

# Fair Observer

Monthly



February 2022

Fair Observer<sup>o</sup>



---

# Fair Observer Monthly



February 2022

---

Fair Observer | 237 Hamilton Ave | Mountain View | CA 94043 | USA  
www.fairobserver.com | info@fairobserver.com

**The views expressed in this publication are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect Fair Observer's editorial policy.**

Copyright © 2022 Fair Observer

Photo Credit: Sameer Madhukar Chogale / Shutterstock

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

International Standard Serial Number (ISSN): 2372-9112

---

# CONTENTS

<b>About Fair Observer</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Share Your Perspective</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Did Digital Media Retire the Sex Tape?</b> Ellis Cashmore	<b>8</b>
<b>Britain's Still Got It</b> Atul Singh & Martin Plaut	<b>10</b>
<b>Since the Start of the Pandemic, Americans Are Drinking Too Much</b> Jennifer Wider	<b>12</b>
<b>The Evolution of National Security in the UAE</b> Mohammad Salami	<b>13</b>
<b>A Personal Boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games</b> Gary Grappo	<b>16</b>
<b>The Taliban Use Violence Against Women as a Bargaining Chip</b> Mohammad Zaki Farasoo	<b>18</b>
<b>Time for a Sober Look at the Ukraine Crisis</b> Munir Saeed	<b>20</b>
<b>The Radical Impact of Canada's Fringe Parties</b> Imogen Alessio & Dominic Alessio	<b>22</b>
<b>Ukraine's Tug of War and the Implications for Europe</b> Peter Isackson	<b>25</b>
<b>Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Is a Wake-Up Call for Germany</b> Hans-Georg Betz	<b>26</b>

---

# ABOUT FAIR OBSERVER

Fair Observer is a nonprofit media organization that engages in citizen journalism and civic education.

Our digital media platform has more than 2,500 contributors from 90 countries, cutting across borders, backgrounds and beliefs. With fact-checking and a rigorous editorial process, we provide diversity and quality in an era of echo chambers and fake news.

Our education arm runs training programs on subjects such as digital media, writing and more. In particular, we inspire young people around the world to be more engaged citizens and to participate in a global discourse.

As a nonprofit, we are free from owners and advertisers. When there are six jobs in public relations for every job in journalism, we rely on your donations to achieve our mission.

---

# PUBLISH

Join our network of 2,500+ contributors to publish your perspective, share your story and shape the global conversation. Become a Fair Observer and help us make sense of the world.

Remember, we are a digital media platform and welcome content in all forms: articles, podcasts, video, vlogs, photo essays, infographics and interactive features. We work closely with our contributors, provide feedback and enable them to achieve their potential. Think of us as a community that believes in diversity and debate.

We have a reputation for being thoughtful and insightful. The US Library of Congress recognizes us as a journal with ISSN 2372-9112 and publishing with us puts you in a select circle.

For further information, please visit [www.fairobserver.com/publish](http://www.fairobserver.com/publish) or contact us at [submissions@fairobserver.com](mailto:submissions@fairobserver.com).

---

## Did Digital Media Retire the Sex Tape?

Ellis Cashmore  
February 1, 2022

---

**With a seemingly endless supply of sexualized content available online, porn has largely lost its power to thrill or disgust.**

Does anything capture the cultural changes of the late 1990s as perfectly as the sex tape? Turning what was once a deeply intimate and personal experience into a public exhibition that could be endlessly reproduced and consumed by anybody interested, the sex tape expressed two key shifts.

The first was the disappearance of what used to count as privacy. Today, we think nothing of sharing our innermost thoughts and behavior with people we don't even know or, rather, we do know, but only remotely (that's no contradiction either).

The second was the legitimization of voyeurism. What was at one time regarded as an unwholesome and indecent fascination with other people's affairs is now considered conventional. In fact, the more transgressive outlook is to be nonchalant.

### “Pam & Tommy”

The new Disney+ mini-series “Pam & Tommy” dramatizes an infamous leaked sex tape involving Pamela Anderson and her then-husband, Tommy Lee, who still plays drums for the band Mötley Crüe. Anderson was starring in Baywatch, a TV series that ran from 1989 until 2001. The show was about a team of lifeguards on a Los Angeles beach and became a showcase for Anderson, who featured in the series from 1992 to 1997 before moving into film.

Anderson married Lee in March 1995. It seemed a marriage made in heaven. Well, in Cancún, Mexico, to be exact. The newlyweds

were sensibly undressed in beachwear, Lee's splendidly inked torso in full view of the media. By the end of the year, Anderson announced she was pregnant. But heaven had an unwanted visitor.

### Private Lives Made Public

There were rumors about a videotape of Anderson and Lee in sexual congress. That such a thing existed surprised no one. The couple seemed blissfully loved-up. But what surprised many was that people were discussing it as if it were a public event. It later became known that the videotape had been stolen from the couple's California home while they were honeymooning and that the thief, a dissatisfied contractor who had done some work at their house, was seeking to release the tape in an instance of what we'd now call revenge porn.

This was the mid-1990s, remember. Today, he would have immediately uploaded the recording and gotten millions of views within minutes.

Anderson and Lee were, it seems, genuinely upset by the prospect of having their private lives turned inside out. Neither had anything to gain. Lee's band had six successful albums, and Anderson was borderline iconic, her signature red swimsuit emblematic of the time. Had the tape gained a wider audience, NBC, the TV network, would probably have dropped her from the show amid protest from their advertisers and several indignant church organizations.

For comparison, in predigital 1988, Rob Lowe's career temporarily cratered after the media got hold of a recording of the actor in a threesome with a woman who was later revealed to be 16 and another woman in her 20s. After a 10-year absence, Lowe made a Lazarus-like recovery when he got a part in “The West Wing,” a show that restored him. Of course, Lowe was a man.

Lowe's recovery is one way of imagining how Anderson's career might have gone had the tape been quickly and widely distributed. Another way is to remember Janet Jackson's “wardrobe



---

malfunction” of 2004. She had several contracts canceled after a tumult of complaints about her appearance in the halftime Super Bowl show in which she exposed her breast. Her partner in the stunt was Justin Timberlake, whose career suffered no comparably ill effects.

Also in 2004, a similar sex tape featuring Paris Hilton and her partner Rick Salomon had the opposite effect. It propelled Hilton to global notoriety and consequent stardom. Hilton was a woman, but, unlike Anderson or Jackson, she did not have a successful career in show business. Salomon was relatively unknown and, perhaps paradoxically, later married — and I am not making this up — Anderson (though only for a year).

A sex tape also functioned as a career propellant for Hilton’s one-time friend, Kim Kardashian. Again, unlike Anderson, but a lot like Hilton, Kardashian had no known acting or singing talents and belonged to what was then the emerging class of celebrities who were well-known for being followed avariciously by the media. Kardashian existed as an internet life force and a presence in a reality TV series. Halfway through the first decade of the century, this was sufficient to guarantee her a spot high on the A-list.

There were several differences between Anderson’s experience and those of Hilton and Kardashian. For a start, audiences already knew Anderson and realized she needed a sex tape circulating about as much as a funeral wreath. Hilton and Kardashian, on the other hand, were best known as socialites, people who dress well, inhabit fashionable environments and are fond of premieres. All three women acted as if they were affronted, outraged and embarrassed by the leaks, but only one of them sounded credible.

### **Has Porn Lost Its Appeal?**

There was another big difference. When Anderson’s tape appeared, the internet was still in its infancy and without YouTube, which launched in 2005, there was no obvious conduit for publishing. Consent and exploitation may

sound old-fashioned today, but, in the 1990s, they were still relevant. Even by the early 21st century, the lack of online regulation had not been realized as the major problem it later became.

Kardashian herself stress-tested the internet’s limits in 2016 when she posted naked selfies, her modesty protected only by censor bars. In the same year, OnlyFans launched an online platform specializing in what was then seen as risqué material. Its majority owner Leo Radvinsky’s background was in porn. It’s now one of the fastest-growing websites, according to Ofcom, second only to Pornhub for streaming this type of erotica.

Tumblr appeared to buck the trend when it banned adult content in late 2018. Its traffic dropped and it was sold a year later for a modest \$3 million, having been valued at \$1.1 billion in 2013.

What about us? Did we change too? Our capacity to respond, appreciate or be repelled by aesthetic influences is not fixed. Perhaps we were more likely to be offended or shocked when the Anderson tape became available, less so by the later exposures and hardly at all by OnlyFans’ output. Porn has largely lost some of its power to thrill or disgust. Our sensitivity to images of others having sex couldn’t have remained unchanged with so much of it readily available online, could it?

There hasn’t really been anything shocking since the original Kardashian transmission. Can you imagine if anyone tried it today? Audiences would hardly be able to contain their indifference. With the possible exception of Britain’s seemingly indestructible, multi-purpose Katie Price, surely no one would attempt it, for fear of being ridiculed.

Our fascination with what other people do in their not-yet-made-public moments is what drove reality TV to its preeminent position as the century’s most popular genre, and I think its form, style and subject matter justify calling it a genre. Maybe this prurient streak has always been in us, though I’m inclined to believe the

---

captivation was animated and encouraged by TV's ingenuity; by coaxing drama from documentary, TV cameras made privacy entertaining. Every one of us became eavesdroppers without any of the guilt typically associated with being a peeping tom. Maybe that's why watching sex tapes, or their digital equivalents, isn't so exciting anymore. Those pangs of conscience were probably part of the frisson.

Like anything else that's banned, the prohibition is part of porn's appeal. The instant you make it legit, you reduce its attraction. While #MeToo and other movements that fight the objectification and degradation of women would find this irony hard to accept, there is logic in rinsing off porn's dirt and making it a bit more respectable — and a bit less stimulating.

### **Changing Its Direction**

Anderson, now 54, would probably not accept any responsibility for the growth or sanitization of porn and almost certainly not want her legendary tape viewed again after nearly three decades. And if it were, it would register only historical interest rather than titillation.

But in the 1990s, Anderson was riding the zeitgeist, however unwittingly and, perhaps, with help from her private misfortune, changing its direction.

---

**\*Ellis Cashmore** is the author of “Elizabeth Taylor,” “Beyond Black” and “Celebrity Culture.” His latest book, “The Destruction and Creation of Michael Jackson,” will be published by Bloomsbury in May 2022. He is an honorary professor of sociology at Aston University and has previously worked at the universities of Hong Kong and Tampa.

---

## **Britain's Still Got It**

Atul Singh & Martin Plaut  
February 2, 2022

---

**Since 1945, the UK has survived many crises to remain one of the world's top economies and has the strength to overcome its latest crisis.**

**S**ince Brexit in 2016, the United Kingdom's growth rate has been poor. Inflation is at its highest rate in 30 years. In December 2021, it had risen to 5.4%. Wages have failed to keep up and, when we factor in housing or childcare costs, the cost of living has been rising relentlessly.

COVID-19 has not been kind to the economy. Rising energy prices are putting further pressure on stretched household budgets. To stave off inflation, the Bank of England is finally raising interest rates, bringing an end to the era of cheap money. Payroll taxes are supposed to go up in April to repair public finances.

The Resolution Foundation is predicting that “spiralling energy prices will turn the UK's cost-of-living crisis into a catastrophe” by spring. The UK's 2022 budget deficit will be larger than all its G-7 peers except the US. The beleaguered Boris Johnson government finds itself in a bind. At a time of global inflation, it has to limit both public borrowing and taxes. Unsurprisingly, there is much doom and gloom in the air.

### **We Have Seen This Movie Before**

Since the end of World War II, the UK has experienced many crises of confidence. One of the authors move to the country in 1977. Back then, the Labour Party was in power. James Callaghan was prime minister, having succeeded Harold Wilson a year earlier. The British economy was the fifth-largest in the world but was buffeted by crises. In 1976, the government had approached the International Monetary Fund

---

(IMF) when, in the words of Richard Roberts, “Britain went bust.”

From 1964 to 1967, the United Kingdom experienced “a continuous sterling crisis.” In fact, the UK was “the heaviest user of IMF resources” from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s. The 1973 oil crisis spiked energy costs worldwide and pushed the UK into a balance of payments crisis. Ironically, it was not the Conservatives led by Margaret Thatcher but Labour led by Callaghan that declared an end to the postwar interpretation of Keynesian economics.

In his first speech as prime minister and party leader at the Labour Party conference at Blackpool, Callaghan declared: “We used to think you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour, that option no longer exists.” After this speech, the Callaghan government started imposing austerity measures.

Workers and unions protested, demanding pay rises. From November 1978 to February 1979, strikes broke out across the UK even as the country experienced its coldest winter in 16 years. This period has come to be known as the Winter of Discontent, a time “when the dead lay unburied” as per popular myth because even gravediggers went on strike.

In 1979, Thatcher won a historic election and soon instituted economic policies inspired by Friedrich von Hayek, the Austrian rival of the legendary John Maynard Keynes. Thatcher’s victory did not immediately bring a dramatic economic turnaround. One major industry after another continued to collapse. Coal mines closed despite a historic strike in 1984-85. Coal, which gave work to nearly 1.2 million miners in 1920 employed just 1,000 a century later.

Throughout the 1970s, the UK was dubbed “the sick man of Europe.” People forget now that a key reason the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 was to make the economy more competitive. Between 1939 and the early 1990s, London lost a quarter of its population. Yet London and indeed the UK

recovered from a period of crisis to emerge as a dynamic economy. Some credit Thatcher but there were larger forces at play.

### **There Is Life in the Old Dog Yet**

Last week, one of the authors met an upcoming politician of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). A strong nationalist, he spoke about the importance of Hindi, improving India’s defense and boosting industrial production. When the conversation turned to his daughter, he said that he was sending her to London to do her A-levels at a top British school.

This BJP leader is not atypical. Thousands of students from around the world flock to the UK’s schools and universities. British universities are world-class and train their students for a wide variety of roles. Note that the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca were able to develop a COVID-19 vaccine with impressive speed. This vaccine has since been released to more than 170 countries. This is hardly surprising: Britain has four of the top 20 universities in the world — only the US has a better record.

Not only students but also capital flocks to the UK. As a stable democracy with strong rule of law, the United Kingdom is a safe haven for those seeking stability. It is not just the likes of Indian billionaires, Middle Eastern sheikhs and Russian oligarchs who put their wealth into the country. Numerous middle-class professionals choose the UK as a place to live, work and do business in. Entrepreneurs with a good idea don’t have to look far to get funding. Despite residual racism and discrimination, Britain’s cities have become accustomed to and comfortable with their ethnic minorities.

Alumni from top universities and skilled immigrants have skills that allow the UK to lead in many sectors. Despite Brexit, the City of London still rivals Wall Street as a financial center. Companies in aerospace, chemical and high-end cars still make the UK their home. British theater, comedy, television, news media and, above all, football continue to attract global attention.

---

Napoleon Bonaparte once purportedly called the UK “a nation of shopkeepers.” There is an element of truth to this stereotype. The British are a commercially savvy, entrepreneurial and business-friendly bunch. One author knows a dealer who trades exclusively in antique fans and a friend who specializes in drinks that you can have after a heavy night. The other has a friend who sells rare Scotch whisky around the world and an acquaintance who is running a multibillion insurance company in India. Many such businesses in numerous niches give the British economy a dynamism and resilience that is often underrated. Everything from video gaming (a £7-billion-a-year industry) to something as esoteric as antique fan dealing continues to thrive.

The UK also has the lingering advantage of both the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire. Infrastructure and assets from over 200 years ago limit the need for massive capital investment that countries like Vietnam or Poland need.

Furthermore, the UK has built up managerial experience over multiple generations. Thanks to the empire, English is the global lingua franca and enables the University of Cambridge to make money through its International English Language Testing System. Barristers and solicitors continue to do well thanks to the empire’s export of common law. Even more significantly, British judges have a reputation for impartiality and independence: they cannot be bribed or coerced. As a result, the UK is the premier location for settling international commercial disputes.

### **The Outlook**

In 1977, the UK was the world’s fifth-largest economy. In 2022, 45 years later, it is still fifth, although India is projected to overtake it soon. The doom and gloom of the 1970s proved premature.

The same may prove true in the 2020s. The economy faces a crisis, but it has the strength and track record to bounce back. The UK still

remains a jolly good place to study, work, invest and live in.

---

\***Atul Singh** is the founder, CEO and editor-in-chief of Fair Observer. **Martin Plaut** is the former Africa editor of BBC World Service News.

---

## **Since the Start of the Pandemic, Americans Are Drinking Too Much**

Jennifer Wider  
February 3, 2022

---

**Over the course of the pandemic, alcohol use in the US has reached concerning levels.**

**O**ver the last two years, the United States witnessed a steep increase in alcohol use among adults. According to research from the Journal of the American Medical Association, those aged 30 and over experienced a 14% increase, with women seeing the steepest rise in heavy drinking — a whopping 41% during the pandemic. The research also highlighted the fact that overdose and relapse rates rose among those who had pre-existing addictive conditions.

There is a multitude of factors that contributed to the increase in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, anxiety and depression rose dramatically among the general population, and alcohol consumption often increases for those who use it as a way to cope.

“Stress and boredom likely were main drivers for a substantial increase in alcohol intake,” explains Dr. Jagpreet Chhatwal, associate director of the Massachusetts General Hospital’s Institute for Technology Assessment and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School.

---

Measures that were designed to help businesses stay afloat during the pandemic may have also affected drinking habits. According to Chhatwal, “cocktails-to-go laws that allowed customers to pick up mixed cocktails at local bars and direct-to-consumer laws that allowed liquor stores to deliver alcohol directly to homes” point to a potential link between access and consumption.

Regardless of the reason, these numbers are going to translate to significant morbidity and mortality rates for Americans in the future. According to new a study by researchers at Harvard’s Massachusetts General Hospital published in *Hepatology*, due to the pandemic uptick in alcohol use, there will be close to 20,000 cases of liver failure, 1,000 cases of liver cancer and 8,000 deaths over the next two decades.

Addressing this pressing issue will be complicated in a country that has long glamorized the use of alcohol among its population. From Super Bowl advertisements to film and music references, alcohol has long been associated with celebration, letting loose and having a good time. Consuming alcohol, even excessively, is normalized to the point that it is integrated into daily life on a regular basis: after-work happy hours, relaxing at home, birthdays, weddings, sporting events, etc. Alcohol has become so fused into the fabric of American society that in 2019, the industry was already worth over \$250 billion.

Putting a positive spin on alcohol is dangerous because it creates the mirage that there are no negative consequences on a person’s physical or mental health, which is both untrue and potentially harmful. “Not everyone is aware of the safe drinking limits or realizes when to stop,” says Chhatwal. Excessive drinking can cause a myriad of health problems including high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke, increase the risk for cancer, liver and GI problems, a weakened immune system, depression and anxiety as well as socialization issues and job loss.

In a country where more than 14 million American adults 18 years and older had a clinical alcohol use disorder, according to statistics from National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the challenge will be raising awareness, confronting a booming business model and reevaluating new laws that made alcohol more accessible during the pandemic.

In Chhatwal’s opinion, “One of the foremost steps is to create awareness about the risk of an increase in alcohol consumption, especially high-risk drinking among women and minority populations who are more vulnerable.” He also stressed the importance of enlisting primary care providers to do more extensive screening for alcohol consumption patterns. There is also an obligation to take a hard look at new laws: “We need to evaluate the effect of cocktail-to-go and direct-to-consumer laws — if such laws contribute to increased drinking then there is a need to make policy-level changes.”

---

\***Jennifer Wider**, MD, is a nationally renowned women’s health expert, author and radio host.

---

## **The Evolution of National Security in the UAE**

Mohammad Salami  
February 3, 2022

---

**Recent developments in the Middle East have shown the UAE that it can no longer rely on the US for national security as it has for decades.**

**T**he United Arab Emirates, a small and ambitious country in the Persian Gulf, faces a variety of security threats. Its geographic location puts it at the center of instability, sectarianism and regional rivalries in

---

the Middle East, which has led the country to pay particular attention to its security.

In recent years, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, especially the UAE, have recognized that trusting foreign governments, such as the United States, cannot offer them the best possible protection. The US has had a presence in the Persian Gulf since the 1990s and the Gulf Arab countries have relied on it to provide security. However, events in recent years have shown that the Gulf Arab states cannot rely solely on Washington.

Such developments include the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan amid the US withdrawal; the US pivot to Asia; the US retraction of most advanced missile defense systems and Patriot batteries from Saudi Arabia; and the lack of a US military response to threats, missile and drone attacks on Saudi oil bases by the Houthis in Yemen.

This has encouraged the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf to pursue security autonomy. The UAE, in particular, has sought to transform its strategy from dependence on the US and Saudi Arabia to a combination of self-reliance and multilateral cooperation.

### **Self-Reliance Security Strategy**

Although the UAE is an important ally of America in the Persian Gulf, over recent years, the US has sought to push the Emiratis toward security self-reliance. Sociopolitical events in the Middle East over the last decade following the Arab Spring of 2010-11 have made it clear to the UAE that the primary goal of ensuring national security, in addition to benefiting from international cooperation, should be the use of national facilities and resources.

Hosni Mubarak's ouster from Egypt during the Arab Spring protests and the reluctance of the US to defend him as an ally — which led to the rise of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood — further demonstrated to Abu Dhabi that it should not exclusively depend on the US for security assistance. Thus, the UAE began to develop a professional army.

The UAE's self-reliance strategy is divided into different branches, but most of all, its military security efforts have been given the highest priority. The UAE's determination to create an independent and professional military is evident from its years of investment in the defense industry.

Indeed, security is a top priority for the United Arab Emirates, and defense spending continues to make up a large portion of the national budget. The UAE's defense spending typically accounts for 11.1% to 14% of the total budget. In 2019, the UAE's defense spending was \$16.4 billion. This was 18% more than the 2018 budget of \$13.9 billion.

The UAE has invested heavily in the military sector and defense industry in recent years. In November 2019, the UAE formed the EDGE Group from a merger of 25 companies. The company has 12,000 employees and \$5 billion in total revenue. It is also among the top 25 advocacy groups in the world, ahead of firms such as Booz Allen Hamilton in the US and Rolls-Royce in the UK.

EDGE is structured around five clusters: platforms and systems, missiles and weapons, cyber defense, electronic warfare and intelligence, and mission support. It comprises several major UAE companies in the defense industry, such as ADSB (shipbuilding), Al Jasoor, NIMR (vehicles), SIGN4L (electronic warfare services) and ADASI (autonomous systems). The main goal of EDGE is to develop weapons to fight "hybrid warfare" and to bolster the UAE's defense against unconventional threats, focusing on electronic attacks and drones.

The UAE has also come up with detailed plans to improve the quality of its military personnel, spending large sums of money each year on training its military recruits in American colleges and war academies. It also founded the National Defense College; most of its students are citizens of the UAE, because of its independence in military training. In addition, in 2014, the UAE introduced general conscription for men between the ages of 18 and 30 to

---

increase numbers and strengthen national identity in its military. As a result, it gathered about 50,000 people in the first three years.

Contrary to traditional practice, the UAE's growing military power has made it eager to use force and hard power to protect its interests. The UAE stands ready to use military force anywhere in the region to contain Iran's growing influence and weaken Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Participating in the Yemeni War was a test of this strategy.

The UAE's military presence in Yemen began in March 2015. It sent a brigade of 3,000 troops to Yemen in August 2015, along with Saudi Arabia and a coalition of Arab countries. Over the past five years, the UAE has pursued an ambitious strategic agenda in the Red Sea, building military installations and securing control of the southern coasts of Yemen along the Arabian Sea in the Bab al-Mandab Strait and Socotra Island. Despite reducing its military footprints in Yemen in 2019, the UAE has consolidated itself in the southern regions. It has continued to finance and impart training to thousands of Yemeni fighters drafted from various groups like the Security Belt Forces, the Shabwani and Hadrami Elite Forces, Abu al-Abbas Brigade and the West Coast Forces.

The UAE's goal in adopting a self-reliance strategy is to increase strategic depth in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Thus, along with direct military presence or arms support for groups engaged in proxy wars, it affects the internal affairs of various countries in the region, such as Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt and Libya. With its influence, the UAE can turn the tide in its favor in certain areas.

### **Multilateralism Security Strategy**

The United Arab Emirates faces a variety of security challenges in the Middle East, and addressing them requires cooperation with other countries. Currently, the most significant security threats in the UAE are: countering Iranian threats and power in the Middle East, especially in Arab countries under Iranian influence, such as

Yemen, Syria and Lebanon; eliminating threats from terrorist groups and political Islam in the region, the most important of which — according to the UAE — is the Muslim Brotherhood; and economic threats and efforts to prepare for the post-oil world.

In its multilateral strategy, the UAE seeks to counter these threats with the help of other countries in the region or beyond. It has used soft power through investments or providing humanitarian aid, suggesting that economic cooperation is more important than political competition and intervention. In this regard, the UAE has cooperated with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Britain and France, as well as normalized relations with Israel.

On August 13, 2020, the UAE became the first Gulf state to normalize relations with Israel. The UAE's goal in normalizing relations with Israel is to counter threats from Iran and the region. The Abraham Accords have not only a security aspect, but also an economic one. Following the signing of the accords, on October 20, 2020, the US, Israel and the UAE announced the establishment of the Abraham Fund, a joint fund of \$3 billion “in private sector-led investment and development initiatives,” aimed at “promoting economic cooperation and prosperity.” In addition, it outlined a banking and finance memorandum between the largest banks in Israel and Dubai, and a joint bid between Dubai's DP World port operator and an Israeli shipping firm for the management of Israel's Haifa port.

Through the Abraham Accords, the United Arab Emirates seeks to invest and transfer Israeli technologies to the UAE through mutual agreements. The UAE has discovered that Israel is one of the bridges to the US economy and high technology. If the UAE intends to have an oil-free economy in the future, Israel may be the best option to achieve this by pursuing a strategy of multilateralization.

UAE relations with Turkey also have a multilateral dimension to reaching common security goals. The two countries had good

---

relations until the Arab Spring protests jeopardized ties between them. Abu Dhabi and Ankara began to defuse tensions after a phone call in August 2021 between UAE Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The nations mainly have differences around issues in Libya, Syria and Egypt. The UAE is trying to resolve its disputes with Turkey by investing in the country.

Turkey is the largest backer of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region. The Turks claim the UAE participated in the failed coup of July 2016 against the Turkish government.

Nonetheless, the UAE wants to end frictions with Turkey and has attracted Ankara by investing and increasing commercial ties. The Turkish lira has depreciated in recent years and Erdogan's popularity has plummeted due to mismanagement in Turkey. Erdogan will not miss this economic opportunity with the UAE and welcomes Emirati investments. In this way, the UAE will likely easily resolve its differences with Turkey.

The current tendency to use force is contrary to traditional Abu Dhabi policy, yet increasing the strategic depth of the UAE is one of Abu Dhabi's most achievable goals in its strategy of self-reliance.

This plan is the exact opposite of multilateralism. Unlike the use of force and hard power, Abu Dhabi seeks to achieve its objectives by using soft power, investment and humanitarian aid. In this situation, the tactical exploitation of economic cooperation takes precedence over political competition and military intervention in the region.

---

**\*Mohammad Salami** is a specialist in Middle Eastern policy, particularly in Syria, Iran, Yemen and the Persian Gulf region. He holds a PhD in International Relations.

---

## A Personal Boycott of the Beijing Olympic Games

Gary Grappo  
February 8, 2022

---

**Based on its charter, the IOC should have denied China's petition to host the 2022 Winter Games.**

**T**he International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the world's largest corporations are allowing the government of China to use the Winter Olympic Games to promote and advance its notion of the superiority of one-party, one-man authoritarian rule, much as was done at the 1936 Nazi-hosted Olympic Games in Berlin.

I'm boycotting these games in Beijing. Doing so does not come easy for me. As a life-long sports enthusiast, I have always looked forward to the Olympics. Watching the world's preeminent athletes compete on the world stage and rooting for my own national team and others who seem to defy the oddsmakers never failed to excite me. As a kid, I even once dreamed of becoming an Olympic competitor myself. (Alas, my 1.7-meter frame was simply not up to the task of throwing the shot put or discus on the world, or any other, stage!)

Here in the United States, NBC television is broadcasting the Winter Olympics, devoting at least six hours per day of coverage. Traditionally, its broadcasts dominate the ratings as Americans gather in front of their TV sets and computer and phone screens to watch and cheer on US athletes. I will be cheering on our athletes, too. But I won't be watching.

### The IOC's Charter

I will not watch these games because they betray the very values enshrined in the IOC's charter and its definition of "Olympism." That is, it "seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example,



---

social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.” It further states its goal “to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”

Based on its charter, the IOC should have flatly denied China’s petition to host the 2022 Winter Games. How could the IOC have been so blind to its values in awarding the games to Beijing? How was it possible to allow China to host the Olympic Games when the government of the People’s Republic of China has systematically persecuted, incarcerated, shackled and tortured up to 2 million Uyghurs, sterilized their women and sought to snuff out their Muslim faith? Uyghurs, a Muslim-majority, Turkic-speaking people, have inhabited China’s western Xinjiang province for at least 1,000 years.

But the suffering of the Uyghurs at the hands of an overbearing, intolerant Beijing isn’t a one-off. The Chinese have been doing largely the same thing for decades to the people of Tibet, effectively carrying out a campaign of cultural genocide.

Several years ago, the world again witnessed China’s notion of “respect for universal fundamental ethical principles” and “promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.” Beijing-directed henchmen attacked the people and institutions of Hong Kong, decimating the last vestiges of democracy in the enclave. The government has been arresting and trying any and all opponents, dissidents, journalists and human rights advocates unwilling to buckle under Beijing’s iron-fisted, authoritarian order.

More recently, the world has observed Beijing turn its aggression to the island of Taiwan, the lone democratic outpost today within China’s one-party, one-man “Asian Reich.” Taiwan presents an unquestionably complex and difficult issue. But the inhabitants of Taiwan have embraced democracy and the freedoms that come with it. Resolving Beijing’s differences with the island and its people with menacing and

aggressive behavior — dozens of mass warplane incursions, repeated threats and belligerent bombast — cannot possibly lead to a solution. Rather, a threatened invasion of the island would not only likely crush its democracy, but also inject enormous instability in Asia and torpedo the global economy in a manner unseen since World War II.

To the IOC, however, none of this mattered. Its president, Thomas Bach, and even UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres traveled to Beijing for the opening ceremony of the games with nary a word about China’s abysmal human rights policies in Xinjiang, Hong Kong or Tibet. Instead, the IOC wants to see another “successful” games, which typically means an Olympics that makes money. Lots of it.

### **The IOC, NBC and Sponsors**

Enter the American media giant, NBC. For exclusive broadcast rights to the Olympics through 2023, the network has paid the IOC \$7.75 billion. That comes out to roughly \$1.8 billion for the Beijing Games alone, or about 20% of the cost of the games. Tragically, revenues trump rights for China and for the IOC.

One would think that with that kind of leverage, NBC and the IOC’s numerous sponsors and advertisers — globally recognized names like Allianz, Toyota, Bridgestone, Panasonic, Coca-Cola, Airbnb, Intel, Proctor & Gamble, Visa, Samsung and others — would have stood up to the IOC, explaining the harm to their brands of awarding the games to Beijing.

And what about NBC itself? The Chinese government has imposed restrictions on journalists covering the games. The sort of 360-type coverage that is traditionally featured in its coverage of the Olympics — not just the events themselves but also the athletes, their lives and backgrounds, the host country and its people — is being severely restricted. One Dutch journalist has already experienced China’s intolerance, having been dragged away while reporting live on camera.

---

Are the dollar earnings so great that NBC will sacrifice its journalistic ethics and responsibilities, all while other members of the profession suffer under Beijing's crackdown on truth and free journalism?

China is not Nazi Germany. But Germany in 1936 was not yet the depraved hell of human suffering — the tens of millions of destroyed lives of Jews, Slavs, Roma and so many others — that it would become under Nazi rule. But we might have seen it, given the way the Nazis and Adolf Hitler engaged in over-the-top self-promotion and outward, sensational displays of Aryan superiority and Nazi rule.

The IOC, NBC and their many sponsors and advertisers have given China center stage to arrogantly parade and shamelessly hawk its own brand of unyielding, intolerant authoritarian rule. In China, the power of the state, its ruling Communist Party and great leader, XI Jinping, vitiate Olympism's concepts of "social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles" and "basic human dignity."

### **Boycott**

If they won't recognize this contemptible undertaking for what it is, I will. I will miss the world's best athletes and the great ritual of the world coming together for 17 days to celebrate individual struggle and achievement.

I won't be watching these Winter Olympic Games.

---

\***Gary Grappo** is a former US ambassador and a distinguished fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies at the Korbel School for International Studies, University of Denver. He is also the former chairman of Fair Observer.

---

## **The Taliban Use Violence Against Women as a Bargaining Chip**

Mohammad Zaki Farasoo  
February 11, 2022

---

**It is critical that Western powers support fundamental human rights in Afghanistan without providing the Taliban with opportunities for blackmail.**

**A**fter the collapse of the Afghan government last August, the only significant challenge to the Taliban's primitive totalitarianism was mounted by women in big cities — the capital Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif in the north, and Herat in the west, among others. The Taliban's approach to women's rights brought fears of violence that engulfed the country in the 1990s when the Taliban first won power. But Afghan society has undergone considerable changes since then, and many Afghan women refuse to accept the militants' restricted approach to their right to work and education.

In response, the Taliban have deployed various oppressive measures. In September, they replaced the Women's Affairs Ministry with morality police, which enforces the armed group's strict religious doctrine on the country. At the same time, while trying to confine women to their homes by forbidding them to work or study, the Taliban are using the threat of violence against women as a bargaining chip against the Western powers.

### **Violent Tactics**

In September last year, the Taliban attacked the media to prevent them from covering the women's protests in Kabul. Two Etilaatroz journalists were tortured. Etilaatroz is one of the leading Afghan newspapers and a critical voice mainly focused on investigative journalism. An attack on the newspaper was a clear signal for

---

everyone covering the protests against the Taliban.

Since the armed group took control of the country, at least 318 media outlets closed in 33 of 34 provinces and, according to the International Federation of Journalists, 72% of those who lost their jobs are women.

But the Taliban quickly changed their tactics to tackle women's protests through more intimidating methods, including nighttime house searches to locate those who dared raise their voice. Tamana Zaryabi Paryani, a member of the movement demanding rights to work and education, is just one of the women taken from their homes in Kabul in the middle of the night; her whereabouts remain unknown. Some families report being contacted by detainees from Taliban prisons in undisclosed locations.

The Taliban deny capturing, detaining or killing women and other opponents. This tactic aims to mislead public opinion, the media and policymakers in Western countries. The situation may be even more critical in the provinces, beyond the eyes of the media. In September last year, the Taliban killed a former police officer with the ousted Afghan government in front of her family in Gor province; she was pregnant at the time of her murder.

There is no way to assess the true number of disappeared women across the country. Some of them are known by the media, such Mursal Ayar, Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Tamana Paryani, Zahra Mohammadi and Alia Azizi. Most of them belong to the protest movement against the Taliban's policies. Azizi worked as a senior female prison official in Herat and went missing when the Taliban took control of the city. Amnesty International urged the Taliban to investigate the case and release her "immediately and unconditionally" if she is in their custody.

Last week, the UN repeated its call and asked the Taliban to release the disappeared women activists and their relatives. The German Embassy, currently operating from Qatar, has called for an investigation into the missing women. It is entirely possible that the Taliban

will eventually release some of the captives, claiming that they were rescued from the clutches of the kidnappers, in order to portray themselves as a responsible government.

Gang rape is another tactic that the Taliban deploy against women in detention. The Independent reports that last September, bodies of eight detainees arrested during a protest in Mazar-e Sharif were discovered. According to reports, the girls were repeatedly gang-raped and tortured by the Taliban. Sexual assault is a many-sided weapon against women in a society based on strict honor codes. Some of those who survived the rapes were killed by their families.

In January, The Times reported that the staff in the government-run Mazar-e Sharif Regional Hospital claim that they receive around 15 bodies from Taliban fighters each month — mostly women with gunshot wounds to the head or chest.

### **Bargaining Chip**

Violence has been the Taliban's primary tool both in war and during negotiations with Western powers. Over the course of two decades of conflict, the Taliban used violence as a means to win recognition as a political force. During their talks with the US and the Afghan government, the Taliban escalated violence to enhance their position at the negotiating table. Now, they are pursuing the same strategy by trading repression for recognition.

Since the Taliban took control of the country, women's rights are a constant subject of ongoing diplomatic discussions that have so far brought no result. The international community has failed to press the Taliban to form an inclusive government and respect women's rights.

But the armed group wants the international community to recognize their government. In January, a Taliban delegation was invited to Oslo to talk with Western powers and representatives of Afghan women for the first time. At the meeting, Hoda Khamosh, a civil society activist, asked the Taliban delegation: "why are the Taliban imprisoning us in Kabul and now sitting

---

here at the negotiating table with us in Oslo? What is the international community doing in the face of all this torture and repression?"

Since then, nothing has changed. The reality is that the Taliban used the talks in Oslo as an opportunity to make an international appearance to advertise their government. They are deploying precepts like women's rights to force more international engagement. While Norway was criticized for inviting the Taliban and offering them exposure, Switzerland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that it invited the Taliban to talk about "the protection of humanitarian actors and respect for human rights."

The Taliban is an ideological, zealot religious movement, and years of experience suggest that they are unlikely to revise their position on women's rights and other fundamental issues, including human rights and political pluralism. Talking about women's rights in Western capitals is just an opportunity for them to normalize their regime and travel abroad. Human rights violations, particularly violence against women, not only serve the Taliban's ideological purposes but have turned into a convenient bargaining chip against the international community.

It is critical that Western powers support fundamental human rights in the country without providing the Taliban with opportunities for blackmail, implementing realistic measures to press the group to release activists and to respect women's rights.

First, it is important to maintain or escalate the current sanctions regime against the Taliban leadership.

Second, making sure that there is no rush to recognize the Taliban regime among foreign governments is another key leverage point.

Third, there is a need to appoint a special rapporteur to monitor the human rights situation and document violations to hold the Taliban accountable. Fourth, it is important to extend and support the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to help monitor the human rights situation in the country.

Finally, the international community can continue its humanitarian support through UN agencies and other organizations without recognizing the Taliban. Recognition of the group will not only increase human rights abuses but will send the wrong signal to other extremists in the region. All these measures will reduce the Taliban's ability to use violence as a bargaining chip against the international community.

---

\***Mohammad Zaki Farasoo** is an Afghan freelance journalist.

---

## **Time for a Sober Look at the Ukraine Crisis**

Munir Saeed  
February 15, 2022

---

**Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the world drifted from a bipolar order that maintained decades of no major wars to a destructive unipolar system.**

**R**ecent wars and crises show us how dangerous it can be when dishonest political elites unite with a powerful media to direct an uninformed public. It might be difficult to comprehend the combination. But unfortunately, even tragically, that's exactly the combination that enabled wars to be launched in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and is now being used in the case of Ukraine.

Remember the Gulf of Tonkin lie? It cost more than 3 million Vietnamese their lives, murdered in cold blood, using the most lethal weapons American war industry could produce and sell. An identical modus operandi was used as recently as 2003 to start the Iraq War. The lies about Saddam Hussein's WMDs cost the lives of a million Iraqis, and counting. Last year, the US finally drew the curtain on its 20-year war in

---

Afghanistan, at a cost of over \$2.3 trillion and nearly 50,000 civilian lives. How is that possible? Because the public is ignorant and, therefore, easily fooled by decision-makers and powerful media.

### **Same Playbook**

It's the same playbook, again and again. The media refocus public attention from a country to a specific individual, presenting them as a bogeyman from whom the people are to be liberated. Now the war is not against a nation in which millions will die but against an individual. It's easy to turn your ignorant people against one person. In Vietnam, it was Ho Chi Minh, in Afghanistan, Mullah Omar and his Taliban, and Hussein in Iraq.

Take a look at the Ukrainian crisis: The conflict is not with Russia — it's with Vladimir Putin. The narrative is, will Putin invade? Why is Putin amassing his — not Russia's — army? The Russian president is the new bogeyman. And what do the nice people at NATO want? Just freedom for Ukraine to join NATO, which incidentally includes Kyiv's right to allow NATO armies to amass on its territory, on Russia's doorstep. How could there possibly be something wrong with that? Right? Wrong!

Here are some real thoughts for our domesticated friends on the other side of sobriety. It might even help free them from the confinements of their media and actually take a global, rather than a parochial, view of their problems.

Suppose Ukraine, after joining NATO, becomes emboldened and decides to challenge Russia (or is it Putin?) in Donbas or Crimea? Both have a sizeable Russian population and, like all of Ukraine and Russia, were part of the former Soviet Union. What will NATO do? Trigger Article 5 and embark on a direct military confrontation against Russia on Ukraine's side? Or will it unprecedentedly abandon a NATO member in war and risk breaking up the alliance, giving French President Emmanuel Macron's description of NATO more credence?

If war breaks out over Ukraine, as some never-seen-action, gung-ho rocking-chair warriors want, what will happen in Asia? What if China decides that the moment is right to take over Taiwan and the whole of the South China Sea? Will our Western warriors start a war with China while fighting Russia?

In the Middle East, where Washington's client states are on the run, will they be able to rely on American protection, which they desperately seem to need despite hundreds of billions spent on military hardware? What will happen if their regional adversaries decide to go full scale on them, creating a wider conflict across the Arab world because all hell has broken loose in Europe and the South China Sea?

And who is doing the actual saber-rattling? The leadership of major European countries — the front-line states — is scared, not by Russia invading Ukraine but of their own Anglo-Saxon war-mongering allies in London and Washington. The Europeans realize that these are the same people who pushed the world to disastrous wars repeatedly, killing countless millions but losing each one of these conflicts — unless, of course, the purpose of war is exclusively to kill and destroy.

Trusting these same people with decisions of war and peace is like using the same failed mindset and same failed plan but hoping for different results. This has never worked. It will never work.

### **Sitting on a Powder Keg**

These are realistic scenarios in a world sitting on a powder keg with everyone wanting to redraw geopolitical maps. Are these global ramifications even considered in the West? Does the public in the West even know or understand these global realities? The media there are busy entertaining the public with war scenarios and military hardware. No one is telling them that if the war starts; we will know where and when it started, but we won't know where or when it will stop. Of course, we will be able to estimate how

---

destructive it will be, assuming that it still matters.

The path to war is littered with bravado, brinkmanship and ego. We then lose control of events, and all that is required is a spark, or a single bullet, like the one that murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand and created an uncontrollable chain reaction leading to a war that killed 40 million people.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, we drifted from a bipolar world that maintained decades of no major wars to a destructive unipolar system of unstoppable wars and invasions. With the reemergence of Russia and the rise of China, we now see a tripolar world in the making, with a number of regional superpowers such as India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey coming into their own. There is no going back on this.

Attempts to prevent others from rising will only result in destructive wars. The sooner our friends across the big pond recognize and learn to coexist with that new world order, the better it is for everyone.

This is not to say their time is up, rather that time has come to share power, and they must accept that new reality. The alternative is disastrous. Germany tried to control the world and become its dictator. We know how that ended. Lessons learned — time for sobriety.

And here is a thought: Taking one's nation to the edge of the cliff requires brinkmanship. Taking a step back requires leadership.

---

**\*Munir A. Saeed** is the former president of TAWQ, a Yemeni nonpartisan pro-democracy movement. He is retired and currently lives in exile.

---

## The Radical Impact of Canada's Fringe Parties

Imogen Alessio & Dominic Alessio  
February 17, 2022

---

**The emergence of the People's Party of Canada has pointed a light at a potentially darker underbelly within the country's politics.**

**A**lthough fringe parties are generally “not considered very relevant,” they nevertheless mirror some of the dominant social or economic concerns of their times. One such fringe party that has risen to recent prominence on the Canadian political scene — particularly in the wake of its support for the anti-vaccine Freedom Convoy truck protest — yet remains otherwise neglected by academics and the international media is the People's Party of Canada (PPC). Formed in 2018 by Maxime Bernier, the PPC seeks to defend so-called “real conservative ideas” on the basis that the Conservative Party has become too moderate.

Indeed, as the Canadian truck protests spread across the globe, the PPC is of particular relevance given that Bernier has been quick to visit the protesters and become a vocal defender of their actions, calling upon Canadians to defend their *liberté*. Nevertheless, the PPC is also of interest for another reason, namely its detrimental impact in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections upon Canada's more moderate/center-right Conservative Party.

Consequently, two questions stand out from the growing significance of the PPC that have implications for fringe parties in general. First, could these parties ever evolve into mainstream political parties? Second, could they, as the Canada Guide suggests, “‘spoil’ races in very close elections by pulling votes away from other mainstream parties”?

---

## **Context: Fringe Parties in Canada**

Although there are currently five “major” political parties represented in the current Canadian House of Commons — the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party of Canada — at the time of the 2021 election there were some 17 eligible federal political parties registered. These 17 are often referred to as “fringe” parties because they have not secured electoral success, their party membership is small, they often only promote a single issue, and their supporters tend to be few and far between.

They can also be widely divergent. Some, such as the Communist Party of Canada, are of a leftist political persuasion and have been in existence for a century. Others, such as the Canadian Nationalist Party, have only been in existence for a short while and are of an extreme-right predisposition.

Nevertheless, labels such as “fringe” are open to debate. Indeed, the Green Party, for example, is theoretically the nation’s fifth major party. Yet at its height, it has only ever secured three seats in the Canadian Parliament in 2019 with 6.5% of the popular vote. Its parliamentary representation dropped to two seats in the 2021 election, with 2.3% of the national vote. In this context, it is not surprising that there is “no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a ‘fringe party.’”

In Canadian politics, it seems that success at the ballot box appears to be the nebulous cut-off point for differentiating between fringe and mainstream parties.

The example of the Green Party is again illustrative of this, as it went from being a fringe party to being a major one. Yet the 2.3% that the Greens received in 2021 was less than the nearly 5% the PPC won that same year. The fact that a so-called major party received a smaller share of the vote than an ostensible fringe party testifies to the problematic nature of the term “fringe.” Furthermore, it implies that the PPC could morph into a mainstream political force.

## **Radical Impact**

However, it is the second question relating to pulling votes from mainstream parties that presents the crux of this cautionary tale. Following the creation of the Reform Party of Canada in 1987, some had argued that it had split the anti-Liberal vote on the moderate conservative right. The same outcome is true in Britain, where there existed “a widespread willingness among current Conservative Party members in Britain to countenance voting for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).”

In order to evaluate the importance of the PPC to the Canadian landscape, it is vital to look at the party’s electoral impact. In the 2019 federal election, the PPC achieved a mere 1.6% of the popular vote. However, analysis by CBC news showed that “even with its dismal level of support — the PPC cost the Conservatives seven seats in the House of Commons by splitting the vote.”

Moreover, irrespective of the PPC’s election results, it is impressive that, in just over a year, Bernier “managed to create a new federal political party, found candidates to run in all of Canada’s 338 federal electoral districts and participated in all the televised pre-election leaders’ debates.” If Bernier achieved all of this within 12 months, what can he achieve within 12 years?

Although the PPC failed to win any seats in the 2021 federal election, the party’s share of the popular vote increased from 1.6% to 4.94%. The detrimental electoral significance of the PPC was recognized by the Conservative leader Erin O’Toole in the run-up to the election. Direct personal communication with a source within the PPC further underlined the threat that the party’s “presence on the ballot may have cost the Conservatives about 21 ridings in this year’s election.”

Given the failure of O’Toole to win in 2021, an additional significant outcome of the emergence of the PPC is that the Conservative Party could face pressure to move further to the right in order to win a greater share of the popular

---

vote. Indeed, O'Toole's leadership position immediately came under threat by far-right elements within his own party on the grounds that he was too moderate. By February 2022, he was removed from the party's leadership.

Although the PPC remains a so-called fringe party, this is not to deny its impact. It was responsible for sometimes splitting the center-right vote and contributing to the Liberal Party's success, as well as now possibly helping to force the Conservative Party into a more radically right-wing direction. Indeed, some contenders for O'Toole's now-vacant seat as party leader have also started to speak out in support of the convoy. However, it is also worth noting that the PPC's electoral impact might not necessarily be the beginning of a new trend.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented Bernier with the opportunity to appeal to an outlier proportion of the population which, without the PPC, might not have had a sympathetic ear in Parliament — anti-vaxxers and anyone vehemently opposed to health measures instituted to contain the pandemic. Although the majority of Canada's population champion vaccines, mask-wearing and similar public health measures, the fact that the PPC was the only political party opposed to vaccine passports allowed it to generate additional support from this cohort that accounts for 8%-10% of the population.

This support is further demonstrated by the fact that the PPC did best in those provinces with the lowest vaccination rates, namely Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The PPC's anti-lockdown rhetoric and strong stance against Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's vaccine mandates were, therefore, partly responsible for its rise in the polls, as suggested by some academic experts who state that "Historically, populism ... tends to appear in times of crises."

### **Ideological Impacts**

The PPC has not only had a tangible impact on Canadian politics, but also an ideological one. Canada has traditionally been seen as "immune to

the outbreak of right-wing populism observed in other established western democracies." That is, until now, as Republican figures such as Ted Cruz and Donald Trump praise the actions of the Ottawa protesters and denounce Trudeau as a "far left lunatic."

Bernier's campaign manifestos of 2019 and 2021 also look similar to populist and nationalist counterparts elsewhere, namely UKIP and the Republican Party under Donald Trump in the US. The PPC manifesto, for instance, states its opposition to climate change policies ("Withdraw from the Paris Accord and abandon unrealistic greenhouse gas emission reduction targets"); commitment to end to Canada's participation in global institutions ("Withdraw from all UN commitments"); and xenophobic resentment in its anti-immigration plans ("Substantially lower the total number of immigrants and refugees Canada accept every year").

A noteworthy addition to the PPC's 2021 manifesto that also has echoes of other nationalist/populist party positions is its consideration of race. In the lead-up to the 2021 federal election, the mainstream parties focused on the economic and political rights of indigenous peoples following the uncovering of unmarked graves of hundreds of indigenous children on the properties of former residential schools. The PPC, by contrast, went in the opposite direction and instead looked to repeal the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which aims to not only preserve but enhance multiculturalism in Canada.

This, in addition to the PPC's call to reduce the number of immigrants, contradicts a widely-held belief that "nativism has become impossible, even unthinkable, for a competitive political party in Canada today." It is for this reason that "Bernier's embrace of radical right-wing populism has heightened concerns about the importation of Trumpism and other far right ideologies into mainstream Canadian politics."

The emergence of the PPC has pointed a light at a potentially darker underbelly within Canadian politics, one that may demonstrate



---

violent sentiments. The throwing of gravel at Trudeau during the 2021 election campaign by the former PPC president of the London Riding Association is a case in point.

The potential political impact of the PPC is undeniable. At a theoretical level, it points to a need to consider the importance of fringe parties in discussions of Canadian politics in general. The PPC also stands as a bellwether, representing a potential future trend. Furthermore, the party is significant as it has had a detrimental impact on the electoral success of the Conservative Party and possibly its future direction of travel.

Most concerning, however, is its ideological impact. As David Moscrop posits in *Global News*, “The People’s Party of Canada has become a rallying point for extremists who existed before it did, but who now have an organisational anchor and home.”

---

\***Imogen Alessio** is studying for a BA in History and Political Science at McGill University in Canada. **Dominic Alessio** is a professor of history and the vice-president of international programs at Richmond, the American International University in London.

---

## Ukraine’s Tug of War and the Implications for Europe

Peter Isackson  
February 23, 2022

---

**It cannot yet be called the invasion Biden predicted, but it will soon become a test of the West’s solidarity.**

**O**n Monday evening in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a long, emotional presentation of all the historical reasons for which Russia’s sense of betrayal by interests in the West justified

declaring two regions of eastern Ukraine autonomous political entities, implicitly compromising the territorial integrity of an independent nation.

Putin’s argument reflected more than a simple statement of preferences. His action, decreeing the autonomy of Donetsk and Luhansk and subsequently sending Russian troops to protect them, literally violated international law as it is understood and practiced today. It provoked immediate condemnation from all sides and a round of previously promised sanctions from the United States and Europe. It stood, nevertheless, as a sincere statement of historical fears not just of the Russian government, but also the Russian people, who have had three decades to define their appreciation of the nature of Western political and economic domination.

In the aftermath of Monday’s events, Al Jazeera helpfully listed “5 things we need to know about Putin’s decision.” After briefly mentioning Russia’s demands concerning NATO, the article notes that “Western leaders have rejected those demands. They say the Kremlin cannot be allowed an effective veto on Kyiv’s foreign policy decisions and have defended NATO’s ‘open-door policy,’ which grants any European nation the right to ask to join.”

The Western position relies on accepting a basic principle of international law as it is understood in the age of the nation-state: the notion of sovereignty. The Cambridge dictionary defines it as “the power of a country to control its own government” and alternatively as “the power or authority to rule.” The Oxford Public International Law website, in its first paragraph, notes, with considerably more precision, that “sovereignty, ie of supreme authority within a territory, is a pivotal principle of modern international law. What counts as sovereignty depends on the nature and structure of the international legal order and vice-versa.” In other words, the concept contains a lot of ambiguity.

In paragraph 156 of the same article, thousands of words later, we discover that the preceding 155 paragraphs have not clarified the

---

issue. “Difficult questions,” it concludes, “pertain to the localization of the co-originality between international standards of human rights and democracy and hence to the relationship between them when either of them or both have their sources in international law.” In other words, as any well-informed farmer in Iowa might say, it just ain’t that easy to draw any cut-and-dried conclusions.

East Coast American jurists have, nevertheless, decided that on the question of NATO, Ukraine’s sovereignty — even after the Minsk accords, which, as Putin complains, have never been truly applied — includes the right to select the partners with which it wishes to ally. The lawyers are technically correct to note that if Russia succeeded in preventing Ukraine from joining NATO, that would be a breach of Ukrainian sovereignty. Al Jazeera describes it as giving Russia “an effective veto.”

The Russians see it differently. And the Americans would probably secretly agree. As a member of NATO, nations compromise their sovereignty by giving the alliance — clearly led by the US — an “effective veto” in many facets of their own security policy, even, to some extent, in their internal politics. But none of that is official. It is merely “effective.” The European nations, especially France and Germany, have discovered and begun reacting to the nature of that effective veto. There have been signs that they are beginning to champ at the bit. But in the current crisis, they have agreed to remain in line.

Depending on how the crisis plays out, the stirrings of a movement toward the independence of Europe’s security with regard to the US are likely to grow into a serious project. Those stirrings were first prompted by Donald Trump’s ambiguous attitude toward NATO and hostile attitude toward Europe. More recently, French President Emmanuel Macron has pushed the idea forward, specifically in response to the growing Ukraine crisis.

There is no telling at this point in which direction the crisis will evolve. It could degenerate into a local struggle for power or it

could implicate the political future of Ukraine and beyond. If it does spread beyond its current borders and if, as a further consequence, that aggravates an already existing energy crisis due to Europe’s dependence on Russian natural gas, the current sense of solidarity with the US accepted by many European nations will be further weakened, if not shattered.

For the moment, US President Joe Biden may be focused more on the kind of strongman posturing deemed necessary for improving the chances of the Democratic Party in November’s midterm elections. At the same time, he is certainly hoping to keep Europe in tow inside NATO. But if things get out of control, and Biden’s posturing has already aggravated that risk, the United States may in the end lose the “effective veto” it has exercised for decades over everything that happens in Europe.

---

\***Peter Isackson** is the chief strategy officer at Fair Observer, an author and media producer.

---

## **Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Is a Wake-Up Call for Germany**

Hans-Georg Betz  
February 28, 2022

---

**Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, dreams and illusions give way to a new realism in Germany.**

**A**nyone who has ever studied international relations in the United States has been exposed to the so-called Melian dialogue. The Melian dialogue refers to an episode in the Peloponnesian War, pitting the representative of Melos, a small island, against the representatives of Athens. The Athenians, engaged in a war with Sparta, demanded that the Melians submit to their

---

power, join their side and, in the process, get absorbed into the Athenian empire.

In case the Melians refused, the Athenians threatened with complete destruction. The Melians did refuse, pointing out that justice was on their side. In response, the Athenians laid siege on the island, took its main city and, after its surrender, killed every surviving male and sold the women and children into slavery.

### **Exigencies of Defense**

One of the central points of the Melian dialogue is the notion that might makes right, or, as the Athenians put it, “you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” It is a prime example of what in international relations theory is known as realism. Over the past few decades, realism has gone out of fashion, especially in Western Europe — and for good reason. Nobody is eager to live in a Hobbesian world where life is “nasty, brutish and short” — in Western Europe, nobody more so than the Germans.

This, of course, has had a lot to do with Berlin’s position during the Cold War, when Germany was, as the prominent German-American political scientist Peter Katzenstein put it, a semi-sovereign state. During the Cold War period, the Federal Republic of Germany pursued a number of strategies that marked a fundamental break with realism: toward its neighbors to the west, a process of economic integration; toward its neighbors to the east (particularly Poland) a policy of *détente* and reconciliation, which came to be known as *Ostpolitik*.

The idea behind *Ostpolitik* was that rapprochement would ultimately lead to change — *Wandel durch Annäherung*. When, in 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, it appeared that the policy had worked.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was soon followed by the crumbling of the Soviet Union and German unification, which meant that Germany had finally regained its sovereignty — somewhat

of a troubling reality, and not only among Germany’s neighbors. In Germany, too, not a few people were worried. They shouldn’t have been. Germany was perfectly adapted to the new times where the “overwhelming exigencies of defence” appeared to have disappeared and where, as the then German minister of defense would put it in 1999, Germany, for the first time in its history, was “only surrounded by friends.”

The end of the Cold War appeared to have ushered in a fundamentally new global reality, informed by interdependence, globalization and the end of history. Here, Germany was poised to play a prominent role as the epitome of a “trading state” and a “civilian power.”

Civilian powers such as Germany rely on what the American international relations theorist Joseph Nye famously called soft power. Soft power comes from the appeal of consumer products (all those sleek BMWs and Mercedes Benzes) and popular culture (TV series like “Derrick” and Bundesliga clubs Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund with their millions of fans all over the world), rather than from the barrel of the gun.

Civilian powers scale down their military. After all, a country surrounded by friends has little use for a military that is up to the task of defending the country. Instead, they are tempted to follow the lead of the Danish Progress party whose late leader proposed in the early 1970s to replace the country’s ministry of defense with an answering machine with the recorded message of “We surrender” in Russian.

### **Mugged by Reality**

On February 24, Germany got mugged by reality and was caught flat-footed. In the face of a Melian scenario, Germany is like the emperor with his new clothes. Over the recent days, a growing number of articles have appeared exposing the sorry state of the German military and lamenting its lack of preparedness. Some of the stories would make for great slapstick comedy were they not describing a pathetic reality.

---

The German soldiers stationed in Lithuania, for instance, not only lack warm jackets but even underwear, or so Germany's defense ombudsperson has charged. At the same time, the commander of Germany's army went public, stating that the military "stands more or less naked." His remarks led France's center-left daily Liberation to claim that "the generals of the Bundeswehr were ready to lay down the arms at the first Russian attack." Another French newspaper charged that the German military, because of "deficient gear and the lack of flexibility of its soldiers," was not in a position to efficiently support its allies in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

None of this is new. It has all been known for years. In late 2018, for instance, Germany's weekly Die Zeit raised alarm noting that only a third of the new tanks, fighter jets and helicopters the military had received were ready to use. Four years later, one of Germany's major dailies, the Süddeutsche Zeitung, reported that the military continued to suffer from massive problems. The German navy, for instance, could count on less than 30% of its ships to be completely ready for action.

A few days before the Russian invasion on February 24, the Ukrainian government asked the Germans for anti-tank missile systems. Berlin declined. The reason is simple: Even if it had wanted to, Germany would not be in a position to supply the weapons — they were not available.

No matter the outcome of the war in Ukraine, Germany will be collateral damage. For too long, the Germans have believed that interdependence and constructive engagement would fundamentally change international relations. This view, however, is based on theoretical constructs that ignore some of the fundamentals informing international relations: the legacy of history and, closely linked to it, emotions. Europe's history abounds with grievances and resentment, more often than not triggering intense passions. The Balkan wars of the 1990s should have served as a reminder. Instead, they were dismissed as a remnant of a bygone era.

There is another lesson to be drawn from this disaster. A few years ago, two American political scientists coined the phrase "weaponizing interdependence." The authors used network theory to explain how "coercing actors could exploit interdependence and why targeted actors would find it difficult to evade coercion attempts." Germany is a textbook case. For decades now, it has increased its dependence on Russian inputs, particularly natural gas and oil.

The controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline is only the latest example of this. Dependence on Russian commodities was once again informed by the same belief in the power of interdependence to engage the other side in a way beneficial to both. But, once again, the whole thing is in shambles, and Germany is caught in the trap largely of its own making.

### **Time for a Change**

But the times there are changing, and rapidly so. Over the weekend, Germany agreed to cut Russian banks off from the SWIFT payment system, announced it would deliver anti-tank missiles to Ukraine (leaving some observers wondering how they suddenly materialized) and sent a military contingent to be stationed in Slovakia.

What is much more significant, however, is the fundamental change in tone with regard to Russia, its assault on Ukraine and Germany's response. The two parties that in the past have been most indulgent toward Vladimir Putin's regime, the Social Democrats and the Left, have made a complete volte-face, condemning Moscow's aggression.

At the same time, there has been growing recognition on the side of Germany's left-wing intellectuals that the "times of illusion" are over, that the notion of "wehrhafte Demokratie" — a democracy that can defend itself — only has meaning if it is backed by real forces, and that this will require not only resources but a fundamental change of mindset. The reality is that Germany's allies will no longer allow Germans to evoke the horrors of the Nazi regime

---

as an explanation for their neglecting its defensive capabilities.

Given the new geostrategic realities, what Western Europe needs, and desperately so, is a strong German military. It must be relieved that on Sunday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced an allocation of €100 billion (\$112 billion) toward the 2022 military budget, aiming to raise defense spending to over 2% of GDP set out in NATO guidelines going forward; last year, it stood at 1.53%.

Finally, it seems to dawn in Germany that Putin's aggression is driven as much by historical revisionism and revanchism as by the boundless drive to snuff out and eradicate Ukraine's civil society and democratic spirit, turning it into a second Belarus, a Russia en miniature. It is hardly a coincidence that the invasion of Ukraine started almost to the day of the anniversary of the end of Viktor Yanukovich's pro-Moscow regime in February 2014.

The only one who has remained steadfast in his Putinophilism is former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who has always prided himself in his close relationship with the Russian autocrat. Whereas Austria's ex-chancellor, Christian Kern, and the former French premier, François Fillon, resigned from lucrative posts on the boards of Russian enterprises, Schröder refused to follow suit, much to the embarrassment of the German Social Democrats.

But then, Schröder belongs to the same generation as the Putins, Trumps and Xis of this world, old men living in an alternative reality who would like nothing more than to turn back the clock. In Germany, at least, dreams and illusions have given way to a new realism, one that is likely to have profound repercussions not only for Germany but for Europe in general.

---

\***Hans-Georg Betz** is an adjunct professor of political science at the University of Zurich.\

---