate bodies who look at these ratings will be less likely to make business decisions to operate and invest in the nation in question. Additionally, such a ranking cannot take into account all the factors that determine whether or not foreign businesses can invest in a country.

The apologies and claims of not doing "due diligence" by Romer are too little, too late. The economic impacts of this institutional mishap are now fully known. Transparency is certainly a good policy – and a good start – but the World Bank has shown its cards. Instead of following the international economic community's expectations to be a watchful and unbiased organization, the World Bank tarnished the good name of one of its poster children. Thus, the World Bank must seriously reevaluate the metrics it applies to judging how global financial conditions, so as to never undermine a nation like it did to Chile. ■

The State of Cryptocurrency in Asia

- Asia-Pacific Region Contributing Authors

Cryptocurrencies have taken the world by storm and many of the world's governments are unsure about how to handle its proliferation. While many countries continue to stand still on the issue, others are now developing policies regarding cryptocurrencies. The Asia-Pacific region is no different, with many countries attempting to find a place for cryptocurrency, but also acknowledging the risks that they pose to their economic systems. The Michigan Journal of International Affairs Asia-Pacific regional writers examine countries across the region and their reactions to the growing cryptocurrency phenomena, as well as address issues in security and legitimacy of cryptocurrencies.

Is Self-Regulation the Solution to Japan's Crypto Crises?

- R. Casey Dwyer

After a \$530 million digital money heist in January, Japan's sixteen cryptocurrency exchanges have decided to form a new, self-regulating body to better protect investors. The theft at Coincheck Inc. resulted in dramatic cryptocurrency share drops on the Japanese stock exchange, leading many investors to think twice before investing in Japan's rising wave of digital currencies. However, new plans to form a self-regulatory body with jurisdiction over the sixteen largest cryptocurrency exchanges in Japan show the country's commitment to reaping the rewards of the crypto-boom. Not only will a self-regulating body be able to respond quicker to the constantly emerging loopholes in digital currency trades, it will present a unified voice that works with the government to create a safe environment for investors and traders.

Last year, Japan rolled out the world's first system to monitor cryptocurrency exchanges in an effort to draw investors into the young, high-potential sector. While sixteen cryptocurrency exchanges were granted official registration, sixteen other exchanges were still pending final clearance. However, Coincheck's pending status and its failure to even meet basic investor-safety requirements show that Japan's supposedly ground-breaking regulations in response to

other highly publicized crypto-heists are slow-moving and inadequate.

After multiple large-scale cryptocurrency heists in the past few years, finding the right balance between facilitating growth and protecting investors has proved harder than imagined by lawmakers. It is imperative, therefore, that industry experts with knowledge of transactional loopholes create a set of regulations that are fit to confront the growing challenges of providing a secure environment for crypto-investors.

China's NEO Currency Thrives, but Future is Uncertain

- Suraj J. Sorab

NEO became the twelfth highest ranked cryptocurrency by market value in January. Da Hongfei, the founder of NEO, aims for it to compete with other cryptocurrencies like Ethereum, but faces challenges from the Chinese government, which is attempting to slow cryptocurrency transactions and impose bans. If NEO is to succeed, it will need to look for international opportunities.

The Chinese government is not entirely against cryptocurrencies, with the People's Bank of China even attempting to test its own government-issued cryptocurrency. However, a joint mission led by the Cyberspace Administration banned some initial coin offerings and is incentivizing stock exchanges to go after firms

which use block chain as a way to promote themselves. Although these crackdown efforts have not been wholly successful, Da and NEO's managers should take note of the potential risks of remaining almost completely within the Chinese cryptocurrency market. China's actions against Bitcoin have already caused volatility and were partially responsible for collapses in cryptocurrency value in January. Unlike Bitcoin, NEO is managed by a small group of coders and managers, potentially making it easier to relocate to a less hostile country.

However, this is easier said than done. South Korea, for example, is cracking down on possible cases of money laundering and is considering imposing a capital gains tax on cryptocurrency trading. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission is also curbing certain crypto-sales as well. While international expansion is necessary if NEO is to thrive, it can expect to continue tumbling into uncertain and constantly changing crypto-currency regulatory environments around the world.

North Korea: A Crypto-Funded Nation?

- Gabriel Mann

In the past year, various economic sanctions have been placed on North Korea in order to put financial strain on the regime and hopefully incentivize them into negotiating for denuclearization. However, North Korea has been determined to get around these sanc-

tions, employing various methods including identity fraud, smuggling weapons and illicit goods, and more recently mining and stealing cryptocurrency.

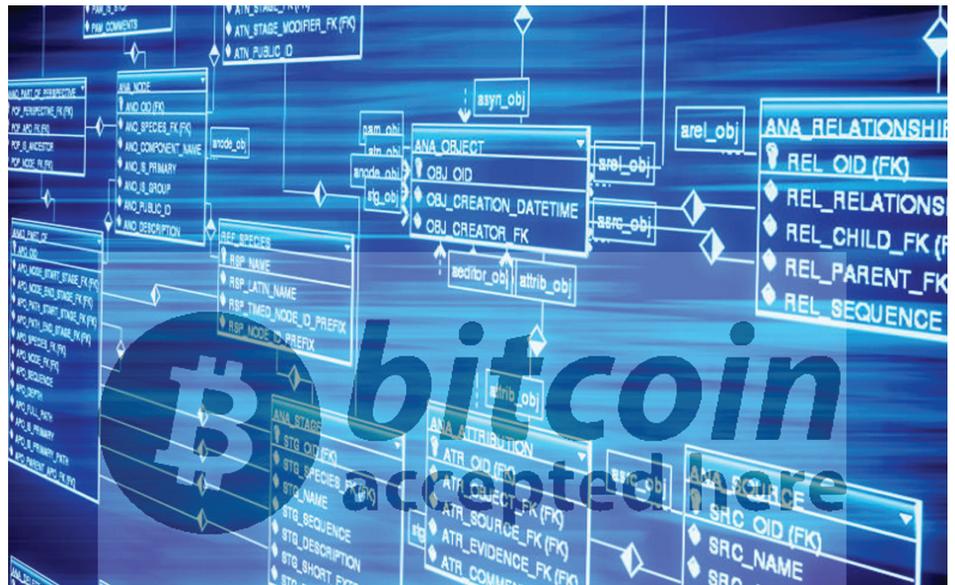
The regime has been implicated in various cryptocurrency heists where millions of dollars worth of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have been stolen from exchanges and digital wallets around the world, the most infamous being the ransomware attack called Wannacry which took place in summer of 2017 and more recently an attack on Coincheck, a Japanese exchange, that resulted in about \$530 million worth of digital tokens being stolen. This was the largest cryptocurrency heist to date and is believed to be a result of North Korea's desperation to acquire more cash amid UN sanctions that are designed to put pressure on the regime's financial reserves. North Korea has also targeted South Korean cryptocurrency exchanges as the country has become a hotbed of cryptocurrency activity with at least two million digital currency investors.

As South Koreans continue to invest in cryptocurrencies, it is now the third largest Bitcoin trading market, it will most likely become the primary target of North Korean cyber attacks. If North Korea continues to expand their cryptocurrency operations it could lead to increased tensions with the South and possibly hinder negotiations between the two countries.

Singapore's Experiment in Digital Currency

- Warren Yu

Singapore may be setting its sights on a potentially big future in digital transactions. Indeed, the chief financial technology officer of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) recently praised the "experimental value" of cryptocurrency and how it is a "fabulous technology". This is a surprising stance for a regulatory agency, given the volatile nature of cryptocurrencies. Unlike how China and South Korea are approaching the issue — by entirely banning a myriad of cryptocurrencies — Singapore is still open for business. Yet, this does not mean that Singapore is totally on board with the new financial technology. In fact, the Minister in charge of the MAS, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, also described the nature of digital currency as "...an inherently unstable, high risk game."



What does the future of digital payments look like for Singapore? For private investors and government officials alike, they seem to be accepted as a part of the growing digital world. So long as financial losses for Singaporeans remain minimal, the government appears content to allow private individuals to experiment with the technology. But an ever-increasing number of speculators along with fears regarding illicit transactions should be noted. These may provide the impetus that push the Singaporean government toward a more hardline stance. Even so, wide swings in cryptocurrency prices have failed to yield such a government response. Perhaps, digital payments are here to stay in Singapore.

Indonesia: Skeptical of Cryptocurrencies

- Akash Ramanujam

The Indonesian government banned the use of cryptocurrencies for any transactions within the country. While firms cannot accept cryptocurrencies as payment, individuals can still buy and sell cryptocurrencies as assets. Bank Indonesia (BI), the nation's central bank, cited concerns about the way that cryptocurrencies remain unregulated and are priced purely according to market forces, a valid concern in light of the volatility that cryptocurrencies could introduce in the Indonesian economy. Additionally, BI is currently trying to boost sluggish consumer spending while raising the value

of the Rupiah, which has recently performed quite poorly in comparison to the US dollar. By barring Indonesians from using cryptocurrencies for transactions, the central government is hoping to keep demand for Rupiah as high as possible, thereby preserving its value. If the Rupiah's value slides, Indonesia risks runaway inflation, which could threaten the country's economic goals.

The Indonesian government is also concerned about cryptocurrencies' potential role in facilitating terrorism. Because the lack of a regulatory body makes it difficult to track cryptocurrency holders, government officials are concerned that cryptocurrencies could be used to finance terrorist organizations in a region where such groups are growing. Last year's insurgency in the southern Philippines highlighted a regional lapse in anti-terror operations. Using cryptocurrencies makes cross-border transactions easier, potentially making cross-border terrorist activities simpler as well, thereby complicating the region's task of mitigating terrorist activity.

Sri Lanka's Inability to Access Cryptocurrency

- Samuri Gunawardena

Due to strict foreign exchange control regulations, Sri Lankans have been unable to gain profitable returns on major investments in

companies like Facebook or Snapchat. As a result, Sri Lankans have turned to investment in cryptocurrencies. Cryptocurrencies have gained much success due to freedom from excessive government regulation in Sri Lanka. Policies created by the Finance Business Act could potentially curtail the success of cryptocurrencies in Sri Lanka, as it prohibits unauthorized dealers from buying, borrowing, or accepting foreign currency from another party or from converting Sri Lankan currency into another currency without the special permission of the bank. Upon first glance, these restrictions seem as if the government is ending the chances of successfully investing in cryptocurrency, but investors have worked around this by arguing that cryptocurrencies are not actually currencies but are more so goods or commodities. The lack of availability of a Sri Lankan cryptocurrency exchange forces dealers to turn to international exchanges that require complex verification procedures and transfer of foreign items. Thus, without being involved in the process, it is challenging to become an expert investor. Sri Lankan authorities, therefore, must focus on the creation of a local cryptocurrency exchange in order to help expand investment options in cryptocurrencies for Sri Lankans.

India Stumbles on Cryptocurrency Regulation

- Vineet Chandra

On February 1st, as a part of the nation's annual budgetary process, Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley reiterated that the Indian government does not recognize Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies as legal tender. This statement is not new or surprising; no nation in the world except Japan actually recognizes any form of cryptocurrency as legal tender – currency closely regulated by the state and meant for transactional use. Media sources in India, however, missed the boat on the nuance of this statement; they promptly declared that Mr. Jaitley had said that cryptocurrency was illegal in India, sending cryptocurrency investors and markets into a frenzy.

The Finance Ministry eventually clarified Mr. Jaitley's statement, but followed up with threatening language about the future of cryptocurrency regulation. Though the ministry's preliminary findings on the issue are not due

until the end of March, their strongly worded statements summarily questioning the legitimacy of cryptocurrencies have caused at least two prominent exchanges to cease operations. Such a stance from members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration is perplexing, given Mr. Modi's stated interest in e-commerce, cashless transactions, and financial literacy and innovation. It also flies in the face of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) reported interest in cryptocurrency regulation: RBI is rumored to be considering digitizing the Indian Rupee, becoming one of the first countries in the world to digitize their national currency.

Such confusion and discord, though somewhat typical of the Indian government at a policy level, is unfortunate for a nation looking to capitalize on the rising interest in cryptocurrency, both domestically and internationally. Though a preliminary framework on the future of Indian cryptocurrency regulation is expected later this year, these mixed signals from the government's various arms make predicting what it will actually say extraordinarily difficult.

Pakistan's Country-Specific Cryptocurrency

- Kim Ira

Pakistan will soon face the issue of striking a balance between promoting more efficient online transactions via digital currencies and enforcing regulations on similar digital currencies that facilitate illegal transactions. Pakcoin, or the self-proclaimed "premier crypto currency" of Pakistan, gained international attention when the Islamabad-based Abid hospital became the first in Asia to accept the digital currency. Describing itself as an "open source, global payment network that is fully decentralized without any central authorities," Pakcoin has marketed itself as a user-friendly method of digital payment, aimed at creating faster transaction times and improving storage efficiency. The digital currency seems to be geared primarily towards Pakistani users, focusing on Pakistan-specific buying and trading needs, and working on educating more and more Pakistani merchants about the benefits of accepting the currency.

Alongside the rise of this country-specific form of digital payment, there has been talk of Pakistan's crackdown on Bitcoin and oth-

er more popular cryptocurrencies. Officially, Pakistan has not recognized Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies as legal tender, but concerns about cryptocurrencies facilitating illegal business transactions have sparked rumors that Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency and Federal Board of Revenue will be investigating users of these cryptocurrencies to evaluate potential threats. Pakcoin's platform, however, indicates that it could be an economically healthy way for streamlining online transactions and catering to the trading needs of Pakistani users. A possible challenge for the Pakistani government, therefore, will be formulating digital payment regulations that prevent cryptocurrency use in illegal transactions, while learning how to integrate country-specific digital currencies like Pakcoin. ■

Maternal Health in Rural Mongolia

- Kim Ira

Maternal mortality rates in Mongolia dropped by 47 percent between 1992 and 2007, largely due to the government-imposed Maternal Mortality Reduction Strategy. These initiatives, implemented from 2001 to 2010, focused primarily on ensuring that mothers delivered their babies in hospitals. Largely effective in aiding mothers in urban areas where hospitals are easily accessible, this strategy failed mothers in remote rural areas, where the danger of maternal mortality is much more prevalent and potential solution more complex. Mothers like Bayarbat Delgermaa, who almost died while giving birth to her first child in the early 1990s, carry on the history of Mongolian nomadic herding traditions. These women, however, often lack immediate access to hospitals because they live in remote areas of the country, surrounded by the Gobi desert's harsh climate and terrain. The Mongolian government must create initiatives that go beyond ensuring deliveries in hospitals. Specifically, it must increase the number and medical capabilities of maternal waiting rooms in order to provide essential medicines and specialized maternal health care for mothers.

The disparity between the accessibility of medicines and medical services in Mongolia's urban versus rural areas is evident in urbanization trends. Recent population studies reveal rapid population increases in urban areas, with 45 percent of the country's entire population residing in the capital of Ulaanbaatar. Data showing decreases in deaths after childbirth post-implementation of the Maternal Mortality Reduction Strategy indicates that the government has provided for maternal health relatively well, even in the face of population increases in cities.

Higher mortality rates in rural areas and nomadic communities as compared to urban areas, however, point to a gap in the government's effectiveness in reducing overall deaths of mothers nationwide. The issue in question for the Mongolian government, therefore, is determining how it will provide for the maternal health needs of people who do not relocate to urban areas and maintain a traditional nomadic lifestyle.



Family in Rural Mongolia. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Various obstacles stand in the way of making essential medicines and specialized care easily accessible to rural communities. The expansive Mongolian landscape makes the sheer travel time to and from rural communities challenging both for expecting mothers and medical specialists. Furthermore, many citizens in remote areas live among the harsh weather conditions of the Gobi desert, where the scorching summers and freezing winters make medical access all the more difficult. In 2016, an extreme weather event called a dzud, an intense summer drought followed by a harsh winter, caused livestock losses around the country, exacerbating health issues for women in rural areas and making access to medical services nearly impossible. Maternal mortality nearly doubled in that year, jumping to 48.6 deaths per 100,000 live births. Rapid increases in maternal mortality in the aftermath of natural events not only highlight the challenges of providing maternal health support, but also emphasize the vulnerability of mothers in affected areas. Preventing maternal deaths almost always requires more expertise than local midwives or family members can provide, which is why the government must improve upon efforts to increase the number of medical facilities providing specialized maternal care in rural and remote districts.

Part of the Maternal Mortality Reduction Strategy included increasing the number of maternity waiting homes, places where women with high-risk pregnancies can stay until they are close to delivery, upon which they are transferred to the nearest hospital if complications arise. Its goal in all districts is to make care more

accessible to rural women. The transportation from these waiting homes to hospitals, however, can be a long journey depending on the district location, and women with unexpected pregnancy complications are at the highest risk if they do not receive immediate medical attention. "During pregnancy complications, we usually only have two to three hours to save a woman's life," says Naomi Kitahara, Mongolia representative to the United Nations Population Fund.

Immediate pregnancy complications like hemorrhaging, sepsis, and rapid increase or decrease in blood pressure all require swift medical response, which is why it is necessary to not only increase the number of maternal waiting rooms in remote districts, but also to equip them to handle life-threatening pregnancy complications, rather than relying solely on the resources of far-away hospitals. As of now, these waiting rooms only function as a point of initial care before transportation to hospitals, but mothers' lives can be saved if these waiting rooms are stocked with an adequate supply of emergency drugs and staff who are trained to manage initial pregnancy crises.

Improving these aspects of maternity waiting rooms and maternal health care facilities in remote areas enables access to a more adequate initial point of contact for rural mothers with pregnancy issues, and can stabilize their condition for the journey to the nearest hospital in order to deliver their baby. The Mongolian government, therefore, must turn the focus of its maternal mortality reduction initiatives to increasing the number of maternal care facilities in remote regions, as well as re-allocating resources to stocking them with essential medicines necessary for pregnancy complications and increasing the amount of specialized staff available to help expecting mothers. ■

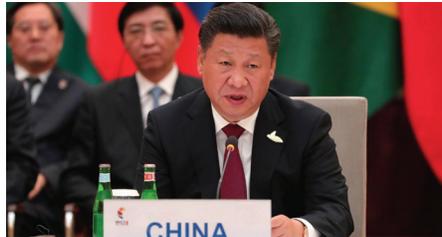
Unchecked

The Making of Xi Jinping's Power Grab

- Vineet Chandra

In our December 2014 edition, *The Unchanged Game*, I discussed China's relatively sudden shift away from its hallmark "quiet diplomacy", noting that "Chinese officials deeply regret that ... they are not truly considered a global leader." In the years that followed, China has indeed emerged as a much more involved global player, with its much-heralded One Belt One Road Initiative, as well as several other investment projects abroad. At the time, I wrote that this move – this increased international focus and hunger for broader recognition – was "a wise one". I did not foresee that Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary and President Xi Jinping, then just a year and a half into his tenure, would take this hunt for the limelight to heart. Indeed, it has become clear that President Xi turned this same desire for recognition and reverence inward on China itself. It is not a coincidence that the Chinese parliament overwhelmingly approved lifting presidential term limits in early March 2018, after years of rubber-stamping his other authoritarian whims. The only surprise in this matter is just how quickly Chinese institutions and political safeguards failed under assault from President Xi and his burgeoning cult of personality.

President Xi comes from fairly pedestrian roots; his father was a veteran of the revolution and is seen as a founding father of communist China, but was purged from the party and thrown in jail in 1962 in the lead up to the Cultural Revolution. Xi was sent to Liangjiahe, a countryside province, for hard labor and 're-education' as punishment for his father's perceived crimes. Despite these retributive measures, Xi was eager to join the CCP but was rejected several times before finally admitted in 1974. From these rather paltry beginnings, Xi went on to serve at some of the highest posts in the Chinese government, including Party Chair of Shanghai and Governor of Fujian Province. He rose to national prominence and became the presumed successor to former President Hu Jintao just as the party leadership began to look for a path to becoming a true superpower. Xi Jinping gave them this path. Perhaps because of his long journey to immense success, he seems to view the accomplishments and failures of his tenure as deeply personal. Since his



President Xi Speaks at a G20 Summit in Hamburg, July 2017. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

ascension to the highest levels of the Chinese government, he has overseen China's more aggressive stance on global affairs, including its involvement in the South and East China Seas and quid pro quo strategy against US President Donald Trump's latest threats on import tariffs. Such a degree of involvement and leadership is somewhat unusual for a modern Chinese president, given that China's policy decisions are usually based on the consensus of the Politburo Standing Committee.

President Xi has undoubtedly made good on the promise of elevating China's role on the global stage in the last several years: China is now a more active player in economic and diplomatic talks and has even positioned itself as a potential source of stability in light of the US' prolonged retreat from the world stage. As these goals are realized, however, Xi has also taken several measures to consolidate power. The most prominent example of his tightening grasp is the large-scale initiative to combat corruption within the CCP. It should be noted that President Xi has some credibility on this matter: when he served as Party Chair in Zhejiang and Fujian, he earned a reputation as a no-nonsense administrator with zero tolerance for corruption. His anti-corruption initiative, then, was as credible as any Chinese president could have put forth, and indeed, it has been moderately successful. However, President Xi has also wielded this initiative as a modus of political attack. Though he genuinely sought to combat corruption in the party at large, he has certainly targeted officials in rival political factions as well. Hundreds of thousands of party members and government ministers have been caught up in this probe – it is unclear how many legitimately so. Xi's most recent maneuver – the removal of all term limits on his time in office – is therefore unsurprising. It fits his ever-

emboldening line of authoritarian tendencies.

What does merit some surprise, however, is how quickly Chinese institutions crumbled to President Xi's will. Soon after the constitutional amendment lifting the term limits on his post passed, retired and more liberal-leaning members of the CCP were warned to avoid criticizing President Xi. By most accounts, they complied. Online censors – increasingly sophisticated and empowered under President Xi – smoothly removed any hints of dissent from the Chinese internet and social media sites; known political dissenters were tracked down and "holidayed", wherein they are sent away from Beijing on all-expenses-paid trips to isolated tourist destinations with a small, party-loyal entourage. State run media outlets happily covered the change, carrying frequent coverage of the party-line response from CCP officials.

For their part, party leadership defended the amendment as a simple method of ensuring consistency – after all, neither CCP General Secretary nor Chairman of the Central Military Commission, titles generally held concurrently with that of President, are term limited. The amendment itself passed the parliament with 2,958 votes in favor, two against, and three abstaining. Though the parliament has long been controlled by loyal CCP officials, the measure's passage is still an incredible feat: President Xi essentially declared himself eligible to rule for as long as he would like, and no one with any semblance of power so much as batted an eye.

Xi Jinping has, by far, amassed the most power of any Chinese politician since Mao Zedong. Many of his supporters argue that he is not an ideologue or a dictator. Instead, they insist that he will step aside eventually out of respect and deference to the party and his own legacy. Nevertheless, the collapse of all protections against this kind of consolidated power is a strong commentary on the weakening state of Chinese institutions. Though the CCP has long chipped away at the Chinese conception of democracy, it has now abandoned the charade altogether. Only time will tell if Xi will eventually step aside out of respect for party tradition, or if his loyalty to the CCP gives way to a lengthy and authoritarian power trip. ■

Olympic Overtures

A Temporary Peace

- Suraj Sorab

This article was written in March 2018, well before planned meetings between North Korean and South Korean officials in April and North Korean and US officials in May. Although the North Korean government has stated its commitment to denuclearization, its true intent remains unclear. Regardless of the outcome of these meetings, Mr. Sorab and MJIA staff still contend that the lack of a clear consensus on the Korean nuclear issue may undermine the prospects for a long-term, Olympics-based peace on the peninsula.

At the start of the PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games, South Korean President Moon Jae-In exchanged a cordial handshake with Kim Yo-Jong, senior North Korean Politburo member and sister to Northern leader Kim Jong-Un. On both sides of the Pacific, hopes of thawing North-South relations further rose as United States (US) President Donald Trump agreed to meet with Kim Jong-Un regarding nuclear arms. The Olympic Games could represent the start of improved diplomatic relations between Seoul and Pyongyang, even an initiation of a potential peacemaking process. Or, more likely, the Games and the current uneasy peace are a temporary hiatus in an increasingly precarious international situation against the backdrop of major world powers and nuclear proliferation.

The South Korean government and International Olympic Committee jointly funded the North Korean delegation's visit to the Olympic Games. After years of rising tensions, especially with the war of words between the Trump administration and the Kim regime over social media, many, especially the South Korean president, have welcomed this opportunity to ease the situation. However, given how recent these improvements are, it is unclear whether or not these cordial overtures in the Olympics, and the succeeding rumors of negotiations, will truly turn into concrete diplomatic action.

A closer look at the North Korean delegation reveals that their arrival is not the result of long-term planning, but rather stems from hasty, eleventh hour communications between the representatives of each government. News of North Korean participation in the February Olympics only began circulating in late 2017. Prior to reopening communications on the "ho-

pline" across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two nations, there had been a two-year break on diplomatic communications between the North and South. This silence was largely brought on by the hardline stances from Washington and Pyongyang regarding North Korean nuclear arms. There is still the underlying tension of a nuclear North Korea and the ramifications of potential regional nuclear proliferation.

The softer external appearance from the Ryongsoong Residence, Kim's main home, could be an attempt by the regime to subvert US-led sanctions on the hermit kingdom, giving Pyongyang both propaganda material to be used domestically, and a public-image boost to use in its relations with other countries. In many ways, it would be wise for the North to avoid being perceived as an animal cornered by sanctions, but instead as a state learning and willing to accept reasonable terms to debunk the international narrative of Kim Jong-Un as a "madman." The BBC described the athletes and cheerleaders from north of the 38th as "key to North Korea's propaganda offensive," as they continuously praised their Dear Leader for the state-run media to show, alongside censored parts of the Games, to an audience back home.

At the same time, the possibility of an Olympics-based peace process, however unlikely, should not be entirely ignored: the world might be seeing a Korean peacemaking process in its infancy. While it is unlikely that the North and South would entirely reunify, despite the waving of Unified Korea flags in the opening ceremonies, there is the chance that, at the very least, the Moon administration could successfully bring both North Korea and the US to the negotiating table again over nuclear arms, especially considering Trump's acceptance of Kim's invitation to meet. The very fact that the diplomatic hotline was reopened across the DMZ is seen as a victory in and of itself by those hoping for warmer relations between the North and South. Kim Jong-Un has also, through his sister, extended an invitation to President Moon to visit Pyongyang. Even in light of recent events, there is little doubt that a North Korean delegation to the Olympics is a step towards better relations compared to the last time South Korea hosted the Games in 1988, which the North boycotted. President Moon and the Unification Minister

Cho Myoung-Gyon have expressed their willingness to reciprocate the North's extending a hand; Cho has also described North Korea's participation as a step towards peace on the peninsula.

Yet, even with these new diplomatic occurrences and exchanges of seemingly warm invitations, the lack of a clear answer to the underlying nuclear question means that this time period surrounding the Olympics will likely not be the basis for a major peace process. Less than half a year before the Olympics, the North tested the Hwasong-15, a missile believed to be capable of reaching any target in the continental United States. President Moon has acknowledged the need for the US to be part of the North-South peace process. With such missile capabilities, Washington's stance is now less flexible concerning the negotiation process, one necessary for peace on the Korean peninsula. This is especially true considering that the U.S. is one of the South's closest allies and trading partners, and has almost 35,000 troops stationed on the peninsula.

The invitation extended to Moon to visit Pyongyang has become controversial for another reason: though on one hand, it is an olive branch intended to move for peace, but on the other, it is a poisoned chalice designed to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington. If true, this means any peace process the Moon administration intends to pursue is ill-fated before it can even begin, because the North is not truly pursuing peace, but rather a divisive agenda with entirely different goals. Such a plight would almost certainly mean a return to the animosity. In the meantime, Trump's agreement to meet with Kim will also likely fail to produce solid results, as neither side has extended concessions and are unlikely to do so in the future.

The question of whether the events at the PyeongChang Olympics will lead to peace or defuse into hardline politics is yet to be answered; however, to place faith in peace alone would be a mistake. Although it is possible that Pyongyang and Seoul are starting to move towards a diplomatic solution, it is more likely that this is simply a pause in the increasingly belligerent crisis on the Korean Peninsula. The temporary departure from the tense relationship is well-enjoyed, but it is likely to end, with the rising contention of the past several years continuing into the future. ■

Too Easy Money? Japan's Interest Rate Debate

- Akash Ramanujam

It pays to borrow from the Bank of Japan. More precisely, the Bank of Japan (BoJ) pays other banks to borrow from it. The Japanese central bank has charged a negative interest rate since 2016. Negative interest rates are exactly what they sound like: banks are paid interest on funds they borrow from the central bank. The BoJ's motivation? Japan is desperate for economic growth, as the country has experienced sluggish growth for most of the past twenty years. While Japan has recently experienced moderate growth, the BoJ has not been without its critics: some claim that the BoJ should revert to low, positive interest rates, citing profitability issues for Japanese banks. However, changing the sign of the BoJ's interest rates would be a mistake. Negative interest rates serve an important role in encouraging households to spend, pushing businesses to increase wages and spend more on research and development (R&D), and spurring investment in innovative companies. The resulting growth would benefit all participants in the Japanese economy, including banks themselves.

Banks' profit margins can get squeezed if the spread between the interest they charge on loans and the interest they pay on savings shrinks. Banks are required to hold a certain percentage of their deposits: the ratio of these reserves to a bank's total deposits is known as the reserve ratio. Oftentimes, banks will lend so much that they need to borrow money from the BoJ to satisfy the mandated reserve ratio. By using negative interest rates, the BoJ is allowing banks to borrow yen at a negative rate to meet the reserve ratio: banks are being paid to lend aggressively. The cost of lending drops dramatically when banks are paid instead of penalized for dropping below the reserve ratio. This lower cost of borrowing then gets passed on to those who borrow from banks. Thus, a negative benchmark interest rate forces banks to charge borrowers low interest rates.

However, as interest rates on loans and deposits converge toward zero, their spread would shrink, threatening banks' potential profits. This has led critics to claim that negative interest rates pose a grave risk to the Japanese banking system, thereby jeopardizing the financial stability of the Japanese economy. Critics also claim that small, but non-negative, inter-

est rates would encourage Japanese banks to offer low interest rates. This is true to a certain extent, but if banks are actually charged when they drop below the reserve ratio, then they are presented with a more significant incentive to hold cash reserves at a healthy margin above the BoJ mandated reserve ratio. Low interest rates are therefore vital to stimulate a Japanese marketplace that is effectively being rejected by households.

The BoJ's negative interest rate pushes these households to spend instead of save. If banks cannot charge high interest on loans, they will offer extremely low interest rates for people wishing to make deposits, as they cannot afford to pay high rates on deposits. Low interest rates on savings will encourage households to make purchases with their earnings instead of saving. If people start spending more, then increased demand can allow companies to produce more goods at higher prices. This is crucial for Japan to spur economic growth, as a rapidly aging population and colossal national debt already weigh on the Japanese economy. Even if households decide not to increase spending, they may choose to store their earnings in assets that can more directly contribute to growth, such as stocks or real estate.

Businesses also need to do their share. A rigid Japanese labor market combined with a tendency for firms to save their earnings instead of passing them on to workers has led to stagnant wages, limiting demand and placing a damper on growth. Low returns to savings combined with recently-introduced tax incentives that encourage firms to raise wages could increase the amount that businesses spend on workers. Low borrowing costs allow businesses to allocate more money to research and development, potentially leading to increased productivity and innovation, which are two key drivers of economic growth. Low interest rates also force banks to lend to firms with more upside potential; a 2016 Financial Times article noted that negative interest rates in Europe forced banks to consider "riskier loans or charge fees for current accounts". With more risk comes more reward; banks can charge higher interest rates for companies with a greater risk of default. Innovative and upstart companies carry more risk than traditional firms; if banks are forced

to chase risk for profits, Japan could experience a dramatic increase in innovation. While risk-chasing bankers can pose a threat to the Japanese economy, Japan needs to take a gamble on these gamblers; Japan needs a dramatic source of growth if it is to overcome the dual threat of an aging population and colossal public debt.

Although banks may take a hit in the short term, the positive effects of negative interest rates on the economy could benefit banks in the future. In fact, a 2018 Economist article pointed out that this is already happening: "[t]he improvement in the economy has increased the creditworthiness of borrowers, obliging banks to write off fewer bad loans." Economic growth would contribute to the repayment to the national debt, making the Japanese economy more attractive to investors. Moody's maintains an A1 credit rating for Japan, indicating that this rating would be damaged by "further delay in the implementation of the second step of [a] consumption tax hike". The tax hike has been delayed due to fears it could dampen and possibly reverse growth. Using negative interest rates to boost growth would ease the introduction of the tax, allowing growth to continue while bolstering the creditworthiness of the national government. Confidence in Japan's leadership could spur more investment from both domestic and foreign lenders, furthering growth and providing banks with more viable borrowers.

Negative interest rates present a unique opportunity to shape the behavior of households, firms, and banks. By encouraging household spending, providing incentives for firms to invest in innovation and wages, and setting the stage for long-term growth, negative interest rates offer a partial remedy to Japan's economic woes. Though it may cause banks to suffer in the near term, the BoJ's monetary policy will propel growth forward and pay financial firms dividends under the principle that a rising tide lifts all boats. For Japan, there is no such thing as too easy money. ■

Thai Democracy Woes

A Land of Tight-Lipped Smiles

- Warren Yu

On January 8th, 2018, Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha presented a cardboard cutout of himself and said to the media, “If you want to ask any questions on politics or conflict, ask this guy.” Despite this bizarre proclamation, the incident was largely shrugged off, and treated as a lighthearted jab at journalists. But this is no laughing matter. That same month, Thailand’s military junta filed charges against advocates of democracy, censored criticism of the government, and intimidated opposition into silence. Chan-o-cha’s farcical display is purely a distraction, drawing attention away from a far more concerning issue: the continued delay of Thailand’s next general elections.

After the 2014 coup d’état against the civilian government, the junta has refused to relinquish power. Promises to restore civilian rule were issued in 2015 and 2017, and new delays have further pushed that date to 2019. The military government has ruled long enough. While Chan-o-cha claims that the extended rule is ‘normal,’ it sets a dangerous precedent by affirming the military as the sole arbiter of civil society. It is time for the military to honor its original pledge and allow for the return of free and fair elections. Only by softening *lèse majesté* (violated majesty) laws, which criminalize any criticism of the sovereign, amending the constitution, and hastening the transition back to a civilian democracy will Thailand’s democratic woes be resolved.

To say the least, Thai democracy has always been in a precarious state. Although the current crisis started in 2014, Thailand has gone through twenty different constitutions since 1932, leading to a new constitution every four years. Furthermore, since the first constitution was accepted, twelve military coups have occurred. Thailand is an interesting case because of the significant influence of the throne, perpetuated through various *lèse majesté* laws; in recent years, however, these laws have grown to encompass protection of military government as well. A report from watchdog Freedom House describes it as “authorities aggressively enforce...*lèse majesté* laws, and have summoned journalists for meetings at which they



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are pressured to stop producing coverage critical of the [junta].” Discretion on what constitutes “critical” material has been entirely in the hands of the government. Prior to the referendum on a draft of the twentieth constitution, opinions “inconsistent with the truth” resulted in arrest and punishment. With any and all dissent muted, the reported 61.4 percent approval rate for the Thai government should be treated with skepticism.

The actual text of the constitution demands attention. Sections Two and Three state that “Thailand adopts a democratic regime of government” and that “sovereign power belongs to the Thai people”. In a society where dissent is rarely tolerated and where expression, assembly, and association are considered sedition, this constitution fails to address the tragic state of Thai democracy. Another portion of this document. Section 279, effectively legitimizes the actions of the military junta: “All announcements, orders and acts...irrespective of their constitutional, legislative, executive, or judicial force...shall be considered constitutional, lawful and effective.” A *carte blanche* for junta members like Chan-o-cha has the worrying implication and consequence that they can legally do no wrong. The sweeping powers they have acquired, as well as the orders and decrees promulgated through Article 44 of the 2014 Interim Constitution, are now accepted as a matter of law.

Some would argue that the presence of military rule is a welcome and necessary one, and would point to the corruption under the previous Shinawatra government as justifica-

tion for the junta’s intervention. While those charges may be true, it is deeply concerning that the reason for initial military action has become a feature of the current military rule. In particular, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan was recently caught in the center of a corruption scandal. Thai citizens active in online spheres identified 25 luxury watches in his possession that he had failed to declare to the National Anti-Corruption Commission. As Prime Minister Chan-o-cha hurries to cover his bases, his insistence on pushing the elections back seems more like a move of desperation. During the chaos of the 2014 political crisis, military action may have been an acceptable outcome. However, the Prime Minister’s continuing grip to his power seems less about supporting the people than it is about supporting his election prospects going forward.

There is a common phrase in Thai: *mai pen rai*. The exact definition is hard to pin down, but it is generally translated as a casual dismissal, or acceptance, of an event. *Mai pen rai* epitomizes an important aspect of Thai culture: the acceptance that events can be beyond one’s control. It follows, then, that the best course of action is to simply follow the rules. However, Thailand’s democracy is in peril; it should not be dismissed with *mai pen rai*. As the government engages in hypocrisy and the rule of law fails to apply to all, it is essential that a peaceful transition of power should occur. Thailand’s next election will be a focal point in determining the future of its democracy. If Chan-o-cha and his colleagues continue their grasp to their power, the will of the people will only be expressed nominally. A firm date for general elections, in tandem with a rewritten constitution and genuine freedom of expression, can help set the stage for the recovery of Thai democracy. ■

What Sri Lanka's National Human Rights Action Plan Means for Women

- Sanuri Gunawardena

In mid-January 2018, the Sri Lankan Finance Ministry announced that it would lift a 38-year-old ban preventing women from buying alcohol and serving liquor in bars and restaurants – a law few people were aware of to begin with. The average Sri Lankan bartender had never even enforced this practice, mostly due to lack of knowledge of the legislation. Just days after the lifting of the ban, however, President Maithripala Sirisena and his cabinet chose not to support the Ministry's decision, claiming that lifting the alcohol purchasing-and-serving ban runs counter to Sri Lankan culture. The government then reinstated the alcohol ban due to pressure from Buddhists in the Sinhalese base, indicating their continuing influence over the national government.

Regardless, the ban violates women's rights to equal treatment, a fundamental right guaranteed under the Sri Lankan Constitution, which also authorizes the state to make specific provisions by law, subordinate legislation, or executive action to ensure the advancement of women by preventing discrimination on the basis of sex. In particular, the ban denies women the right to make choices with regard to equal employment, as it is now illegal for women to seek a job in the server business as a waitress or bartender. If women are prevented from serving alcohol by the government, then they will ultimately be turned away from potential jobs. Marginalizing women in order to serve the interests of highly conservative groups will not create a nation of equal opportunity and access to resources for all its citizens, regardless of gender.

In cases such as the alcohol-serving ban, Sri Lanka's National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) should be consulted, as its chapter on the fundamental rights of women calls for guaranteed employment equality. The NHRAP, a piece of legislation created by the government in collaboration with civil society groups, promotes policies that seek to remedy inequalities in Sri Lankan society. Passed in 2016, its ratification inspired hope for improved gender equality in the country. However, the final draft of the legislation was never circulated to the wider public. Although the initial effort was



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an attempt to create a more equal Sri Lanka, the lack of enforcement mechanisms, as well as the exclusion of the non-governmental sector in the legislation, effectively prevents the NHRAP from achieving its lofty goals. The Sri Lankan government must uphold the civil and political rights promised to all citizens equally by allowing women the same freedoms provided to men, especially in terms of accessing resources for employment and career choice.

Many women's organizations operating in Sri Lanka are advocating for exactly that. Several organizations have petitioned the Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reform to address the historical and systematic marginalization women have faced and continue to face in Sri Lanka, despite the fact that there already is an equality clause in the Sri Lankan Constitution. Once the state takes clear action to end sexist discrimination in both legislation and practice, Sri Lanka will be able to follow through on its constitutional commitment to provide equality and dignity for all citizens, regardless of their gender. Including the viewpoints of the public sector in the initial proposals – as in the writing of the NHRAP – was a positive first step toward reducing the gender gap in Sri Lanka. Continued involvement by relevant civil society groups is crucial for future negotiations between President Sirisena, his cabinet, the Sri Lankan Parliament, and the broader public in ensuring that the voices of the people are heard on issues of inequality.

While several other pieces of legislative have been proposed in order to make further progress on women's rights, these efforts, like the NHRAP, do not have appropriate enforcement mechanisms. The Women's Charter of 1993 epitomizes this problem. Although it seeks to address women's rights in seven diverse areas

– family, education, economic activity, political rights, healthcare, protection from gender-based violence, and protection from social discrimination – it lacks enforcement mechanisms entirely. In a similar vein, a Women's Rights Act is currently in draft form, building off of proposals by the 2002-2003 Sri Lankan government that addressed gender discrimination and advocated for equal opportunities for women in society. Unfortunately, the bill is still in draft form, suggesting that the government is hesitant to make further progress on advancing women's rights in Sri Lanka, perhaps due to pressure from conservative groups, as with the alcohol-serving ban.

Sri Lanka has made immense strides in the aftermath of a devastating civil war that plagued the country for decades (1983-2009). Promoting women's rights, especially in the workforce, as well as involving civil society in the legislative process, as in the writing of the NHRAP, shows the international community how far Sri Lanka has come in terms of guaranteeing equal rights for all citizens. President Sirisena and the conservative Buddhists that oppose lifting the ban on alcohol-serving tarnish the nation's reputation and undermine the progress it has made so far in providing an equal environment for all of its people. Maintaining this ban will not change how the culture of Sri Lanka has moved toward allowing women to make their own employment decisions and incorporating input from women's groups in government decisions; it will not significantly alter how Sri Lankan citizens live on a day-to-day basis. However, it will hurt Sri Lanka's reputation on women's rights in the eyes of the rest of the world. ■

Proof or Paranoia? China's Influence in Australia

- R. Casey Dwyer

Sino-Australian relations have rapidly deteriorated under growing suspicions from both governments. The fear has manifested in a divisive speech on restricting Chinese influence from Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. As Zhou Enlai famously said during China's 1949 Communist Revolution, "the Chinese people have stood up;" Turnbull claimed the same of the Australian people, as he switched back and forth between Mandarin and English in his speech. Suspicions have stemmed from growing Chinese influence in the country, ranging from university censorship to political buyouts of Australia's highest offices. While Australia should be hesitant to adopt a classic anti-China hysteria, it must also pursue practical regulatory proposals necessary to ensure the sovereignty and wellbeing of the Australian people and press. Chinese state influence in education and democracy must ultimately be acknowledged, investigated, and – if necessary - punished if the Australian government wants to preserve the country's safety and sovereignty.

Suspicion of collusion between Australian and Chinese representatives has been growing for months. After weeks of controversy, Australian senator Sam Dastyari resigned from his position in the senate amidst fears that he was taking pro-China positions in return for financial support from Chinese donors. After links were discovered between the senator and Huang Xiangmo, a prominent Chinese businessman with ties to China's ruling party, the Communist Party of China (CCP). Dastyari was forced out, as new rules and regulations were sought to prevent a similar occurrence. In addition to being caught coordinating counter-surveillance plans with Huang, Dastyari was questioned on his changing position on the territorial dispute in the South China Sea, as well as his insistence that a fellow Labor Party member not meet with pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong. Coupled with accepting loans to pay personal debts, Dastyari has become the prime example of Chinese influence in Australian politics.

According to a recently released report from Australia's Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, China has also been effectively censoring and monitoring academic work on campuses across the country, often



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through the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). These organizations are funded and controlled by the Chinese embassies operating in Australia, and have served as a reference point and watchdog for Australian popular and unpopular opinion regarding the CCP. Instances like the president of the University of Canberra CSSA saying she would notify the embassies if there were any human rights protests, or the Chinese consulate-general protesting the teachings of Hong Kong and Taiwan as separate states, all point towards China's growing influence in Australian academia. As large numbers of Chinese students studying in Australia become involved in these organizations, it will become increasingly important for the Australian government to ensure that these organizations will not limit academic or media freedoms.

While it is important for Australian political and academic leaders to confront an overbearing influence from some Chinese figures, it is also vital that Australia refrains from adopting an entirely anti-China frenzy. For example, while many CSSA's have been subtly influenced by leading members with connections to embassies and business in China, many Australians have opened accusations of espionage and treason to a vast majority of Chinese students in Australia. While it is possible that some have contributed to pro-China publications lacking anti-CCP profiles, it is more likely that the Chinese government will freely enact surveillance through a number of online platforms run by Chinese entities. With the CCP's nearly unlimited access to micro-blogging websites like WeChat, Chinese-Australians face the daily threat of censorship and espionage without any inclination to feed into the CCP's censorship

practices. Thus, it is important that Australia develops a practical set of regulations that can keep the CCP's influence out of academia and politics without severely damaging Sino-Australian relations within the country.

Although still in the early stages, and justifiably receiving criticism for their broad nature, new sets of Australian laws concerning foreign influence have recently been introduced by parliament. The regulations notably include a ban on overseas political donations, as well as required registration of lobbyists working for foreign entities. The parliament has also informally offered protection for anti-China books that face the threat of legal action from Beijing, which is most notable in the case of Professor Clive Hamilton, whose controversial book detailing the extent of Chinese influence on Australian society was dropped by multiple publishers out of fear for CCP retaliation. On the other hand, there has also been fierce domestic backlash, accusing these laws of not going far enough to protect Chinese whistleblowers and journalists, who could be jailed if they are in possession of classified materials. While Turnbull has already signaled that revisions will be coming, it will be important to strike the balance that prohibits foreign meddling in politics and academics while guaranteeing the necessary freedoms of press and speech for Australians.

As Sino-Australian relations continue to decline amongst both a war of words and direct espionage, it is imperative that both Xi Jinping and Malcolm Turnbull take a step back and evaluate what has been gained from their long, prosperous relationship as Pacific neighbors. In the coming months, it will be vital for both leaders to engage in constructive dialogue and policy talks, rather than accusatory rhetoric with possibly-lasting, detrimental economic effects. Although Australia's newly proposed set of laws has notable deficiencies in need of remedy, decreasing Chinese-backed interference in nationally sovereign areas like academia and politics must remain a priority. If Australia is able to fashion a set of laws that prevents foreign influence and promote mutually agreeable terms of academic cooperation, there will once again be hope for improved Sino-Australian relations. ■

European Elections in the Age of Populism

- Europe Region Contributing Authors

Presidential and parliamentary elections have dominated European headlines in the first months of 2018, as voters go to the polls open across the Continent. Some election campaigns are just beginning, while others draw to a long-awaited close. Accusations of corruption and fraud imply that others were over before they even began. The Michigan Journal of International Affairs Europe region writers provide coverage of the diversity and drama sweeping through European polling booths in early 2018, from Madrid to Moscow.

Spain

- Liam Beers

Spain's recent political landscape has been shaped by the Catalan separatist movement and Madrid's response to what they call an "illegal referendum" in Catalonia. From all of this internal strife has arisen a party that seeks to compete with the current heavyweight in Spanish politics Partido Popular (PP): Citizens (Ciudadanos). The Citizens party and its leader Albert Rivera hope to give the Spanish population a different option, come the 2020 general election.

Albert Rivera was born in the Catalan capital of Barcelona, served in the Parliament of Catalonia, and was elected president of the Citizens party during its founding conference in 2006. He has been reelected party leader every cycle since. Rivera is convinced that now is the time for change in Spain's political system, which has been dominated by only two parties since the transition to democracy in the 1980s. But dethroning the PP will be no easy task: it is easily the most organized party in Spain and has been extremely popular until recent allegations of corruption in the party hit the front page of Madrid papers.

Regardless of the PP's dominance, the Citizens party and Rivera still provide something that Europe desperately needs right now: stability. Citizens has been described as both center-left and center-right; Rivera and his party are anti-separatist on the Catalonia issue, and perhaps most importantly, show Spaniards that there is a third option in elections. Rivera's views on Catalan independence may be considered typical by Spanish standards, as he continues to suggest no change in the relationship between Spain and Catalonia. This stance offers stability for a country that certainly needs to step back and take a breath over the issue. His idea that

politics has to move away from the left-right axis echoes French President Emmanuel Macron. Citizens is also winning support through its policy proposals fighting business monopolies and its Scandinavian-style labor reforms that help the unemployed retrain and find jobs. Citizens wants to shake up the political, electoral, and educational systems and tackle Spain's high rate of school dropout. Given Rivera's genuine popularity, these goals could very much come to fruition. He claims the Citizens party is part of a worldwide movement, citing Macron and Canada's Justin Trudeau among other world leaders.

Rivera's ambition and calming messages could be exactly what Spain – and Europe – need to begin the process of healing from recent, tumultuous years in politics. While Rivera faces an uphill battle in the 2020 elections, there is a very good chance that Citizens will play a major role in Spanish politics for the foreseeable future.

Italy

- B.A. Bacigal

In the wake of this spring's parliamentary elections in Italy, one thing is clear: the wave of populism sweeping Europe persists unabated in Italy. Unfortunately, that seems to be the only thing that is clear, as no single party or alliance achieved the 40 percent necessary for an absolute parliamentary majority. Italy now faces what is called a hung parliament with no clear leader or ruling party – described by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker as the "worst case scenario" for Europe.

Polling at a historic low, the governing, center-left Democratic Party received just nineteen percent of Italians' votes, while anti-establishment, right-wing coalitions gained unprecedented ground. The far-right Five Star Movement came the closest to a parliamentary ma-

majority with roughly 32.7 percent of the vote, and the anti-immigrant League party (formerly the Northern League) gained more votes than even familiar face and former PM Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia party, with 17.5 percent and fourteen percent, respectively.

With nearly a third of Italian youth unemployed, and the devastating effects of Italy's recent economic recession only just beginning to wane, backlash against the establishment was expected. Five Star capitalized on this discontent with promises of a universal basic income and greater subsidy schemes, messages that deeply resonated with constituents in the south of Italy, which traditionally has the highest unemployment rates in the country. Other notions of xenophobia, Euroscepticism, and isolationism rose to the forefront of populist campaigns, pulling out voter sentiments that had been underlying debate for nearly a decade.

After days of negotiations, center-right to far-right factions have finally reached an agreement on parliamentary speakers, with Five Star's Roberto Fico as president of the lower house, and Forza Italia's strong-voiced Elisabetta Casellati as president of the Senate. No formal governmental alliance has been announced as of yet. The results of the Italian elections have sparked fear in establishment leaders, hope for populist visionaries, and uncertainty not just for Italy, but for Europe as a whole. Now, the world waits to see whether or not a larger party coalition will form – but regardless of the final composition of the Italian parliament, populism persists.

Cyprus

- Mark Dovich

Cyprus has historically been inhabited by two main ethnic groups, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Tensions between the two

communities culminated in a 1974 military coup d'état by Greek Cypriot nationalists, in response to which the Turkish government invaded and occupied the northern part of the island. The island remains divided to this day, with Greek Cypriots living in the southern half of the island (the Republic of Cyprus) and Turkish Cypriots living in the northern half (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus). Since the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, negotiation talks to reunify the island have been held repeatedly, though without any definitive results.

Indeed, reunification emerged as a central campaign issue in the most recent presidential elections in the Republic of Cyprus in early 2018. Nine candidates – all men – contested the two-round race, including incumbent President Nicos Anastasiades, who prioritized reunification with the north, as well as economic stability, during his first term in office. His main opponents were Nikolas Papadopoulos, a noted hardliner on reunification and himself the son of a former president, and Stavros Malas, a pro-reunification candidate supported by Akel, the communist party. In addition, Elam, a far-right and neo-fascist party, fielded a presidential candidate for the first time in Cyprus' history.

In the first round of the election, held in late January, Anastasiades received 36 percent of the vote, Malas 30 percent, and Papadopoulos 26 percent. Christos Christou, the far-right candidate, received six percent. As no single candidate received a majority of the vote, a runoff was then held between Anastasiades and Malas in early February, in which Anastasiades received 56 percent of the vote and a second term in office. Restarting reunification talks with the north was, naturally, one of Anastasiades' first promises, upon reelection. Whether or not he will be able to keep such promises, however, remains unclear.

Czech Republic

- Anna Haynes

Continuing the Eurosceptic trend in Eastern European administrations right now, incumbent Czech President Miloš Zeman claimed victory yet again, running on a platform of migration reform and protecting national sovereignty. Rhetoric throughout his first term emphasized these same topics, consistently promoting anti-immigrant sentiment and vocalizing dissatisfaction with the EU. Accused of blatant sexism and Islamophobia, Zeman considers himself the “Czech Trump” and capitalizes on media

attention to fuel his agenda. Most notably, the Czech Republic has only admitted twelve asylum seekers out of the 2,600 assigned to them by the EU quota system. Based on his recent reelection, support for such policies does not seem to be waning.

However, Zeman's belligerence toward migrants and disregard for the Czech Republic's Western European allies spurred Jiří Drahoš, the former leader of the Czech Academy of Sciences, to oppose him in the most recent election. Drahoš was a complete newcomer to the political arena. He criticized Zeman's crude language, aggressive politics, and general divisiveness, claiming in a debate that “Mr. Zeman is the past... He is now a symbol of division and name-calling”. Although Drahoš ultimately lost the election, he nonetheless posed an impressive challenge to the incumbent, claiming 48.6 percent of the votes with relatively high voter turnout.

Many of Zeman's opponents also cite his troublingly close relationship with Vladimir Putin as a reason for distrusting his policies. Some suspect Russian meddling in the election, including political scholars and Drahoš himself. In the days leading up to the vote, a series of fake stories accused Drahoš of pedophilia and communist collusion in the same way that many Russian disinformation campaigns have recently done. This interference in Czech politics has caused many to question whether the country will remain in the EU and NATO, or whether Zeman will push the country to leave these organizations in the upcoming term. As one scholar pointed out, this sort of fracturing may ultimately prove beneficial to Russia: “Europe is dividing itself, and [the Russians] do not have to do much.”

Russia

- Meghan Rowley

Russian president Vladimir Putin claimed reelection victory on March 18 in an unsurprising result in a noncompetitive election. Official numbers credit him with over 75 percent of the vote, easily securing the autocrat another six years in office. This recent victory essentially guarantees that Putin will oversee the country for a total of 25 years, making him the only other Russian leader to rule for more than two decades besides dictator Joseph Stalin.

Many liberal Russians discredit the election by considering the lackluster quality of the candidates, calling Putin's seven opponents “the

circus” that offer no real change. Millionaire business Pavel Grudinin was endorsed by the Communist Party, the second-most competitive party in Russian politics after Putin's own United Russia, but was then seen as noncompetitive after Russian media revealed his company observed numerous illegal business practices. Liberal challenger Ksenia Sobchak was largely viewed as a non-threat, partly for her reality TV past and partly because of close family ties with Putin himself. Consequently, people did not take her progressive statements calling for legalizing same-sex marriage and returning recently-annexed Crimea to Ukraine seriously, instead suspecting her as Putin's handpicked ‘opponent’. The only viable contender, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was barred from running after questionable and politically-motivated convictions of embezzlement.

With several unviable opponents, Moscow has attempted to increase turnout to indicate the legitimacy of its ‘democracy’ to the outside world. Get-out-the-vote campaigns included selfie competition raffles for iPhones and cars. Hard-to-find food products were placed as incentives for voting at polling places. Bosses threatened termination if employees abstained from voting. And it may have worked: turnout increased from 65 percent in the 2012 elections to 70 percent in 2018. At the same time, Golos, an independent election monitoring group, has cited multiple counts of election fraud, including ballot stuffing and blocking security cameras. Nonetheless, the Russian Election Commission has declared the polls valid.

Regardless, the real controversies are not necessarily the conditions of this election, but the upcoming one. Putin is constitutionally barred from running again after his term ends in 2024. Yet, given that he has once before worked around the country's term limit rules by temporarily serving as Prime Minister (2008-2012), it is not out of the question that he may do so again. Furthermore, as other world leaders, such as China's Xi Jinping and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have recently removed constitutional constraints on their powers, international trends put similar Russian measures within the realm of possibility. Though Putin has called such suggestions “silly”, after nearly a quarter century in power, it does not look like he is ready to retire just yet. ■

Troubling Times for a Troubled Border

- Liam Beers

The British Isles have experienced tremendous turmoil throughout history. During the medieval era, the kingdoms of the islands were in constant conflict, and in modern times, pushes for Irish independence and Irish unification sparked civil wars and terrorism. But since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 between the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom, the threat of continued large-scale violence has seemed unlikely.

But Brexit has changed the conflict's tenuous yet peaceful ending. The UK's secession vote and subsequent discussions toward the establishment of a new trade arrangement renewed regional tensions. While the rhetoric from the EU, UK, and Ireland has come out strongly against the establishment of a so-called 'hard' border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, there is no compromise in sight. Any disagreements on the matter could have radical effects on the region, including a return to violence in an already unstable environment. It is of the utmost importance for the stability of the British Isles that British desires take a backseat to the sentiments of the Irish people in determining what the post-Brexit Irish border entails.

Brexit is a hasty solution to nearly non-existent problems, which creates greater issues in the British Isles. Both Northern Ireland and Scotland voted heavily in favor of staying a part of the EU, but did not form a majority and have been subjugated to English will yet again. But with a lack of understanding of how to proceed from leaving the EU, deliberations are moving slowly. Throughout the discussions, Prime Minister Theresa May and the British government are attempting to appease both Irish countries with several suggested modifications to the border. These suggestions include: The Trusted Traveller Program, under which people would pre-register for fast-track movement across the border; the Automatic Number Plate Recognition, to have unmanned border protection to ensure which cars are passing through legally; and, finally, other 'Smart Border 2.0' solutions that are said to help create a strong yet fluid border for people who must commute across it for various reasons. Theresa May has called these initiatives necessary for the protection of



the UK and its constitutional integrity. Not only do these solutions fail to address the age-old tensions surrounding the Irish border, they also elicit the wrath of both the Republic of Ireland and the EU.

The Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, called the establishment of border pre-registration completely unacceptable and reminiscent of institutions put in place during the Troubles. He has also been adamant that this continued rhetoric threatens not only the relationship between Britain and Ireland, but also threatens the Good Friday Agreement as it will drive a wedge between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, it could drive a wedge between the citizens of Northern Ireland, whose differing views on membership in the United Kingdom pitted them in outwardly conflict up until a mere twenty years ago. Not only would a 'hard' border also inconvenience the Irish people, it would also be in direct violation of the Constitution of Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement. In response to these concerns, the EU proposed a drafted agreement that would keep Northern Ireland in the customs union and the single market, and establish a hard border between the UK and Northern Ireland. But this arrangement would create a new economic frontier down the middle of the Irish Sea, which neither England nor Northern Ireland supports because of the large amount of trade between the two.

Although it seems obvious that the Irish border cannot go back to how it was before and during the Troubles, it also cannot become

a checkpoint for Irish citizens to traverse because of the cost that people paid for violence to end and to establish a general sense of peace. The Irish government expressed its concerns that the UK hasn't sent a single government official to the Irish border to see how and why their proposed solutions are unacceptable. In fact, Varadkar deservedly criticized May for not understanding how important this border is to the stability of the region, and that her inability to do so is creating a gripping sense of uncertainty. Due to largely England's own ineptitude, continued gridlock threatens progress on Brexit talks between the EU and the UK as Theresa May scrambles to find consensus within her government to support an agreement with EU leaders. Additionally, the Republic of Ireland has rightfully threatened to veto any further talks on an EU trade deal for the UK if it feels the border situation has not been properly addressed. This creates yet another layer of problems for the UK's hopes to leave the EU with a trade deal intact.

The UK has not thought through the consequences of Brexit, turned it into an Irish problem, and thrust Ireland into the center of an arrangement that it has already fought over for decades. The UK must recognize that it has only one option if it wishes to leave the EU: it must respect the fact that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have a border dynamic that is unique, and must be prepared for major concessions if its goal is to really leave the EU. Ireland must not go through another period of violence over British governance. The onus is on the British, who have made this border an issue once again, to ensure peace in the British Isles. It can do that by deferring to the will of the Irish people on the future of the Irish border. ■

Macron-omics

The French President's Labor Reforms Are Necessary, but Outpacing Employment Safeguards

- Meghan Rowley

In late March 2018, French rail workers went on strike, causing massive delays to the country's subway systems. Hordes of Parisian commuters could be seen exiting overcrowded cars as they returned from work hours late. This is just one of many protests in the past few months from civil servants and union members alike in France. Since passing labor reforms in August 2017, the romanticized popularity of President Emmanuel Macron has been thrown for a loop. Although he was elected by a wide margin, thousands have opposed the job-for-life guarantees and retirement benefit plans of his more flexible labor laws. This uptick in protests and firings does not necessarily mean the reforms have been unsuccessful. On the contrary, his efforts to overhaul the indecipherably complex French labor code are overdue, and already improving growth. Employee and benefit cuts are expected to immediately accompany these newest reforms. However, the National Assembly must also improve unemployment programs to ensure fair firing practices and improve long term economic stability.

A notoriously thick book symbolic of France's historical socialist republic, the Code du Travail is lauded by unions but loathed by employers. France's largest unions see the 3,324 page code is key to protecting employees from exploitation since 1910. Yet employers are often paralyzed by the Code's dirigisme (regulatory interventionism), which demands a costly process to hire and fire employees. Modern companies see these conditions as partly responsible for the Euro's moderate performance, France's stagnant GDP, and its consistently high ten percent unemployment rate. Youth unemployment rates are even higher, long standing near 25 percent. Macron took on labor reform last August as a way of revitalizing the French economy, successfully passing a bill that overhauls exceedingly rigid restrictions.

Macron was right to do so, as all of the laws he supports aim at encouraging employers to hire and fire when necessary, without any fear of excessive cost. Ultimately, these changes look to promote productivity, competitiveness, and more employment opportunities. For example, the reforms in question cap previously unlim-

ited firing costs to one month's wage per year of service. In unfair dismissal cases, the new law bounds the previously unlimited payouts to three month's salary per every two years of service. These provisions provide clarity to an inconsistent and unpredictable system that favors massive payouts, eliminating employers' fear of firing. The new labor code also allows small businesses to hire more employees under individual contracts, as opposed to union contracts. This ensures that conditions serve individual firms, rather than holding them to ill-fitting, sector-wide standards, allowing for greater employment.

The law also permits businesses of any size to fire under terms of economic hardship. Previously, the French Chamber of Commerce denied applications for multiple fires if the firm was making a profit. But the overhaul now takes global competitiveness into account, a reason many firms have shut down in recent years. This will allow companies to downsize and stay in business, rather than forcing companies to choose to stay in an unprofitable business or to shut down indefinitely. Finally, the overhaul slashes requirements for firms with more than fifty workers, such as the need for multiple employee safety councils. Barring high-risk industries, the law folds multiple councils into a single structure, cutting costs and encouraging hiring beyond fifty employees.

The law has already proven effective. Since the reforms passed, French economic growth has increased 1.9 percent after five stagnant years, having drawn the interest of large foreign investors and praise from the International Monetary Fund. Companies like Toyota and Amazon have discussed their excitement to open new factories and distribution centers that will create thousands of local jobs. And the benefits are not exclusive to France. The Eurozone economy also grew by 2.5 percent following the revamp, its best performance in a decade otherwise plagued by stagnation and various economic crises.

But while business is booming—and desperately needs to—Macron has yet to uphold the second part of the overhaul bargain. Along with rising growth and foreign investment, numer-

ous French companies have announced plans to downsize, leading to thousands of firings by some of the country's largest employers. Granted, large layoffs should not be a surprise in times of transition, nor should they be taken as a foreboding sign. Economists and politicians agree that a more flexible job market with more frequent layoffs and fewer opportunities for one-job careers ultimately increases stability, jobs, innovation, and growth. But while the law will create jobs in the long term, immediate results are showing greater firings than hirings.

Macron has promised to invest €15 million in programs that offset these shocks. Policy proposals include expanding unemployment compensation, offering attractive buyouts to older workers, and bolstering retraining services. But existing programs take years to show results, and are only moderately effective. Meanwhile, French lawmakers will not vote to approve secondary measures until late April 2018, as they are hard-pressed to raise funds amidst tax cuts to the top ten percent. In the interim, they have left older, low-skilled employees vulnerable to a huge wave of layoffs without safeguards. Macron's administration has effectively allowed employers to profit off of the overhaul before it is even complete.

This disconnect is problematic for many reasons, not least of which includes the political fallout from French unions and the Eurozone, should the labor market not recover. Even more important is the sustainability of the French economy. In order to be stable in the long-term, the Code du Travail needs to balance protecting essential unemployment programs and freeing employers from onerous hiring restrictions to ensure short-term unemployment stays short. Without revitalizing key programs, it cannot hope to do so, nor can it achieve its larger political goals.

Macron campaigned on the French economy to be more flexible, but he also promised stability. His recent labor reforms were long overdue, and have freed-up the French economy to achieve growth and innovation necessary for the country's well-being. But great shake-ups have even greater fallouts, and without investing in effective unemployment programs, Macron's reforms could stand to benefit employers much more than employees. ■

Turks in Germany

A Domestic Rift with International Implications

- Selin Levi

After years of increasing tension and controversy, Turkey and Germany remain on a path of divergence with no clear resolution in sight. While analysts continue to consider the international dynamics and interests at play in this tense relationship, the Turkish-German community is often left ignored and overlooked. Established almost 60 years ago, the four million strong Turkish-German immigrant community is one of the most politically controversial groups in German society. For years, the community has been the target of many national headlines in Germany, as right-wing sentiments grow louder and the voices of immigrant communities are silenced. The critical role of the Turkish-German community within international affairs, particularly its strategic placement in the center of Germany and the EU's relationship with Turkey, is often ignored by German political leaders. As a result, there is a continued politicization and alienation of Turkish-German citizens while politicians simultaneously place less emphasis on addressing the tangible, urgent issues plaguing this community. As Germany searches for answers to its endless immigration woes and controversies, it must recognize the international implications of its domestic actions while targeting pressing social issues, not Turkish-German immigrants themselves.

Beginning in 1961 with a labor treaty between Germany and Turkey, hundreds of thousands of Turkish guest workers, *gastarbeiter*, moved to take unskilled or low-skilled labor in the rapidly expanding West German economy. Initially intending to return to their home country, many instead moved their families to Germany, escaping political turmoil in Turkey. Today, Turkish-Germans are active in all sectors of the economy and are actively involved in both political and cultural life. However, the community faces systematic discrimination in nearly all areas of their daily lives. Across the board, German Turks experience significantly higher rates of unemployment than their German counterparts. German employers systematically discriminate against job applicants with Turkish names; the figures are even worse for Turkish Muslim women. Studies have also repeatedly found high dissatisfaction among the Turkish-German community; compared to immigrant groups from Eastern Europe and other

Middle Eastern countries, Turks have some of the lowest rates of integration. A large number of the issues plaguing Turkish-Germans stem from the German education system's failure to equally support the education of children from disadvantaged families.

The current mainstream narratives of German political parties like the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the increasingly influential German far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) have adopted a misguided approach to tackling issues facing immigrants. For example, Chancellor Merkel's CDU continues to advocate for a restriction on dual-citizenship for non-EU countries, which would force so-called "disloyal" Turkish-Germans to choose between having Turkish or German citizenship. The dual-citizenship policy has been labelled discriminatory, as the same restrictions would not apply to dual-nationals of other countries in Europe. In the face of increased tension between Turkish-German supporters of Turkish President Erdoğan and Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Chancellor has called on Turks in Germany to "display a higher degree of loyalty" to German institutions, saying that in return she would keep an "open ear" to Turkish concerns. This standpoint is reflective of the misguided approach towards the immigrant community adopted by Merkel and her party. Instead of being quick to label pro-Erdoğan Turks as disloyal and anti-German, the CDU must look beyond just keeping an open ear to Turkish concerns and start acting upon them. The Turkish-German community stands in a complex sociopolitical predicament, at a crossroads between an authoritarian government which promises them representation and an apparently Western liberal society which preaches equality but does not effectively deliver on those values. The rise in popularity of far-right parties like Alternative for Germany, which is infamously anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant, has also led to a drowning out of other perspectives on immigrant policy. As xenophobic narratives dominate headlines and political discourse, the conversation surrounding Turkish-Germans and their concerns turns exclusively to matters of cultural difference, crime, and the questioning of loyalty. As a result, there is more focus on the politicization and alien-

ation of Turkish-German citizens and less on addressing the tangible, urgent issues plaguing immigrant communities.

As Turkish-Germans struggle domestically, some have turned to the international political stage to express their frustrations. An increasing number of Turkish-Germans have turned to support Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's international activism, viewing him as a strong political leader willing to stand up to Germany and the EU's shortcomings. Anti-EU rhetoric and continuing criticism of Merkel has made Erdoğan a vehicle for Turkish-Germans to express their frustrations toward Germany, which continues to ignore their concerns and question their citizenship. This growing alienation has only worsened the relationship between Turkish-Germans and German society, as German politicians interpret support for Erdoğan as a rejection of German values and society.

Moving forward, there needs to be an acceptance of the presence of the Turkish-German community and their permanence in Germany society. Turkish-Germans are more than just "guests" in German society; they are valuable members of German society who deserve the same attention, representation, and protection of rights as all German citizens. Furthermore, narratives which question their loyalty and allegiance are counterproductive, distracting from the pressing sociopolitical problems facing the community. Chancellor Merkel must look to specifically tackling high unemployment, discrimination towards immigrants, low German language literacy rates, and the troubles facing urban areas, as a significant number of refugees and migrants battle for what little low-skilled wage labor jobs are available. Educational reform and support in the job market are key in fixing the institutions that promote systematic discrimination and exclusion. Secondly, as Germany and Europe look to their future with Turkey and Erdoğan, they must recognize the interconnectedness between the issues of immigrant integration and international affairs. To remedy their relationship while maintaining economic and political ties, they must prioritize the integration of Turkish immigrants, who remain trapped between the politics of an increasingly hostile Europe and a continually unstable Turkey. ■

A New Face for Austrian Conservatism

- Andrew Beddow

In May of 2017, France elected Emmanuel Macron, the youngest president in its history who embodied a new kind of liberal-centrist populism. In December of 2017, however, Austria managed to outdo France in its political boldness, selecting the world's youngest head-of-state, Sebastian Kurz, to represent a coalition of the center-right People's Party (ÖVP) and the right-populist Freedom Party (FPÖ) as chancellor. Kurz's political shift to the right, as well as his willingness to enter into government with the FPÖ, has caused much anxiety among the European media and elite political classes, not the least with Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose relations with Austria are said to have grown strained under Kurz's tenure. Yet, in spite of much handwringing, Kurz represents a pragmatic vein of center-right politics, one which offsets the leftward cultural shift among Western European conservative parties and combines a willingness to compromise with a commitment to the liberal order.

Kurz's rise to power was preceded by a tumultuous series of Austrian presidential elections in 2016, in which Austria's traditional political forces, the moderate-left SPÖ and moderate-right ÖVP were excluded from the second round of voting. The near-election of FPÖ leader Norbert Hofer, a perceived sign of the rise of a dangerous right-populist force in Europe, caused much consternation in the international and Austrian press. In truth, however, it signaled a long-ignored dissatisfaction among Austrians with a detached and technocratic political elite, one more at home in Davos than Vienna. Lockstep with Chancellor Merkel, this regime had long been unwilling to reconsider its generous migration policies, which have failed in many cases to discriminate between legitimate refugees and other forms of migration. Critics contend that these policies have led to a subculture of pervasive violent criminality, in particular among Austria's Afghan community.

The problem, many Austrians fear, is not merely the increased danger of living in a society characterized by rising rates of crime, especially sexual violence. There is an effect that escapes statistical analysis – the breakdown of a way of life, a feeling of security and comfort which allows Austrians to feel at home. This



Sebastian Kurz, Chancellor of Austria. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

sentiment dictates that the influx of a large number of foreigners, like an occupying force whose integration will, in the most hopeful of estimates, take decades, and who in many cases are antagonistic to the local population and their traditions, has created a social crisis in Austria—a sense of embattlement. Whatever their individual chances of victimization, Austrians experience a feeling of outrage when they see reports, for instance, of children and the elderly subjected to sexual abuse, of ordinary citizens brutally murdered in public, and of the rules and conventions which had governed their society for generations changing to accommodate this new reality.

Austria's political leadership has been seemingly asleep at the wheel, incapable of formulating an answer to the fact, for instance, that according to the Vienna Police Chief Gerhard Pürstl, drug gangs with North African roots are responsible for half the violent crime in Vienna. Nearly a third of all asylum seekers in Vienna are accused of some form of criminal activity, yet the most common response in Austrian press and politics has been to censor and shame critics of the open borders policy. So it is entirely predictable – laudable, even – that Austrians demanded a rightward shift in their politics in 2017, which Sebastian Kurz, then chairman of the ÖVP, satisfied by essentially adopting the restrictive migration platform of the right-populist FPÖ.

Kurz is on his way to make good on the promise of securing Austria's external frontiers and subjecting the migration process to a sense of order and limitation. Criticizing the dysfunctional EU quota system of migrant distribution, Kurz has instead supported the establishment of de-escalation zones in migrant countries of

origin, to be secured militarily as was done in Syria. In this, it is true, Kurz has been in agreement with such unsavory characters as Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán. Yet the essence of his moderate conservatism is a willingness to serve as a mediator between the most extreme forms of anti-EU dissatisfaction and the Europhilia represented by Merkel. This willingness to recognize the flaws of current European policy, to accommodate the (sometimes exaggerated) criticisms of its detractors, makes Kurz's brand of conservatism far better able to flexibly defend European institutions than the rigidity of Merkel and Macron's policies, which leave EU institutions brittle and unresponsive.

Indeed, unlike many other rising leaders of the European right (for instance, Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen), Sebastian Kurz is an ardent defender of the European project. Rather than abandon the task of harmonious integration, Kurz believes that EU-architecture must be put to the task of confronting the “big issues” of common defense, foreign policy, and migration. This means that Kurz is not an anti-institutional pariah, calling for ‘exit’ – rather, he represents an alternative conception of the project of Europe, and to this extent he is particularly challenging for those who wish to continue the inertia of an open-borders EU.

In fact, this makes Kurz a figure of singular importance – perhaps the single most significant right-leaning politician in Europe. Unlike Farage and Le Pen, Kurz represents a respectable form of right-wing politics, one that aims to transform, rather than upend, the existing European order. For this reason, he poses a challenge to Angela Merkel, the core representative of that existing order, as Germany's conservatives now look to Kurz, even more so than to the right-populist Alternative for Germany party, as an ideal type for Merkel's replacement.

As the presidency of the Council of the European Union passes to Austria next year, Kurz will acquire even more influence, which he claims he will use for the sake of border control and subsidiarity. In the coming years, European conservatives, much disappointed by Merkel's leftward shift and the failure of Les Républicains in France, may have something to look forward to in Kurz's leadership. ■

A Modest Proposal for the Nobel Prize in Literature

- Daniel Evans

Members of the Swedish Academy have the unenviable annual task of deciding which writer “in the field of literature” has “the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”. This decision results in the Nobel Prize in Literature. As compared to other Nobel Prizes in physics, medicine, or chemistry, literature is incredibly subjective as well as culturally and artistically diverse, which readily invites criticism. Specifically, an ostensibly global award ought to worry about claims of Euro-centrism that have long plagued it. A quick glance at all the finalists from 1901-2017 indeed reveals a bias of five to one in favor of European writers. Rather than pretending to be the leader in awarding literary talent from around the world, the Nobel Prize in Literature should restrict itself to just awarding prizes to European writers.

Before decrying the proposal as regressive or anti-cosmopolitan, consider how the selection process works. The Swedish Academy was founded in 1786 to promote the “purity, strength, and sublimity of the Swedish language.” To that end, its eighteen elected members serve for life without the option of stepping down, and oversee the publication of dictionaries, award multiple domestic annual prizes, and select the winner of one of the most prestigious awards in world literature. The Academy sends out nomination forms to past laureates, professors, and other literary experts. From February to May, the board then trims the hundreds of nominations it receives down to a shortlist of five authors from whom it reads and reviews a representative sample of work before deciding on a winner.

Given that the academy is not geographically restricted in its selection of winners, the limited number of members stretch themselves remarkably thin by acting as judge and jury over the entire expanse of world literature. With the roughly 200 nominations the academy receives each year, the members need to read at an incredibly fast pace, and thoroughly, to reach an informed decision. Since the Nobel is awarded for an author’s entire oeuvre and not just a single publication, this substantially multiplies the number of works that board members need to sort through before selecting a winner.

Even if it could cover all the literature neces-

sary, the idea that a group of eighteen literature professors, all from Sweden, are ideally suited to annually shine a spotlight on the most “deserving” candidate in the world is misguided. At the heart of literature may lie the desire to communicate universal truths about our shared humanity, which anyone can rightly weigh in on, but often a nuanced appreciation of the importance of an author’s work demands an understanding of its impact on a writer’s language or culture. Under what sort of rubric should the Swedish Academy competitively evaluate authors from Kenya publishing in their native Gikuyu with the likes of Adunis, an avant-garde Syrian poet writing from exile in Arabic, the Japanese surrealist writer, Haruki Murakami, or the prolific American critical darling, Philip Roth? Since translators are needed for authors that do not publish in one of the thirteen pooled languages the Academy masters, the body wields at best second hand expertise over some of the material it is tasked with distinguishing as the world’s best.

This lack of proximate knowledge of the literary climate in distant parts of the world forces the organization to rely on imperfect methodologies of selection, which has meant selecting authors with attention to whatever political ideology the Academy endorses. As a result, certain periods featured upswings in the selection of anti-Apartheid writers from South Africa, anti-imperialist thinkers in the Bush era, or anti-authoritarian revolutionary writers in Latin America. Regardless of the goodwill attached to these political selections, the very idea of a European body dictating which writers around the world deserve our attention according to their political ideologies reeks of colonial subjugation. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, for instance, is suspected of having been snubbed for an award in his lifetime by the Academy because of his tacit approval of the dictatorial Argentine government. To the detriment of literature, the Academy’s selections can influence our perception of certain regional works as being only important in relation to the immediate conflicts they address, rather than their universal aesthetic and intellectual appeal. If, due to a lack of proximate expertise, the Academy resorts to politics or even existing frames as its guide for awarding authors outside

of the Western Anglosphere, its choices of non-Western winners become more predictable and ultimately less unique and valuable.

Fears that we might lose a method of introducing Western readers to important non-Western writers are not completely unfounded. However, the fact that only three of the last eighteen winners could truly be considered to write for non-Western audiences suggests that the award is not doing a good job of that to begin with. Furthermore, in the world of a strictly European Nobel Prize in literature, other more regionally specific awards would emerge in prominence, since the Nobel Prize would no longer dominate our attention by proclaiming to be the final authority in world literature. We could, for instance, funnel our attention to the International Prize for Arab Fiction (IPAF) for the Arab world or the Soyinka prize for Africa, which has described itself as the Nobel of Africa.

Would the award lose its identity if it relinquished its sway over the global stage in favor of a refined regional focus? Not necessarily. The Nobel Prize is at its best when it balances bestowing the award on recognized literary mainstays, and introducing the world to under-read gems. Part of the fun has always been not knowing whether the likes of Alice Munro and Kazuo Ishiguro with existing fame, or relatively obscure artists like Tomas Tranströmer and Svetlana Alexievich, would win. By humbly reducing its scope to a region whose literary culture the Swedish Academy is intimately acquainted with, the organization can hope to achieve such balance with credibility and consistency. If it never claims to be anything more than a European prize, our expectations of the prize would shrink to what it has realistically delivered all along.

It is far from the case that literature from outside of Europe is unworthy of the Nobel Prize. Precisely because the diverse literature of the world is so dazzling and awe-inspiring and worth exploring, a Nobel Prize retreat from the global stage could be a gift to literature worldwide. ■

Refocusing on Rights

Swedish Prostitution Policy is a Model for Europe

- Anna Haynes

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights, in its first sentence, affirms the inalienability of fundamental freedoms. Inalienable means here that no person, action, belief or status can render a person separate or undeserving of their rights. For an increasing number of young women and men migrating into the European Union, coerced or tricked into prostitution to survive, the principle of inalienability holds the greatest importance. Despite well-intentioned developments in prostitution policy, those most vulnerable to the degradation of their rights are those least impacted by reforms.

Disagreement around prostitution policy in the EU has continued almost fruitlessly for three decades, evidenced by the immense variance between different countries' laws. The most famous outcomes of this debate are the legalization strategies of the Netherlands and Antwerp, Belgium — known for creating high-tech “brothels of the future”. Germany legalized prostitution with strict regulations as well, boasting the ability of German sex workers to claim social services and establish employment contracts. The opposite of legalization is complete criminalization, practiced in Romania and Lithuania, where prostitutes face up to three years of imprisonment. Other EU country policies adhere to “decriminalization”, which changes prosecution of sex work into a civil matter, or “abolition”, criminalizing exploitative acts like soliciting and pimping.

Scholars, lawyers, and activists alike have debated the merits and consequences of each policy tirelessly since the institution of these major reforms. Feminists disagree on the definitions of exploitation and female empowerment, while policymakers juggle the concerns of human trafficking, gender-based violence, migration law, and tourism. However, the surge of migration into the EU since 2014 has dramatically altered the landscape of sex work in Europe, and has given a more public, if not entirely new, face to sexual exploitation.

Reports from underage boys in Athens betray an enormous, unregulated market in Greece, in which older buyers solicit services from young male refugees who migrated without their parents. Many refugees believe prostitution is inevitable; the clothing, tem-

porary shelter, and cash they might receive as payment mean they can save for fake passports or support their families back home. The only alternatives available to most refugees are smuggling other migrants or dealing drugs. Young men and women in Germany face a similar dilemma when they turn eighteen and age out of youth-oriented social services. Even with legal migrant status allowing them to remain in the country, young people struggling to find work or shelter may agree to a buyer's offers in order to stay alive.

Women and girls from sub-Saharan African countries face similar struggles in Italy and Spain, where reports say migrants make-up a majority of sex workers and where human trafficking seems especially prominent. Networks of “madams” convince girls from Benin City, Nigeria that they will bring them safely to Italy and find them suitable work to support their families at home. Once the girls depart, these “madams” and smugglers sell them into trafficking rings. Often, women are forced into prostitution to work off their debt to smugglers. In Belgium, 60 percent of illegal prostitutes were trafficked from Nigeria alone.

The problems of trafficking and sexual exploitation facing migrants clearly transcend national borders, prostitution policies, and legal statuses. Eliminating such pervasive crime necessitates an overhaul of EU policies in favor of a survivor-centered framework. Countries in favor of legalizing prostitution argue that this approach empowers women, allowing them to choose prostitution if it is a safe and viable career for them. Making sex work legal also allows the government and police to monitor conditions of brothels, enforce just labor laws, and build trust with prostitutes, who can request government help without fear of punishment. Unfortunately, prostitution is not considered a legal career for women entering the country as migrants, meaning that refugees and asylum-seekers do not benefit much from these progressive policies. After studying the outcomes of legalization efforts, scholars found that the expansion of human trafficking and illegal prostitution applies to both legal and illegal actors in regulatory systems. Total decriminalization, as attempted by Spain and numerous other E.U. members, grew the prostitution markets as well.

However, moving to an abolitionist approach in which the government cooperates with NGOs to protect sex workers has helped detect victims of trafficking rings and prosecute perpetrators.

A slow-growing trend in policies resembles the Swedish neo-abolitionist approach to the issue. This approach limits the demand for prostitution through imprisonment of buyers while leaving sex work itself legal, preventing the exploitation of prostitutes by law enforcement. In Sweden, decreasing demand is paired with policies that dedicate social services toward providing women pathways out of the prostitution market and the development of alternative careers with similar monetary benefits. Uniquely drafted in 1999 with vulnerable populations in mind, this system promises to protect rights both effectively and urgently.

Out of all variations of EU prostitution law, only the Swedish neo-abolitionist movement has proven effective in decreasing exploitation of prostitutes and combating sex trafficking within the country. In developing this framework, Swedish politicians deferred to the expertise of legal scholars on the needs of sex workers and the inalienability of human rights. Recognizing the coercive powers within sexual relationships, officials targeted policies at buyers, pimps, and traffickers, while allowing prostitutes to approach the police without fear of harm or punishment. Although some disincentives to reporting still exist, both for buyers facing punishment and prostitutes facing estrangement from their profession, this law takes an important step in refocusing protective policies where they are needed most. Since the implementation of Sweden's reforms, street prostitution has decreased by fifty percent. Moreover, human trafficking has decreased more in Sweden than in any other E.U. country, as traffickers view Sweden as a difficult-to-manage and less-profitable market. Government social services for sex workers and enforcement mechanisms against trafficking proved immensely successful at limiting the economic drivers behind prostitution and the overall demand for it. Where failing social programs and limited economic resources leave more people vulnerable by the day, politicians must embrace the most effective policies to refocus and reinforce human rights. ■

Brussels Should Not Stay Silent about Holocaust Revisionism in Eastern Europe

- Mark Dovich

One critical, but under-acknowledged, aspect of Eastern Europe's post-socialist transition has been the rewriting, reframing, and revising of history by national governments. As Washington and Brussels focus heavily on integrating the ex-communist states into the EU-NATO bloc and containing perceived Russian aggression, they largely fail to recognize the changing processes of how history itself is understood by Eastern European people, and how it is manipulated by their governments. Although memory politics in the region has manifested itself in many ways, one historical event appears and reappears in national discourses across the region more frequently than any other: the Holocaust.

Most recently, in February, the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) government of Poland passed an anti-defamation amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance that criminalizes suggestions that the Polish nation or state were responsible for or complicit with the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. Although many Poles did, in fact, resist the Nazi forces during their occupation of Poland — most famously in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising by the Polish underground resistance — there is also documented evidence of collaboration. In the most infamous instance, Poles in the town of Jedwabne locked their Jewish neighbors in a barn and set it on fire, killing at least 350 people. Despite international outcry opposing the amendment and the historical revisionism it entails, most forcefully from the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the U.S. State Department, it does not appear that the Polish government intends to repeal the amendment or otherwise change its position on the matter.

Moreover, the Polish amendment stands as only the most recent in a series of similar laws or policies throughout the Eastern European region. In 2015, for example, the Ukrainian government passed Law 2538-1, which commemorates certain Ukrainian nationalist and anti-communist figures from the Second World War who collaborated with the Nazi regime. In 2016, Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović was photographed posing with the flag of the Independent State of Croatia (NHD), a Nazi puppet-state that occupied portions of Yugoslavia in the 1940s and operated concentration

“By fighting the spread of Holocaust revisionism in Eastern Europe, the EU will ... sustain the viability of the European project as a whole.”

camps there. Meanwhile, legislation passed in recent years in Lithuania — widely considered the EU's poster child for successful post-socialist democratization and development — recognizes the Lithuanian people as “pure victims” of successive Nazi and Soviet occupations. Again, this law was passed in spite of overwhelming historical evidence for both resistance to and collaboration by Lithuanians with the Nazi regime, which exterminated more than 95 percent of Lithuania's Jews in the course of the war.

In spite of the startling frequency with which historical revisions of Holocaust history are occurring throughout Eastern Europe, the EU has done little either to condemn or combat such measures as Poland's ‘Holocaust Law.’ President of the European Council Donald Tusk, himself a former Polish PM, has made only one statement regarding the amendment, saying that it “harms the good name and interests of Poland.” In contrast, the Israeli reaction has been much more forceful: several prominent Knesset members have accused the Polish government of Holocaust denial, the Israeli Ambassador to Poland has been recalled, a planned meeting between senior members of the Israeli and Polish governments has been canceled, and, perhaps most impactful, the Knesset is now debating a bill of its own that criminalizes Holocaust denial itself. The EU should follow Israel's example, both by more explicitly condemning the Polish government's decision to approve the amendment and by taking concrete steps to combat Holocaust revisionism across Eastern Europe.

First, the EU should pressure its member states to fully implement the EU Framework Decision for Combating Racism and Xenophobia, which contains provisions for the criminalization for Holocaust denial. (Since the legislation was first passed in 2001, several member states have refused full implementation.) Second, the EU should more fully condemn member states that push for such historical revisionism and punish them accordingly; in particularly extreme circumstances, Brussels

should consider triggering Article 7(2) of the Lisbon Treaty, by which it can impose sanctions on and suspend the EU voting rights of a member state. Third, the EU should expand educational programs and support the initiatives of human rights and Jewish groups across the Continent in order to combat persistent anti-Semitism among Europeans. According to a 2012 survey conducted by the Anti-Defamation League, for example, 63 percent of Hungarians profess anti-Semitic views.

Indeed, it is not only Brussels' duty to do so, given the moral weight the EU carries as a union of democratic and liberal states, but it is also in its best interest. By fighting the spread of Holocaust revisionism in Eastern Europe, the EU will actually be building and supporting the civil society infrastructure and liberal-democratic attitudes it needs Eastern Europe to adopt in order to sustain the viability of the European project as a whole. A democratic and pluralistic Eastern Europe would, by definition, negate the threats of illiberalism and historical revisionism that have spread throughout the entire region, even if the media focuses primarily on Poland's PiS and Hungary's Viktor Orbán, Eastern Europe's perennial thorn in Brussels' side. Given the continuing weight of both historical revisionism and Holocaust politics in Eastern Europe, a commitment to condemning and combating Holocaust revision may very well represent one of the most effective first steps Brussels can take in tackling the issues Eastern Europe presents it at large. ■

Third Time's the Charm

Will the third Romanian Prime Minister in under a year be able to restore rule of law?

-B.A. Bacigal

Another glass ceiling has shattered, but not where was expected. In January, Viorica Dăncilă became the first-ever woman to hold the position of Prime Minister in Romania, making her Romania's third PM in just under a year's time. The European Union (EU) is now watching with bated breath to see if she will outlast either of her predecessors, Mihai Tudose and Sorin Grindeanu, or if she too will be ousted by her own party.

The recent turbulence has led to protest movements against bad governance and corruption that have coalesced with wider political discontents over public resource management inefficiencies, a lack of transparency in government, and the over-politicization of the public sector. But, for the time being, the people of Romania alone cannot enact tangible change to combat governmental corruption. While a concerted mass of civilians is growing in opposition to the government, the Romanian people have not yet been given the chance to channel their anger into the type of activism needed to develop a viable political force. Until the people's discontent renders tangible political gains, the EU needs to take more decisive action and wield what little clout it has more effectively to make time for the Romanian people to organize before the next parliamentary election cycle in 2020.

The prime ministerial upheaval is ridden with egotistical power plays, as all three PMs hail from the Social Democratic Party (PSD), Romania's leading political party. Therefore, all have one man in common: Liviu Dragnea. Admittedly, they likely have many many men and maybe even a few women in common... But this man is of note because as the current PSD party chief, Dragnea holds what is widely considered the second most powerful political position in Romania. However, as the record shows, he is not quite satisfied with second place. During Grindeanu's premiership, a disagreement over legislation to overhaul the justice system drove a wedge between the two,



Viorica Dăncilă, the newest Prime Minister of Romania. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

ending with a call by Dragnea for Grindeanu's resignation. When the Prime Minister refused, the PSD pulled all support, all of his ministers resigned, and a parliamentary vote of no confidence forcibly removed Grindeanu from office. Tudose similarly sought to distance himself from Dragnea's influence, but, again, once he started exhibiting autonomous authority contrary to the will of the party leader, Dragnea convinced parliament that he had to be removed.

So, why does Dragnea not run for the premiership he so clearly desires? The answer is simple: Dragnea is ineligible for the premiership due to a 2015 electoral fraud conviction. He has several indictments pending and is under international investigation for high-level corruption, graft, and organized crime that occurred under the EU Anti-Fraud Office's 'watchful' monitoring program. Given the evidence against him, there should be no doubt that this man can never be PM of Romania.

Yet, here, the judicial overhaul mentioned earlier comes back into play. Just days after the Grindeanu cabinet was sworn in, PSD pushed through ordinance bills on the pardoning of certain crimes and amended a portion of the Romanian Penal Code on abuse of power. Judicial institutions and the public responded viscerally, but the ordinance was nevertheless approved by the newly sworn-in government. The results? The largest protests in Romanian history, exceeding even those during the fall of communism in the late 1980s. The approved ordinance was a first step toward legalizing a run at the premiership by Dragnea. Naturally, then, he would not make the same mistake in promoting a new PM who could threaten that chance. This time Dragnea ensured that a pliable woman from his home district, whom he knew he could influence, filled the role: Dăncilă. Her only prior political experience, after a small stint on city-council was holding seat in the European Parliament—one she seemed to rarely fill, as her attendance record was spotty at best.

So far, the EU has been far too soft when it needed to be aggressive. Over a decade has produced little more than ten annual audits by an ill-equipped monitoring group created for the purpose of reducing corruption — one of the EU's missions in Romania since its accession to the political union in 2007. The current monitoring system provides a toothless threat with no potential for legitimate sanctioning and is slated to end by 2019, when Romania takes over the EU Council's rotating presidency. This quite clearly demonstrates the EU's lack of actual control over the actions of its member states, particularly when a state strays from the EU's often-subjective expectations for "rule of law."

But to prevent Romania from following nearby Hungary and Poland's recent democratic backsliding, the EU can use its institutional clout and role as arbiter of continental-wide policies to muscle Romanian politics back towards transparency and stability. It needs to capitalize on two key bargaining chips: ending its monitoring period and allowing entry into the passport-free Schengen Zone. More importantly, the EU must hinge these promises upon the condition that the PSD repeals the unjust ordinance bill, that the Romanian Parliament prevents such corrupt legislation from being enacted in the future, and that Romanian courts actually bring all convicted officials, including Dragnea, to justice. The passport-free Schengen Zone is a particularly strong bargaining chip, as instituting these privileges for Romania, introduces the ability for Romanian citizens to traverse around Europe in the way that has privileged a majority of the EU.

Therefore, enacting these provisions is the only chance the EU has to legitimize the democratic political efforts of the Romanian people and fulfil their goal of making Romania a corruption-free state. Otherwise, counting on the PSD political machine and its cronies to ensure a transparent and representative government remains a dangerous risk, considering the party cannot even pick a prime minister who can see out a full year in office. ■

The Archaeological Myths that Underpin Modern Greece

- Will Feuer

I arrived in Athens three months ago with hopes of high-speed adventure, golden treasures, mortal enemies, and everything else Indiana Jones promised me. My hopes were dashed on the first day as hour one faded into hour six of methodically sweeping away dirt to find the typical cigarette butts and broken bottles. This will forever be what archaeology means to me.

But what is archaeology more broadly? It is rooted in two Greek words: *archaios*, meaning ancient, and *logia*, meaning to study or learn. Britannica defines archaeology as “the scientific study of the material remains of past human life and activities.” That key word, “scientific,” makes all the difference. It distinguishes the methodological and purely curious survey of potential sites for excavation from simple treasure hunting for expected relics. It distinguishes the calculated uncovering of objects, one at a time, to establish a timeline from the unsystematic rush to affirm contrived expectations. It is the difference between courageously confronting our past, and a political construction of history.

Symbols of the past are all around us, on flags, coins and even names of countries. Evidence and interpretation of ethnic migrations and cultural heritage, no matter how contested, are used to justify ethnic cleansings and modern-day territorial expansion. At the collision of Asia, Europe and Africa, there is perhaps nowhere in the world where archaeological practice plays a more decisive role in modern politics than the Mediterranean. And there is perhaps no country that places such a value on its ancient past as Greece, where the politicization of archaeology underpins much of the Greek nation's historical and political narratives.

Here, archaeology has played a key role in the nation-building project that began when modern Greece emerged from the Ottoman Empire in 1830. To justify a sovereign Greece, revolutionaries created a nationalist connection between the ancient Greek empire to the nascent Modern Greek state. It is no wonder then that Athens – and the Parthenon – was chosen as the capital despite its meager population of roughly 10,000 in 1830.

Symbolism was key from the start, and it underscored an irredentist philosophy coined the “Megali Idea” by nationalist poet Alexander Soutsos. He sought the ‘liberation’ of all land

with Greek ‘history,’ and thus the restoration of Greek pride. Greece expanded in order to fulfill the Megali Idea: it annexed Macedonia and the Mediterranean islands, and even unsuccessfully invaded Turkey in 1919. This narrative of a Greek rebirth became an even more necessary tool of justification. And it is just as necessary to obfuscate any Truth – capital T – that would complicate this false narrative. Archaeology is not immune.

It follows that the discovery and ultimately the propagation of antiquities was prioritized, quickly leading to the establishment of a state-run archaeological system, which is today called the Ministry of Culture. With direct authority over all museums, archaeological excavations and what they publish, public education and state media, the Ministry of Culture shapes both the individual and collective identities of the Greek peoples – unified and presented to the world as direct descendants of the ancient Greek empire.

This is a powerful narrative. In fact, it is a narrative that the Nazi party would eventually turn their gaze upon during their conquest across Eastern Europe. Adolf Hitler personally funded archaeological digs in Greece with vast sums of cash and manpower. Nazi archaeologists were tasked to confirm the narrative that German Aryans fled ancient Bavaria due to a natural catastrophe and wound up in Greece, where they established the dominant Greek Empire, thus affirming Aryan supremacy. Hitler took a special interest in Olympia, where Nazi archaeologists planted findings ahead of the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympics, which itself was a stage to propagate the so-called ‘ideal Aryan man.’

The Nazi narrative is, undoubtedly, more dangerous than that of the Greek Ministry of Culture, but both are factually incorrect and harmful manipulations of our past. The obvious paradox in the Greek narrative is that today's Greece is an Orthodox Christian nation. Ancient Greece was, of course, a pagan society, eventually condemned by the Orthodox Church as uncivilized.

The current line of direct descent from ancient to modern Greece forgets thousands of years of history. It forgets the Roman conquering of Greece, the rise of the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman conquest of Greece. It forgets the literature and art, the loves and relationships, the tears shed and the triumphs celebrated dur-

ing these thousands of years. It ultimately betrays all the individual lives lived in Greece between ancient and modern, forgetting the existence of generations of Greek Muslims, for example, who's very personhoods are inconvenient to the Modern Greek identity.

Just as was the case when an independent, Modern Greece emerged, archaeology remains at the forefront of propaganda surrounding the Greek identity. The Ministry of Culture pressures and incentivizes archaeologists to draw connections that don't exist. For example, in 1977, Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos unearthed an elaborately decorated tomb in Macedonia that he believed to be the tomb of Philip II, father to Alexander the Great and patriarch of the Macedonian people. The Ministry of Culture claimed this proved the descent of the Macedonian people from ancient Greek society, and thus that today there is no Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece because they are, indeed, Greek.

However, as time pressed on and new methods of research came into play, controversy erupted. On his deathbed in 1992, Andronikos admitted that there is now little evidence to prove it is in fact Philip II's tomb. It is an admission that the Ministry of Culture has yet to recognize, and the government still uses the presence of that tomb to deny the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece.

It is time for archaeologists of all nationalities, ethnicities, and various personal allegiances to recognize their role in global politics. In Greece, but also in countries like Israel, Cambodia, China and so many others all over the world, governments use the so-called science of archaeology to justify their nationalist constructions of history. But what kind of a science yields such simplified and linear results as those claimed by these governments?

At its best, archaeology gives us a glimpse into the evolution of our world, allowing us to situate ourselves in the context of our reality. At its worst, archaeology is a political tool used to exclude those who do not fit the narrative. History and heritage are complex, and rather than working in tandem with powerful interests, archaeologists ought to silence the elite by working to affirm the validity of diverse explanations and interpretations of human history. ■

The 'Brain Drain' In the Middle East

- Middle East Region Contribution Authors

Brain drain' is a term commonly used to explain the phenomenon of the migration of highly skilled and educated individuals from their country or region of origin to elsewhere in the world. The Middle Eastern brain drain is particularly disastrous; a 2004 study found that Arab countries lose half of their newly qualified medical doctors, 23 percent of engineers, and fifteen percent of scientists each year. Our writers examine the reasons for brain drain in various countries and the methods in which different regimes have combatted this affliction.

Iraq's History of Sanctions and Intervention Exacerbates Brain Drain in Healthcare

-Omar Ilyas

The years of economic sanctions and the constant violence that has plagued Iraq since the 1980s have served as catalysts for professionals leaving in search of better opportunities abroad. This efflux had devastating consequences for the Iraqi people and hindered Iraq's healthcare development. Iraq only has six doctors per 10,000 residents, whereas Egypt and Jordan each have 24 doctors per 10,000 residents. The British Medical Journal reported that Iraqi medical staff have found that more than half of the deaths in the emergency room could have been saved if there were more experienced staff present. Compounding upon the vacancy in healthcare professionals, nearly 84 percent of Iraq's higher education institutions have been looted and burned. Saddam Hussein attempted to stop this brain drain, but the violence under his regime caused an estimated four million Iraqis to leave the country, leaving Iraq in desperate need of young talent.

Surprisingly, it was the state-owned national insurance company that launched a program to reclaim high-achieving Iraqi students by creating a life insurance policy against terror attacks for those with a professional degree. The

Higher Committee for Education Development provides scholarships to Iraqi students to study abroad and then to return to Iraq to apply their knowledge. However, the scholarship program attracted criticism for its \$125 million budget, with critics pointing toward the crippling healthcare system as a greater priority. The Iraqi government listened to the critics; Baghdad cut scholarship funding for students abroad, leaving many unable to continue their graduate school education. Unfortunately, until continued stability in the nation is achieved and corruption in the Iraqi government is minimized, there will not be a comprehensive plan to counter brain drain, particularly with regards to the healthcare industry.

The UAE Smiling at its Success in Brain Gain

-Maya Zreik

The United Arab Emirates used to suffer from high levels of brain drain. Through concerted efforts and policies, they have succeeded in reversing this trend and now experiences a brain gain, a net increase in intellectuals, of 1.3 percent. This comes from improved living conditions within the country, as the UAE's economy experienced extremely rapid growth in the past few decades. Today, the country boasts one of the highest qualities of life in the world, and has developed an economic culture known for investment and innovation. Such factors decrease brain drain, as people are less likely to want to leave the country.

The UAE utilized various strategies to reverse

brain drain. One example was government-affiliated companies offering scholarships with stipends to students, which allowed them to attend prestigious universities abroad with the condition that they return to the UAE upon graduation. Such a strategy ensured that the UAE reaped the benefits of highly educated citizens, who then started businesses and practices within the country. The government also launched a recruitment portal aimed at informing Emiratis abroad of opportunities in the UAE in an effort to convince them to return. These tactics, combined with the rapid development of the UAE, resulted in a nation that is now a hub for talent and opportunity, and is one of the most sought after destinations for entrepreneurs in the Middle East and around the world.

Jordan Connects Expats with their Regional Counterparts

-Maya Zreik

In Jordan, there are several reasons for citizens' high rates of migration, not limited to a suffering economy, high taxation, low access to funding, high unemployment, and a lack of confidence in the government's ability to improve economic conditions in the future. Many Jordanians also believe that markets abroad are bigger and more appealing, and find it very difficult to start their own businesses within Jordan. The Jordanian government has even encouraged young people to find work abroad due to the high unemployment at home. Overseas jobs

contribute to Jordan's economy, since many expats send money back to their families.

Jordanians within the country are attempting to reverse brain drain by creating a network that connects scientists and technologists at home and abroad. Those within the country benefit from the expats' knowledge and use it to establish businesses. Additionally, Jordan's Prince Hassan has stressed the importance of education and training in improving the nation's entrepreneurship. He has stated that policies must be enacted which promote creativity in Jordan, both in the scientific sector and the technological one. These policies could promote entrepreneurship within Jordan and encourage young entrepreneurs to invest in their homeland.

Can the Suez Canal Axis Project Actually Help Egypt?

-Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

Egypt is one of many Middle Eastern nations whose brain drain was exacerbated by the revolutions that began in 2011. Dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, an efflux of unskilled laborers to Gulf countries became a mass migration of educated youths who faced economic instability and high unemployment. One report found that nearly 65 percent of Egyptian emigrants have secondary education and above, which is higher than the average of the remaining population who stay in Egypt. The crux of Egypt's brain drain is a legacy of high state involvement in the economy, which resulted in a bloated public sector and onerous regulation that disincentivizes startups and private firms.

Under President Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, however, there have been positive steps made toward increasing the nation's economic competitiveness to draw in highly skilled workers. Chief among these is the massive infrastructure project known as the Suez Canal Axis Development Project. Started in 2014, it aims to create a new economic zone on the Suez Canal that includes a technology sector, fisheries, an industrial zone, and seven new tunnels that will connect this development with greater Egypt. The costs are high, with a \$12 billion loan from the IMF already being disbursed. However, the benefits to skilled Egyptians looking to remain in the country are massive. Egypt is one of the only countries to

take such an aggressive step toward limiting its brain drain, and time will tell whether their efforts are effective.

Tunisia's Brain Drain Continues in Face of Democratic Successes

-Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

Tunisia's brain drain is the result of continued economic tumult that began during the 2011 revolution and left a high unemployment rate, especially for youth. Additionally, Tunisia's tourism industry, once a major source of income for many Tunisians, has not recovered to its pre-revolution levels. The Tunisian government is unable to respond to the crisis because of other pressing matters such as stabilizing the Tunisian Dinar and fortifying national security.

The chief benefactor of Tunisian brain drain is France, which sees the largest influx of skilled workers in the academic and technology sectors. Because of Tunisia's colonial history, the academic language used by highly skilled workers is French. The Franco-centric brain drain in Tunisia begins from a young age because the secondary educational system in Tunisia is not competitive internationally and relies heavily on curriculum and expertise from France. As early as high school, students begin preparations for French university entrance exams in the hopes of entering the more robust French labor market.

Tunisia has made this brain drain worse by adopting policies that hinder a startup culture, such as steep corporate taxes that feed into Tunisia's social security apparatus. Furthermore, established businesses are also reluctant to hire new employees because of the costly benefits that employers must provide. Tunisia will continue to suffer from crippling brain drain until the government is able to reduce the cost of doing business in Tunisia and encourage a genuine startup culture.

One of the Hardest Hit by Brain Drain, Algeria Begins to Take Action

-Ayah Kutmah

The former Algerian minister of trade, Smail Goumezi, estimated that the "brain drain" of more than 500,000 Algerians who have emigrated cost the nation about \$165 million over 30 years. Algeria has been one of the countries most affected by the migration of young men and women to more economically affluent countries, particularly France. The longevity of French colonization of Algeria established many post-colonial legacies such as the French educational system, rendering most literate and educated Algerians fluent in both French and Arabic, making migration to France particularly easy. Many Algerians first began fleeing Algeria to escape the civil war ravaging the country in the 1990s. Even after stability was achieved, the high youth unemployment of about 30 percent has led many to migrate to Europe to find jobs in the post-baccalaureate field.

Recently, Algeria has adopted several new measures to combat the emigration of its bright, young citizens. In 2009, the Education Minister Boubekeur Benbouzid restricted study abroad scholarships while simultaneously acting to improve the funding and working conditions of researchers and university students. The Algerian government is undertaking several endeavors to build a strong scientific research infrastructure by increasing funding and developing more advanced technology for new research centers. However, Algeria must still work to increase its human resources and student retention rate through greater incentives; the government should not be reactionary but proactive in its approach to stemming brain drain. ■

A History of Socially Progressive Movements in the Middle East

- Middle East Region Contribution Authors

While the Middle East is often seen as the one of the most conservative regions in the world, the generalized viewpoint of a permanently ‘illiberal’ Middle East – in opposition to the ‘liberal’ West – is quite false. Many indigenous Arab and Middle Eastern movements in favor of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) and women’s rights continue to make strides towards more progressive governmental policies and social attitudes. There are also levels of intersectionality in some movements, such as the case of Palestinian feminist organizations, as well as backsliding in others, such as the LGBT movement in Turkey. The Michigan Journal of International Affairs Middle East region writers seek to challenge outdated conceptions of progressive movements in the Middle East and recount the continued obstacles to social progressivism in the Middle East that such movements address.

Recent Iranian Protests Feature Feminist Calls for Greater Rights

- Tyler D. Coady

In the widespread protests that engulfed Iran in last December and January, one act of defiance stood out. Vida Movehad, a 31-year old from Tehran, removed her hijab, attached it to a stick, and waved it in the streets of the Iranian capital. This public rebuke of the Islamic dress code that the Iranian government has enforced since the 1979 Revolution was then copied by numerous other women as news of Movehad’s act of defiance spread like wildfire on social media.

The New York Times’ Iran correspondent, Thomas Erdbrink, wrote that the hijab, a form of Islamic dress that women wear to cover their head, is “seen by Iranian ideologues as a pillar of the Islamic Revolution of Iran.” To the Iranian leadership and many segments of Iranian society, the hijab represents a physical manifestation of how Islam binds the country together. For Nahid Siamdoust of Yale University, the act of removing one’s hijab and waving it in public, as Movehad and others did, represents “regaining a woman’s control over her body.”

These public displays of a rebellion may spring from increasing Iranian exposure to Western media, enhanced senses of empowerment that come with access to social media, or a heightened level of comfort to express them-

selves, as moderate President Hassan Rouhani has scaled back strict enforcement of religious norms in recent years. But one cannot deny that whenever Iranian protests make worldwide news, Western newspapers, think-tank analysts, and television commentators always suggest that they are a symptom of wider political, economic, and cultural movements within the country that pose risks to the viability and stability of the Islamic Revolution. While Movehad’s act of defiance very well could represent the widening of the feminist movement in Iran, it might not quite be the harbinger of broader societal change the West expects or wants.

Turkey’s History of Progressive Movements Is Backsliding

- Konrat Pekkip

Historically, Turkey has been progressive when it comes to LGBT rights. The Ottoman Empire was among the first major powers to decriminalize homosexuality in 1858. In 2003, Istanbul was the first city in any Muslim-majority country to hold a gay pride parade. Elements of feminism, too, have a long tradition in Turkey: in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire – the so-called Sultanate of Women era – the women of the Imperial Harem exerted strong control over the government. Following imperial times, in the early 1930s, women gained the

right to vote. In 1992, Tansu Çiller became the first female Prime-Minister of Turkey. However, more recently, both the LGBT and the feminist movements have been increasingly marginalized. Since 2015, the AKP-led government has banned every gay pride parade in Istanbul. In addition to that, in 2017, the capital Ankara banned an LGBT film festival hosted by the German Embassy and subsequently banned all showings of LGBT identities in film, theater and art. When it comes to women’s rights issues, the conservative government is not entirely reactionary. For instance, many Muslim women appreciated then-PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s loosening of secular restrictions on wearing the hijab in public. On the other hand, President Erdoğan exclusively supports traditional gender roles, stating that women who reject motherhood are incomplete. Overall, both the LGBT and women’s rights movements are more and more threatened in Turkey, mostly due to the increasingly autocratic nature of the Turkish regime.

Lebanon: A Leader in Feminist and LGBT Movements in the Arab World

- Maya Zreik

Feminist organizations have operated in Lebanon since the 1920s. In the past century,

they have made strides on political and cultural issues, activism, humanitarian work, and economic empowerment. Recently, feminist issues have included a focus on bodily autonomy and sexual violence. In the past few years, Lebanese women's rights activists have successfully passed laws increasing the length of maternity leave, protecting victims of domestic and sexual violence, and promoting girls' education. Currently, feminist movements in Lebanon are focusing on allowing mothers to pass on Lebanese citizenship to their children and increasing female representation in the political sphere.

Lebanon was the first Arab country to have its own gay magazine, first published in 2005, and held its first pride parade in 2017. It is also the first Arab country with an NGO dedicated to LGBT rights; the organization, called Helem, has been operating in Lebanon since 1998 and was officially registered as an NGO in 2004. LGBT rights organizations have organized protests against police detainment, campaigned for LGBT freedoms, and sought to promote anti-homophobia in Lebanon. A main goal of many organizations is decriminalizing homosexuality, as it is still illegal under Lebanese law. Though the law has not yet been repealed, judges have ruled against it and declared homosexuality not a crime in four separate court cases since 2009. A case in 2016 declared that transgender citizens are allowed to change their sex on official documents. Though there is still much progress left to be made, Lebanon is considered the most LGBT-friendly Arab nation while making continuing progress towards greater equality for women.

Progressive on LGBT Rights, Criticized for Pinkwashing: The Israeli Case

- Konrat Pekkipp

Israel has a long history of spearheading the global LGBT movement. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1963 and legalized in 1988. In 1993, Tel Aviv, considered one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world, became the first city in the Middle East to host a gay pride parade. However, these successes are often overshadowed by one of the most controversial issues

around LGBT issues in Israel: Pinkwashing. In the Israeli context, pinkwashing refers to the idea that the Israeli government promotes LGBT rights in order to project an image of broader Israeli modernity and progressivism while continuing to violate Palestinians' human rights. Indeed, the conservative Israeli government often tries to cover up its own reactionary policies regarding Palestine by pointing to allegedly-widespread homophobia in Muslim societies. A widely-cited example is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech before the US Congress in 2015, when he asserted that Israel stands out in the Middle East, a region where "women are stoned, gays are hanged, and Christians are persecuted." In the words of Aeyal Gross, a law professor Tel Aviv University, "gay rights have essentially become a public-relations tool," even though "conservative and especially religious politicians remain fiercely homophobic." That being said, some argue that accusations of pinkwashing are anti-Semitic and that Israel is held to different standards than other countries. Ultimately, the intersectionality between socially progressive movements and the motives of those who use them deserves closer examination.

Palestinian Feminism in the Context of Israeli Occupation

- Ayah Kutmah

Feminism and women's rights in the Palestinian case have always been compounded and influenced by the greater Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Palestinian women have historically played a significant role in the struggle for autonomy and pressing for greater women's rights. The General Union of Palestinian Women, which was founded in Gaza in 1965, has become the official representative of Palestinian women within the Palestinian Liberation Organization. According to the Directory of Palestinian Women's Organizations, 172 women's organizations were operating in the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem by 1993. The intersection between the struggle for Palestinian women's rights and against the occupying forces, in its essence, leads many of these organizations and unions to highlight the oppression of Palestinian women and their

denial of rights by the Israeli government and Israeli Defense Forces, including rights to freedom of movement and education, the right to vote, the right to work, and the right to sufficient and clean resources. In many of these instances, Palestinian feminists argue that these rights are being violated primarily by the Israeli government, rather than by fellow Palestinians. Although some highlight the denial of women's rights by groups such as Hamas in Palestine, many of the same Palestinian women's organizations have a history of fighting against these patriarchal and oppressive institutions as well. Feminist movements, newsletters, and organizations have organized conferences, seminars, and meetings to publicly discuss violence against women, women's reproductive health, and girls' secondary education. The oppression of Palestinian women and Palestinian feminist movements in the larger context of Israeli occupation and oppression gives the movements a more dimensional and nuanced face.

Despite Recent Progress, Saudi Arabia Has a Long Way to Go

- Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

Although Saudi Arabia continues to be one of the most gender-segregated countries in the world, feminist groups in the country have welcomed recent moves towards gender equality under Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. In September 2017, a royal decree announced that the ban on Saudi women driving would be lifted by June 2018. The lifting of the ban aligns with Salman's relatively progressive politics, which stand in stark contrast with the views of the ruling family's largely conservative support base. The announcement was met with celebration by women's rights groups which had long opposed the ban and suffered the threat of detention for opposing it. For example, one woman, Loujain Hathloul, was arrested and detained for 73 days in 2014 while trying to cross the border from the United Arab Emirates to Saudi Arabia in her car.

For the feminist movement in Saudi Arabia, this victory is meaningful, but it does not bring women's rights in the country anywhere near true equality. The implementation of women driving will still be defined by the male-centric

'guardianship' laws that dictate women's movement in Saudi Arabia. Under these guardianship laws, women will still need the approval of their husbands or the male head of household when acquiring a driver's license or traveling internationally, among other restrictions. Manal al-Sharif, an outspoken Saudi women's rights advocate, tweeted "#Women2Drive done, #IamMyOwnGuardian in progress," referencing her new campaign to amend the guardianship laws themselves. Although recent, positive developments for women in Saudi Arabia should not go unnoticed, there is still much work for feminist groups there to get done.

Women's Rights in Oman

-Jordan Sandman

Over Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said's 47-year tenure, Omani women have attained a gradual advancement in their rights. Women have achieved this advancement within the confines of the formal institutions of the Omani government rather than through protest or censure to highlight gender inequalities. Though Oman is an authoritarian state in which dissent for the Sultan and his legitimacy are not tolerated, the Ibadi tradition, which undergirds Oman's political system, creates norms that direct the Sultan to consult a variety of interests throughout civil society. In 2003, Oman implemented universal suffrage for both men and women in elections for the Majlis—its consultative council. Since then, the government has issued decrees to expand women's access to property and employment opportunities.

By operating within the constraints of the formal consultative process, women have garnered the support of the government. The Times of Oman, a news outlet with close ties to the government, has written articles championing Omani women successful in their professions. Because the government does not view the Omani women's movement as a serious threat to its legitimacy, the Sultan is content to champion women's rights as a public-relations boon to tout to the West while issuing measured reforms. Yet Omani women still face massive inequities. Oman enforces no law against domestic violence; women own less than one percent of Oman's land; husbands or guardians must provide written consent for Omani women to acquire a passport—there is no indication that the gradual reform process is likely



to produce significant changes. While the formal consultative political process has yielded modest results in the past, Omani women are unlikely to gain major improvements through practical politics in the future.

Tunisia's New Democracy Lends Hope for Increasing Women's Rights

- Tyler D. Coady

Since the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia has experienced numerous growing pains in its transition towards democracy. Truth commissions highlighting past state tortures and killings, uneven economic growth, and competing political and religious movements have exposed deep fault lines in Tunisian society.

One area in which progress is undoubtedly being made is in the sphere of women's rights. Though Tunisia has allowed divorce and outlawed polygamy since the 1950s, sexual and domestic abuse of women has often gone unpunished, as the existing legal framework prevented perpetrators from being held accountable. In the past year, however, Tunisia passed legislation that hardened laws against sexual abuse of minors, mandated compensation for victims of sexual abuse and rape, and explicitly acknowledged that both women and girls

can be rape victims. Furthermore, President Beji Caid Essebsi pushed through a resolution that axed a law that banned Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men. Women's rights advocates in the Middle East and in the West alike have lauded these moves, hoping that these progressive measures find wider acceptance throughout the region.

Advocates of these causes should be cautious, though, as the moves towards democracy and acknowledgement of past sins that have contributed to this paradigm shift are tenuous and being challenged. But this should not dampen excitement, as Tunisia's concrete moves towards greater gender equality seem to be instigating a broad shift in how women are viewed in society. ■

Russia's Burgeoning Role in Libya

A New Chance for Peace

- Madeline Hibbs-Magruder

In front of the U.S. Senate Armed Services committee in March 2017, General Thomas D. Waldhauser, the head of Africa Command, testified that "Russia is trying to exert influence on the ultimate decision of who becomes, and what entity becomes, in charge of the government inside Libya." General Waldhauser's conclusion is based on mounting evidence that Russia has been funneling money, arms, troops, and supplies into eastern Libya, an area currently under the control of Commander Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA). Despite the undeniable growth of Russian influence in Libya, their involvement does not necessitate pushback by the US or by the UN, which currently backs the Government of National Accord (GNA) under Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj. Rather, Russian involvement should be conditionally recognized as a positive force for brokering a peace deal between the LNA and GNA.

Since the outbreak of the second Libyan Civil War in 2014, a multitude of groups including the LNA, the GNA, the Islamic State, and various rebel groups have been vying for land and power. The instability in Libya and the haven it provides to groups like ISIL make it a chief priority for US and allied interests on the continent. As it stands, the two primary players in the conflict are the LNA, under commander Haftar, and the GNA, under Prime Minister al-Sarraj. Haftar, who came into power in 2014, controls a lion's share of Libyan oil fields and is allied with the National Bank of Libya. Denying the legitimacy of Haftar's rise to power, in 2016 the UN formed a new government under Prime Minister al-Sarraj in Tripoli. Both sides fail to recognize the other, making coordination against the growing presence of ISIL impossible.

Russia's interests in the Libyan conflict are threefold. First, Russia suffered a major economic loss once the Gaddafi government was toppled in 2011. Reuters estimates that close to \$10 billion in profits from unfulfilled railway projects, oil infrastructure, and arms sales were lost as a result of the first Libyan Civil War. Russia sees its partnership with Haftar as a means of rebuilding these economic links, since the internationally-recognized Tobruk Government controls most of the land and oil. Second, Russia hopes to build up a military presence with-

in Libya in order to exert greater influence in North Africa. Russia does not currently hold any permanent stations or bases in Libya, even though there had been talks of opening a naval base while Gaddafi was in power. Having a military presence in Libya would position Russia closer to the European sphere of influence and enhance its image as a global military power.

Finally, Libya provides an opening for Russia in terms of proving its ability to act as a political power broker between the GNA and the LNA. Putin criticized the Obama Administration's decision to intervene in the first Libyan Civil War and retreat soon after, leaving political reconciliation in the hands of the United Nations. Russia hopes to show American inadequacies by promoting the stability that the US could not. Russia has publicly courted Haftar, bringing him aboard their only aircraft carrier during a tour of the Mediterranean Sea, while still outwardly supporting the Government of National Accord. Russia was instrumental in bringing Haftar and al-Sarraj together for peace talks in May of 2017, the first time the two sides had met in over sixteen months.

Russia's aims are certainly motivated by a desire to build its political capital while underscoring instances where it succeeded and the US failed. The outcomes of these motivations, however, offer more benefits to the United States than General Waldhauser's testimony makes it appear. Both Russia and Haftar have an interest in the dismantling of ISIL strongholds in Libya that are some of the largest in the world. Libya's fractured politics allowed for the growth of ISIL training camps that are responsible for training fighters from all over Africa and Europe. Haftar's strategic position and oil wealth make the Tobruk Government one of the best posed forces for defeating ISIL in Libya.

Additionally, Russia's willingness to work with both Haftar and al-Sarraj offers the opportunity for peace between the sides even if that is not the explicit aim of Russian intervention. Although Haftar possesses most of Libya's wealth and military skill, he needs to win diplomatic favor internationally if they ever hope to be a legitimate government. To accomplish this, Haftar and the GNA would have to reconcile under a new, united government; Russian participation has the potential to foster such a

deal. Doing this would bring greater stability to Libya which still faces a massive migrant crisis and a crippled economy after years of civil war.

Critics of Russia's burgeoning role in Libya cite the implications of a Russian allied force in North Africa which could shift alliances that have been historically dominated by American diplomacy and military partnerships. Russia has been working closely with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to provide money and weapons to the Tobruk Government including roughly \$2.2 billion which Russia printed for the National Bank of Libya. These powers support Haftar's claims and have been key players in assisting Russia in the region. Allegiance between Russia, Egypt, and the UAE is neither new nor limited to this instance. Their collusion should not be taken as a deviation from the norm, but rather a strategic move by all sides to promote stability in Libya, since it is of interest to stability in the region as a whole.

Russian involvement in Libya is a potential bridge between the LNA and the GNA. Russia is the one of the only powers that has met with both sides and has demonstrated a willingness to engage diplomatically. Russian assistance has also won favor with Haftar, making the military strongman more interested in working with international players and potentially brokering a peace deal with the GNA. Russia's dual position in Libya is mirrored by France, which has met with both sides and is suspected of lending assistance to the LNA despite the UN's singular support for the GNA. France's use of similar tactics demonstrates that Russia's involvement in Libya isn't just a farce or a well-timed power grab, it has the potential to settle a nearly four-year conflict if negotiated correctly.

Although General Waldhauser's claims are not unfounded, the international community should not admonish every attempt by Russia to enter the international, diplomatic stage. Russian involvement allows the international community to focus resources elsewhere while not committing to a complete abandonment of the Libyan conflict. Additionally, Russian involvement has the potential to help both the LNA and the GNA achieve peace. Libya cannot sustain further civil unrest and fracturing of politics, and with Russian intervention, Libya has the potential to reunify. ■

In Turkey, a Muzzling of the Free Press is One Symptom of Wider Crackdown on Dissent

- Konrat Pekkip

Facing increasing isolation from the West, the Turkish government has recently been able to alleviate some pressure by releasing several foreign journalists from prison. Deniz Yücel, a German-Turkish dual citizen and journalist working for the German newspaper *Die Welt*, was held prisoner in Istanbul for over a year prior to being released in February of 2018. Another German journalist with Turkish roots, Meşale Tolu, was arrested in April 2017 and ultimately released that December. Yet, the issue of free media in Turkey goes beyond imprisoning journalists, and is rather one move in a systemic silencing of the press. While the release of some journalists and the establishment of a new independent news platform elicits some optimism, the situation is far bleaker than it is positive.

Looking back into Turkish history, the nation cannot pride itself on its promotion of freedom of press. Up until the early 1990s, journalists were murdered frequently, especially those reporting on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. Although the number of journalists murdered decreased after 1995, they have still remained a prime target for abduction and other crimes; even with a number of regime changes in Turkey's past, the problem of an unfree press remained. When Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a reformer committed to advancing democratic ideals, was elected Prime Minister in 2003, the press looked forward to positive changes regarding the treatment of people in their profession. By 2005, Turkey rose to the 98th rank in the Reporters without Borders' Press Freedom Index, a significant improvement. The country's increase in press freedom came as it aspired to join the European Union (EU).

However, despite Turkey's progress towards a more democratic society, the EU, with Germany's conservative chancellor Angela Merkel leading the way, rejected the country and proposed a "privileged partnership" rather than the inclusion of Turkey into their elite circle. The country's response to this was a return to more authoritarian practices, leading to a rapid decrease in freedom of press. This is mostly reflected in the high numbers of imprisoned journalists in Turkey during recent years.

The first major case of imprisoning journalists that caught the attention of a Western



A protest in favor of freeing imprisoned Turkish journalists. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

audience under the Erdoğan administration were the controversial Ergenekon trials, which concluded in 2013. In these trials, 275 critics of the government from the military, the opposition, and the press were convicted for treason. This conviction of alleged members of the Turkish secularist deep state was seen by many as a power grab by Erdoğan, mainly to 'cleanse' the country from high-profile secularist and liberal figureheads, but also as an instance of suppression of the press more broadly.

More recently, the attempted coup d'état of 2016 posed another opportunity for the government to go after the independent media. In the aftermath of the coup, Turkey became the country with the highest number of imprisoned journalists worldwide, with over 300 journalists arrested. Moreover, under the state of emergency laws and on the grounds of anti-terrorism policies, over 200 media outlets were shut down, more than 900 journalists lost their accreditation, and approximately 2500 people in the press lost their jobs. Subsequently, Turkey was ranked 155th in the Press Freedom Index in 2017, a decrease of 54 places over the course of a decade.

As a result of this complicated relationship between the government and mass media, much important information is withheld from the public. A major example is the failure to broadcast the Gezi Park protests of 2013, in which more than 3.5 million people protested the government in Istanbul. Over the course of multiple weeks, 22 died and thousands were injured. It was at the time when CNN Türk went viral for all the wrong reasons: They decided to show an extended documentary on penguins, while their counterpart, CNN International, reported live from the police crushing protesters

at a sit-in, sparking outrage among the Turkish people. In fact, a vast majority of protesters surveyed by Istanbul's Bilgi University stated that their main impulse to join the protest was the ignorance on behalf of the media.

The few independent media outlets that do exist have struggled heavily in recent years. For the most part, they either flipped, like in the case of *Sabah* after the government seized it and resold it to Erdoğan's son-in law, or they were put under heavy pressure by the government, which in the case of the weekly newspaper *Cumhuriyet* led to the imprisonment of almost half of the newspaper's staff. In some cases, the government even shut down the entire newspaper, as it did with *Zaman* in 2016, the newspaper with the highest circulation in the country up to that point.

Despite all these devastating developments in Turkey's recent past, there is still some hope for independent Turkish journalists. Journalist Can Dündar, for instance, did not give in after an assassination attempt and a sentence to five years in prison. Instead, the former editor-in-chief of *Cumhuriyet* left the country and in 2017 launched *Özgürüz* ("We are free"), an online platform for independent Turkish news that he runs from exile in Germany. The portal reports bilingually, in Turkish and German, and seeks to educate both the Turkish and German public on current affairs in Turkey. Additionally, Dündar now works as a columnist with the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, where he publishes a weekly column on current affairs in Turkey.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assumed office in 2003 with promises of democratization and further integration into the West, but after fifteen years of his rule, the reality is the opposite. With an increasing number of journalists imprisoned, the mass media being captured by the government, and independent media increasingly being forced into insignificance, Turkey has become one of the world's worst countries for freedom of the press. However, the recent release of journalists from prison, as well as new, creative ways of spreading information established by Turkish journalists fosters hope that, perhaps, journalism in Turkey is not a lost cause. ■

The UN and WHO's Complicity in the Syrian Humanitarian Crisis

- Ayah Kutmah

With over half a million civilians killed, 5.4 million refugees, and 13.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, the situation in Syria has been frequently characterized as the “worst humanitarian crisis of our time.” The nature of the Syrian conflict, with various rebel-groups, the presence of ISIS, and the brutality of the Syrian regime under President Bashar al-Assad, have all made the United Nations relief mission in Syria one of the most expensive, challenging, and complex humanitarian undertakings in history.

Due to the regime's monopolization of sovereignty in Syria, organizations such as the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) must operate and carry out their relief efforts within parameters formulated by the Syrian government. The extent to which these two organizations operate in accordance to the regime, along with the extremely limited degree to which medical supplies and aid reaches civilians who need it most, generally those in opposition-held regions under government besiegement, has led many international actors within and external to these organizations to criticize these missions for betraying the humanitarian principles of “neutrality, impartiality, and independence.” These UN and WHO practices are not just a failure to address Syria's humanitarian catastrophe, but constitutes their complicity in perpetuating the conflict in Syria by providing a monetary lifeline to the Assad regime.

The catch-22 of the international humanitarian relief apparatus is that in situations where the state is a perpetrator of crimes against humanity, international organizations such as the UN and the WHO are subject to work only in the parameters constructed by said regime so as not to violate state sovereignty. These parameters include a very limited list of contractors, local NGOs, and businesses that the UN and WHO are allowed to work with, as well as governmental control over where UN aid convoys are allowed to travel and what supplies they are allowed to carry. The UN and WHO defend their cooperation with the regime by arguing that despite these limitations, they work to maximize their funds so as to reach the most vulnerable and afflicted. Additionally, there are also certain benefits to working with the regime, such as the ability to negotiate access to

besieged areas which other groups cannot reach.

Yet the essential trickle-down theory pushed by the UN and WHO – that the supplies and aid efforts monopolized by above will eventually, in a limited fashion, reach those furthest from the regime – is an insufficient explanation. The monopolization of contracts and sovereignty only allows the Assad regime, arguably the greatest violator of human rights in Syria, and its allies another way to profit off of humanitarian aid and weaponize it as a tactic of war.

While the UN and WHO consistently defends their mechanism of maximizing the most funds to ensure the greatest impact, the numbers and details reflect a different story. In 2016, an investigation conducted by Dr. Reinoud Leenders found that the UN has awarded contracts worth tens of millions of dollars to businesses and NGOs that are closely tied to the Syrian president Assad and his family. These contracts include over \$17 million paid directly to Syrian governmental institutions, and over \$9.5 million contracted to various pro-regime NGOs and businesses, such as the Al-Bustan Association and the Syrian Trust charity. In addition, the WHO has spent more than \$5 million to support Syria's national blood bank, which is controlled by the Syrian Department of Defense. Finally, to ensure their utmost comfort, the UN has paid over \$9 million for its staff to reside in the five-star Four Seasons hotel in the capital of Damascus.

Ironically, the organizations and businesses that have been granted these multi-million dollar contracts by the UN and WHO have all been sanctioned by the US and EU due to their high levels of corruption and proximity to President Assad. There are severe consequences to subcontracting humanitarian relief efforts to such dubious partners. For one, the level of corruption within the businesses themselves allow for money to be funneled for personal gain. More importantly, awarding contracts to regime-associated NGOs and businesses serves to provide a monetary lifeline through which funds can be misappropriated to fund endeavors aimed at aiding a dictatorial regime in its perpetuation of war crimes. A perfect example is the hundreds of thousands of dollars given to organizations run by Rami Makhlouf, a prominent Syrian businessman who has substantial links to pro-regime militias that are involved in

the besiegement of several Syrian cities.

The lack of independence that the United Nations and World Health Organization enjoy in relation to freedom of movement and access throughout Syria, along with their complete lack of control of supplies sent to besieged areas again highlight their complicity in allowing the regime to manipulate siege and humanitarian access into a weapon of war and terror. The siege of entire cities, suburbs, and regions held by rebels and citizens opposed to the regime is central to Assad's method of total-warfare and retaliation to the popular uprising.

Assad's total siege aimed at civilians and combatants alike as a form of collective punishment is a war-crime. The reason these sieges have been successful, however, is due to the lack of access to humanitarian supplies, despite the abundance of resources the UN and WHO have to offer. As the regime has control over the list of supplies sent, often time medicines and supplies such as sterilization equipment that are desperately needed by the populations at siege are forbidden. Besides the fact that thousands of civilians have died due to a lack of food and medicine, a weakened civilian population allows the regime to finalize a siege with weeks of bombardment for the sake of eventual “liberation.” The Assad regime's manipulation of humanitarian aid, in which he alone has the power to determine where aid is sent and what supplies are available, into a tactic of war in besieging entire cities is done through international humanitarian organizations, whether they agree with it or choose to look away does not make a difference in this case.

The UN and WHO cannot hide behind the catch-22 of the humanitarian apparatus. The need to respect state sovereignty in order to continue aid is both necessary and difficult to accomplish. However, complicity arises when the need for respect turns to a shroud of silence and disregard for the implications of the mission itself. Both external NGOs and internal actors have protested this perversion by refusing to cooperate. In this sense, the UN and WHO have forfeited their rights to claim “neutrality, impartiality, and independence” with their mission in Syria; on the contrary, they have only succeeded in empowering a corrupt and dictatorial regime. ■

An Energized Relationship

Why Jordan Must Partner with Israel to Boost Its Energy Security

- Tyler D. Coady

Straddled next to each other, with only desert plains and the Dead Sea separating them, Jordan and Israel make for interesting neighbors. Although pitted against one another as adversaries in the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the two have had diplomatic relations since 1994. Political and economic cooperation has followed, with joint endeavors addressing terrorism, fresh water, and the fate of the Palestinian state.

Yet, it is in the energy sector where the greatest potential for substantial cooperation between Jordan and Israel lies. In the past decade, Israel has discovered massive offshore deposits of natural gas in the Mediterranean that it wants to export. Jordan, eager to diversify its energy mix and dealing with substantial population growth, recently signed deals to import natural gas from Israel. Though this invited great public resentment in Jordan, it harks to a broader development in which the Jordanian political and economic elite sees much more to be gained than lost from closer ties with Israel. Importing natural gas from Israel will make Jordanian society stronger, as it will diversify its energy mix, decrease electricity costs, and enable greater investment in renewable energy sources. King Abdullah II of Jordan must move ahead with Israeli gas imports as it will create greater economic opportunity for Jordanians, help incorporate Syrian arrivals into society, and instigate the move towards energy security the nation needs.

Though Western conceptions of the Middle East usually paint Arab nations as flush in petroleum or natural gas dollars, Jordan is a stark exception. With practically no reserves of oil or natural gas, Jordan counts the less glamorous, and lucrative, phosphate as its largest natural resource. Thus, Jordan has long been reliant on Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt for its energy needs. But continued instability in Iraq has delayed the construction of an oil and gas pipeline into Jordan. Meanwhile, Egyptian pipelines to Jordan have fallen victim to militant attacks in Sinai. Finally, Saudi Arabia is always willing to export oil, but generating electricity from oil is an expensive and polluting process that constrains the Jordanian economy. Therefore, the King smartly laid out a comprehensive energy strategy that prioritizes reducing crude oil

imports, increasing the share of renewables in electricity generation, and importing greater quantities of natural gas.

The Jordanian capital of Amman is located in the country's heavily-populated northwest, close to the Israeli border. Importing gas from Israel could take advantage of this proximity by constructing pipelines that run from Israel into greater Amman. It is more expedient than importing large volumes of gas via Egyptian pipelines, which only extend into Jordan's barely-populated southern regions and are vulnerable to attacks in increasingly combustible Sinai and Gaza. Pipelines that flow directly into Amman will be easier to keep close security over and maintain.

While the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in the southern port city of Aqaba increases Jordan's gas import capabilities, LNG is more expensive to purchase and must run in lengthy pipelines across Jordan from Aqaba north to Amman. Furthermore, increased Israeli gas imports into Jordan means less reliance on Saudi and Iraqi oil. This frees up oil for more practical uses like transportation.

Like so many state-owned electricity utilities in the world, the Jordanian National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) is suffering from massive budget deficits, aging infrastructure, and ever-growing energy demands. With Syrian refugees contributing to huge population growth in Jordan, NEPCO now bears an ever-increasing burden to generate the energy that both Syrian arrivals and Jordanian citizens require for generating business and conducting home life.

But Israeli gas imports could help NEPCO deal with growing energy demands while also lowering electricity costs. Natural gas is plentiful in the world market and generating electricity with it would be cheaper than with oil or LNG. Combine these phenomena with enhanced Israeli-Jordanian pipeline connection, and importing Israeli gas into Jordan would provide NEPCO with a cheap and reliable energy source that it could use to supply its customers. It would also relax the financial pressures that have been building on NEPCO, allowing the state-owned utility to begin paying back its debt, investing in infrastructure, and developing renewable energy resources.

Jordan, graced by empty deserts and sunny skies, is a prime spot for solar power generation and is indeed growing quickly there. However, it will be decades before Jordan has the necessary solar farms, battery technologies, and financial resources to power the country mostly by sun. Therefore, greater use of natural gas in electricity generation, which is championed by environmentalists and policymakers as less polluting and less carbon intensive than oil, would help Jordan meet its goals in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Again, cheap Israeli gas imports would relax financial pressures on NEPCO, allowing it to commit more resources towards developing solar farms and improving efficiency in electricity generation.

Yet, importing Israeli natural gas is no silver bullet, as it is fraught with deep political, economic, and cultural considerations. While Abdullah may view enhanced cooperation on energy with Israel as practical, the Jordanian people protested loudly when news of proposed Israeli gas imports hit the headlines. As most Jordanians trace their ancestry to the Palestinians, their concerns over direct economic ties with a nation seen as antagonistic towards Palestinians are deserved. Also, to increase economic ties with Israel and decrease them with fellow Arab nations could yield the King criticisms that he is cozying up with the Israelis while shunning his fellow Arabs. Beyond that, Israeli production of its offshore natural gas resources has been slow to take off, with political and economic hurdles making foreign investors wary.

Despite these setbacks, it is still wise for Abdullah and Jordan to move ahead with plans to import Israeli natural gas. It is cost-effective, weans Jordan off of expensive and polluting oil, provides an opportunity to ignite greater renewable energy development, and enables Jordanians to live lives that are not constrained by energy shortages nor high electricity prices. For the King, championing such cooperation is firmly within his pragmatic moves towards greater cooperation with Israel and not being beholden by the history of Arab-Israeli relations. Championing the Palestinian cause should not dissuade Abdullah II from taking advantage of his neighbor's newfound resources so as to bolster his nation's energy security and social development. ■

Continuing Garbage Crisis in Lebanon Threatens Government's Legitimacy

- Ryan Gillcrist

A series of winter storms in early 2018 washed a large amount of garbage onto Lebanon's revered coastline, forcing workers to descend upon the beaches in an effort to remove the waste. There is, however, nowhere else for the garbage to go. As recently as 2016, over two million metric tons of waste remained littered just along Lebanon's coast. Since 2015, because of the government's waste mismanagement, landfills across the country are completely overflowed, obstructing traffic and growing so large that many people now refer to them as "garbage mountains." But in failing its legal obligation to protect the health of its citizens from such practices as open burning, the Lebanese government risks losing further legitimacy in the eyes of the Lebanese people.

For years, many Lebanese have informally burned garbage in dumps, which results in substantial toxins and smoke being released directly into the air. Though the Lebanese government has repeatedly asserted that this practice violates the country's laws, open burning takes place at around 150 dumps per week and has increased substantially around Beirut and Mount Lebanon in recent years. From 2015 to 2016, there were over 3,612 cases of open burning in Beirut and Mount Lebanon alone and 814 in the rest of the country. Moreover, open burning often occurs in poorer parts of the country where communities exist without access to good healthcare. Burning even occurs in close proximity to schools: in 2016, a school in Naameh was forced to send students home because of its close proximity to an open burning site.

Numerous studies have revealed the dangerous and immediate impacts of open burning on human health, both in the short-term and in the long-term. In the short-term, the air pollution caused by the open burning process may irritate the lungs and the eyes, impede visibility, and cause rashes, nausea, and headaches. For those who live in especially close proximity to open burning, the health consequences can be even more drastic. Many people who live in the vicinity of open burning dumps have reported that they felt severe respiratory symptoms shortly after the burning began. Research suggests that open burning also can be devastating in the long-term. The process exacerbates pre-existing illnesses and has led to an increase in

“Lebanese leaders need to put a lid on this stinky problem, or they too will be thrown out to the trash.”

the cases of cancer in Lebanon, especially for those who live near areas in which open burning occurs. Many toxins released into the air have been previously linked to skin diseases, asthma, heart disease, and emphysema, as well as cancer and other health issues. The problem has escalated so severely that overworked doctors in Beirut have publicly decried open burning's health consequences.

Another public health challenge that open burning presents for the Lebanese government is the poisoning of the water supply. The chemicals released by open burning often infect reservoirs and other locations containing much of Lebanon's water supply, which has lasting health effects on the people who drink the water. Lebanese health professionals believe that moderate-to-heavy raining could carry toxic chemicals into the water supply, leading to unsanitary conditions and effectively poisoning Lebanon's already suspect freshwater supply.

Despite these serious threats to Lebanese health, the government has not conducted formal studies on the environmental impact of open burning. Furthermore, in Lebanon, there have been few private studies or tests examining waste burning's connection with public health issues. Unfortunately, public health is clearly not a priority for the Lebanese government. Moreover, many people conflate the government's inability to address waste management and public health with its political dysfunction. Already reeling from Prime Minister's Saad Hariri's Saudi-induced resignation last year and his subsequent restoration to the position, the government has shown its true colors in not just partaking in internal, partisan fighting, but in failing to protect the health and welfare of the Lebanese people. This makes it even more difficult for the government to operate and effectively address national healthcare issues. It also hurts government efforts to persuade the Lebanese people that it is even worth trusting in solving the wider societal issues that plague this small, coastal country.

In an unfortunate sign of the Lebanese government's ineptitude, it too has been forced to engage in open burning of garbage. The government's inability to rectify the country's waste management issues is not only sapping itself of legitimacy, but is creating a vacuum within which groups like Hezbollah, the Lebanese political party and militia, further can claim to be the force that best provides for the welfare of Lebanese citizens. This creates a political culture in which the state is no longer seen as a vehicle for providing services to citizens, but is merely a political construct that political parties use to marshal influence and retain a stranglehold on public coffers. Lebanese leaders need to put a lid on this stinky problem, or they too will be thrown out to the trash. ■

How to Reverse Lebanon's Brain Drain

-Maya Zreik

Like many middle-income countries, Lebanon suffers from a brain drain epidemic. The term “brain drain” refers to the migration of highly educated youths, such as medical students and aspiring entrepreneurs, to more wealthy countries to live and work. This migration is usually in search of better opportunities abroad, and comes at the cost of progress in the home country. It is possible to reverse this trend, however, through the development of STEM sectors and the promotion of startups within Lebanon, which can be achieved with both government investment and the help of the private sector in the nation.

The Lebanese technology and medical sectors are suffering from profound brain drain. Due to both a lack of resources to develop startups and the underdevelopment of the medical industry, many Lebanese leave the country immediately upon graduation to seek employment in Europe, North America, or the Arab Gulf. An influx of Syrian refugees, many of whom are in desperate need of medical attention, has left Lebanese hospitals lacking resources, beds, nurses, and doctors to serve these displaced people. In fact, there are only 12,000 registered physicians in the entire country. A study recently found that almost 40 percent of graduates from Lebanese medical schools currently practice in the United States, the seventh highest rate of physician migration in the world. This forces many Lebanese to travel outside the country for medical operations which cannot be performed locally. Many aspiring Lebanese entrepreneurs and technicians also prefer to seek employment abroad, especially in the Arab Gulf or Europe. This is due in part to the limited job opportunities in Lebanon: many students describing a “hopeless” job search in the home country. The loss of these intellectuals has consequences for Lebanon's economy and growth. Almost 83 percent of migrants are between the ages of twenty and 44, which will result in an increasingly elderly population in Lebanon in the future with fewer young people to replace them.

A key issue in Lebanon's medical industry is its underdevelopment. One recent success in investing in the medical field is the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), the largest hospital in the country. The center has recently implemented a program

aimed at adding more rooms to the hospital, expanding their medical class, and adding new centers for cardiology, oncology, neurology, and other areas. The program will be beneficial for people in need of medical care, and will offer job opportunities to young physicians who would otherwise go abroad. Additionally, the program will contribute to Lebanon's medical industry through research, which has begun seeing fruitful results. Last year, for instances, the pediatric department at AUBMC performed Lebanon's first successful heart transplant on a child. By investing money into programs that will advance the medical industry, private practices like AUBMC help to counter the brain drain. Along with opening up job opportunities for recent graduates, it will help establish Lebanon's medical field as a reputable one, which will encourage physicians to stay in the country. To achieve similar success in public practices, the government should invest money to expand their programs in the same way AUBMC has. Additionally, governmental aid can help provide existing hospitals with resources that they are lacking like supplies and equipment. An expansion of the medical field benefits the Lebanese economy, increases hospitals' efficiency in providing services to people in need and begins the reversal of the brain drain.

Government support and investment in the private sector could also open opportunities for jobs in Lebanon's technology field. In order to prevent brain drain, the government must make the sector more attractive to the nation's educated youths. This can be achieved through promoting technology in schools, and investing money in the industry. In February 2018, the Lebanese government released a \$48 million fund from telecommunications firms to aid startups dealing in technology and software programming. This is expected to increase the efficiency of Lebanese industries, but the private sector can take a more direct approach. Some have been overseeing the creation of conferences in Beirut, such as ArabNet, which bring together entrepreneurs and business leaders in information technology and STEM fields. The conferences hold workshops on innovation and product development and provide opportunities for young startups to compete against others in the Gulf Area. Georges Abi

Aad, a speaker at ArabNet, said “ArabNet is one of the rare chances Lebanese startups have to network and mingle with big corporations and investors, acting as a bridge between the ecosystem and the startup scene.” Such events are unique, as they bring necessary resources for a successful business ventures directly to Beirut. Before such events and innovations, young entrepreneurs would often need to leave the country to find opportunities, and would usually take their businesses with them. Events such as these allow them to stay and develop their work within the country. Nadine Haram, the co-founder of Proximie, a platform developing virtual surgery techniques, said “Lebanon was suffering a brain drain, and I think by invigorating and investing in the tech industry the government has made a huge impact on the current generation and generations to come.” In the long-term, such a strategy will see Lebanon develop a tech network that could rival that of the Gulf's and establish it as a hub for business, opening opportunities for young graduates to find jobs locally.

The implementation of various programs, and investment in technology, provides resources for the educated graduates of Lebanon who would otherwise look for opportunities abroad. If both the private sector and the Lebanese government invest in more entrepreneurial events and to expand the medical field, the prospect of finding secure employment in Lebanon will not seem so hopeless to many of the nation's graduates. The long-term impacts will be useful to the country as a whole: a larger network of entrepreneurs and technicians will reflect favorably on the economy, and establish Lebanon as a stronger economic force in the region. More doctors and a developed medical program will improve the quality of life in the country, especially for the disenfranchised, such as the impoverished and refugees. Through programs such as AUBMC and ArabNet, Lebanon has been making progress towards these goals, but needs to do more to ensure the brain drain is fully countered. ■

Healthcare in Afghanistan

Inadequate Infrastructure and Too Much Violence

- Omar Ilyas

From the ten year invasion into Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, followed by an ineffective government established under the Taliban, and ending with the US invasion in 2001, Afghanistan has struggled to survive through sequential invasions and internal violence. Afghanistan was ranked 173 out of 178 in the United Nations Human Development Index in 2004. This is perhaps most evident in its crippled healthcare system. Infectious diseases that are considered non-existent even in other developing nations, such as acute respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, measles, and malaria are prevalent across the country. Although the Afghan government is attempting to rectify its systemic healthcare issues, the prevalence of curable diseases indicate the difficulties of improving the healthcare system. The reality is that a deadly combination of declining physical infrastructure, inadequate healthcare access and spontaneous violence has derailed potential solutions to progress the Afghan healthcare system. The country can make tepid success towards shoring up its battered healthcare system, however, by retooling the focus and services of clinics and hospitals and creating no-conflict zones in which all Afghans can receive medical care.

The lack of healthcare infrastructure has manifested itself through an absence of a country-wide highway system and a shortage of medical facilities. The poor road network and the complete absence of a railway system is exacerbated during rough winters, where the limited number of emergency vehicles are not able to visit critical-care patients in rural areas. Many road systems remain unrepaired from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) causing craters large enough to swallow trucks. The fact that different factions control Afghan roads aggravates the situation by not allowing emergency responses for individuals living outside of the city constraints. A study asked Afghans whether they would rely on the ambulance system if their family members were to get ill; 66 percent of respondents noted that the ambulance system was not reliable and it was better to either call for a private car or to carry the sick to the hospital. In a country where 43 percent of the Afghan population lives further than one hour's walking distance to a medical facil-

ity, the attempted trek to the nearest hospital often results in death.

Afghan hospitals either have very limited resources or none at all. Kabul hospitals average roughly seven beds per 1000 patients, while hospitals in rural areas average significantly less. The International Council on Security and Development found that the rural Mirwais Hospital only has one bed per 2000 people and no basic necessities such as heat, clean water, and electricity. The lack of resources also manifests itself through the poor quality of medicines offered in clinics. A majority of the medications are imported from neighboring countries with little to no quality control checks. The poor antibiotics lead to the rise of drug immunity, compounding the effect of diseases on the already susceptible Afghan citizens and increasing the risk of developing debilitating diseases like Tuberculosis and Cholera.

The violence in Afghanistan continues to complicate the already struggling infrastructure. The limited roads that lead to medical facilities are often the home of violence through IEDs or land mines; which Afghanistan has more of than any other country. In 2007, 45 percent of Afghanistan's rural areas were inaccessible to the United Nations for medical missions because of violence. And in 2012, 450 hospital clinics were closed due to security concerns that were compounded by the pro-government forces using those clinics as military bases and the Taliban retaliating to perceived occupation. Due to the loss of medical facilities and personnel, there are 5 million people who are in critical need of healthcare. And in another defining moment that highlights the increasing violence, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced a drastic reduction of its operation after working for 30 years in Afghanistan. Over the last twenty years in Afghanistan, more than 1,150 aid workers have been kidnapped, wounded, or killed in deliberate attacks.

The government is attempting to rectify its deplorable healthcare system by relying on foreign aid from the United States and by collaborating with multiple NGOs. \$4 billion in foreign aid from the United States was intended for rebuilding the poor road network and for providing resources for healthcare facilities. However, the Afghan government has been un-

able to maintain even a fraction of the roads and highways constructed since 2001, leading the US government to freeze future funding for large transportation projects by 2012. Financial backing for healthcare infrastructure has resulted in multiple clinics being created. However, there has been a significant decline in the number of medical staff, leading to empty hospitals.

To combat this, the government is working on creating an emergency medicine residency for increased physicians in the emergency clinics, however it is still at a rudimentary development stage. The establishment of an emergency medicine program can increase physicians specializing in critical-care patients, increasing the survival rate at clinics. In the context of increased violence, there have been moments of cooperation between all parties involved. Roads and clinics that were controlled by either the Taliban or the government have allowed injured citizens to have access to the clinics. However, these reports are outweighed by the constant news of healthcare officials and infrastructure being lost in collateral damage caused by both factions. Based on other healthcare interventions in war zones, Afghanistan needs to work with NGOs to establish no-conflict zones where all parties can receive healthcare. Médecins Sans Frontières has precedent with working in war zones to establish similar programs with success and should be contacted to begin similar initiatives.

The decaying healthcare infrastructure and the increasing violence has become endemic in Afghanistan, hindering any attempts to revive the healthcare system. Afghanistan can invest in initiatives such as creating an emergency medicine residency program and collaborating to create no-conflict zones. But these initiatives will fall short if the Afghan government is not able to effectively use foreign aid to maintain its infrastructure and curb violence around healthcare facilities. ■

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