

Fair Observer

Monthly



August 2017

FAIR OBSERVER[®]

Fair Observer Monthly



August 2017

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International Standard Serial Number (ISSN): 2372-9112

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ABOUT FAIR OBSERVER

Fair Observer is a US-based nonprofit media organization that aims to inform and educate global citizens of today and tomorrow. We publish a crowdsourced multimedia journal that provides a 360° view to help you make sense of the world. We also conduct educational and training programs for students, young professionals and business executives on subjects like journalism, geopolitics, the global economy, diversity and more.

We provide context, analysis and multiple perspectives on world news, politics, economics, business and culture. Our multimedia journal is recognized by the US Library of Congress with International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) 2372-9112.

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20 Years After Diana, Princess of Wales

Ellis Cashmore
August 1, 2017

Even the most sober account of her life and death seems like a fairytale that got out of hand.

In March 1982, there was a charity preview of the Lillian Hellman play *The Little Foxes* at London's Victoria Palace. The star of the show was Elizabeth Taylor, playing her first full stage role.

Making a late entry into the theater's Royal Box was Diana, Princess of Wales, then pregnant with her first child. "It seemed impossible that anyone would ever manage to upstage the Princess of Wales, but in the last two weeks, a 50-year-old woman with a turbulent past and an uncertain future has succeeded in doing so," advised R.W. Apple Jr. of *The New York Times*.

It was the last time anyone would upstage Diana. She would blaze her way transcendently into history, mainly through her charity work and her media appearances, but also because of her troubled, loveless marriage. Diana was a kind of heiress apparent to Taylor: fame and notoriety overlaid and invaded both of their lives. If Taylor created what film critic Dave Kehr calls "a new

category of celebrity," Diana became its distillation.

Apple Jr. described how Taylor's arrival in London two weeks before the preview "prompted a riot among news photographers" and that her every move from that point had been chronicled by the British media. He was writing for a New York newspaper, of course. Four years later, when Diana made her entrance to the US, the scenes were comparable.

Diana swept into Washington, DC, to attend a gala dinner at the invitation of President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy in 1985. She mixed with movie stars and politicians, danced with John Travolta while Americans watched in rapture. Diana had her critics, but the unseen emotions she seemed to radiate had powerful effects. To her countless acolytes she was a force of nature, animating the spirits of whomever she touched, bringing vitality to wherever she traveled. Twelve years later, she was gone.

LADY SPENCER

Diana had married Prince Charles in 1981. She was divorced in 1996, the year before her death. Long before that, Diana had reconciled herself to being unique and unrivaled as the paparazzi's

favorite subject. Up till her arrival, interest in the British royal family had for long been largely reverential. Onlookers were exactly that: detached observers, watching as subjects rather than participants. Only Queen Elizabeth's sister, Princess Margaret, induced a more involved curiosity — her trysting occupying the paparazzi, though without sending them into frenzy as Diana did.

Born in 1961 at Park House, the home that her parents rented on Queen Elizabeth II's Sandringham estate, Diana was the third child of Edward John Spencer, Viscount Althorn, heir to the seventh Earl Spencer, and his first wife Frances Ruth Burke Roche, daughter of the fourth Baron of Fermoy. So, her aristocratic credentials were sound.

She became Lady Diana Spencer in 1975, when her father became an earl. Returning to England after finishing school in Switzerland, Diana grew close to Prince Charles. They announced their engagement in February 1981 and married later that year. The wedding ceremony was televised globally. Their first child, William, was born in 1982 and their second, Henry, or Harry as he was to become known, in 1984.

Over the next eight years, interest in Diana went global. Already the most

admired and, perhaps, accepted member of the royal family, she contrived to remain imperious while developing a common touch. Time and again, people would testify that “she touched me” even though they might never have met her or seen her in the flesh. There was a tangible quality not so much in her presence, but in even her sheer image. And this was made possible by exhaustive media coverage that occasionally, in fact once too often, became dangerously invasive.

Diana was a beautiful, yet lonely princess imprisoned in a loveless marriage with a prince whose suspected infidelity with an older and less attractive woman was the talk of the court. Trapped and with no apparent escape route, she seemed defenseless against a powerful and uncaring royal family. Diana made an enchanting victim, a vision of mistreated womanhood smiling serenely at her millions of faithful followers.

Her popularity seemed to grow in inverse proportion to that of her husband. Diana threw herself into charitable work and aligned herself with great causes, visiting people living with AIDS, children in hospitals and other sufferers, all of whom responded empathically. People, especially women, from everywhere were drawn to

someone who, in her silence, seemed to speak for everyone.

WORST KEPT SECRET

The separation was one of those worst kept secrets. When it was finally announced in 1992, both Diana and Charles continued to carry out their royal duties. They jointly participated in raising the two children. Diana continued with her charitable endeavors, attracting battalions of photojournalists wherever she went. If there was a high point during this period, it came in January 1997 when, as an International Red Cross VIP volunteer, she visited Angola to talk to landmine survivors. Pictures of Diana in a helmet and flak jacket were among the most dramatic images of the late 20th century. In August, she traveled to Bosnia, again to visit survivors of landmine explosions. From there she went to see her companion, Dodi al-Fayed, in France.

Late in the evening of August 30, 1997, Diana and al-Fayed, their driver and bodyguard left The Ritz hotel in Place Vendôme, Paris and drove along the north bank of the Seine. Ever vigilant, the media were soon alerted and pursued the Mercedes in which the party was traveling. Remember, by 1997, Diana's every movement was closely monitored. Interest in every

aspect of her life was genuinely global. Not only was she fêted the world over, she was inspected too. At 25 minutes past midnight, nine vehicles carrying the media and a single motorcycle followed Diana and al-Fayed into an underpass below the Place de la Mairie. As the Mercedes sped away from the pursuing pack, it clipped a wall and veered to the left, colliding with a supporting pillar before spinning to a halt.

There followed a few moments while the chasing photographers paused to consider their options. Inside the wrecked Mercedes were four motionless bodies, including that of the world's most famous, most esteemed, most adored, most treasured and most celebrated woman. Photos of the wreckage would be hard currency. But to delay helping her and her fellow travelers might jeopardize their chances of survival. The paparazzi took their shots.

Diana was still alive when she was freed and rushed by ambulance to a nearby hospital. Attempts to save her life were futile and, at 4am, doctors pronounced her dead. Of the Mercedes passengers, only Trevor Rees-Jones, al-Fayed's bodyguard, survived. None of the others were wearing seat belts. It was later revealed that the chauffeur, Henri Paul,

had been drinking earlier in the evening. The media people were cleared.

OUTPOURING OF EMOTION

There followed the most extraordinary expression of public grief ever. This is unarguable: The scale, scope and intensity of the response to her death distinguished it from any comparable manifestation of sorrow. The response to Diana's death is usually described as an "outpouring of emotion," suggesting an unrestrained expression of heartfelt grief all over the world. In the days leading up to her funeral on September 6, over a million people flocked to pay their last respects, many leaving bouquets at her London home at Kensington Palace. Her funeral attracted 3 million mourners who cast flowers along the entire length of the journey. A global television audience of 26 million watched the day's events.

A foretaste of the exploitability of Diana came when the first issue of *Time* magazine following her death sold 750,000 more copies than usual. Sales of a commemorative issue exceeded 1.2 million. The *National Enquirer*, in a somewhat hypocritical gesture, refused to publish pictures of Diana's death scene, despite having headlined a cover story the week

before, "Di Goes Sex Mad." The copies were pulled from the newsstands.

Then came the merchandise. A planned comic book featuring Diana raised from the dead and invested with superpowers and entitled (following the James Bond movie) *Di Another Day* was ditched by Marvel Comics amid protest. But less offensive products such as statuettes, decorative plates and Cindy-like dolls began to appear on the shelves within months of the tragedy. The near-inevitable conspiracy theories surrounding the death were equal to those of the moon landing, the JFK assassination or 9/11.

More rational attributions of blame centered on the chasing pack of paparazzi. Diana's brother, the Earl of Spencer, offered this view: "I always believed the press would kill her in the end. Every proprietor and editor of every publication that has paid for intrusive and exploitative photographs of her, encouraging greedy and ruthless individuals to risk everything in pursuit of Diana's image, has blood on his hands."

If the paparazzi had not been so voracious in their attempts to track down Diana, they would not have pursued her car so heedlessly. So went the argument. Few wanted to extend that same argument further. If they had, they

would have concluded that the paparazzi were motivated by money offered by media corporations that could sell publications in their millions to consumers, whose thirst for pictures and stories of Diana seemed unquenchable. In the event, the photographers were cleared of any wrongdoing by a French court in 1999. The fact remains: All parties, from the paparazzi to the fans, were connected as if by invisible thread. And then something interesting happened.

NARRATIVE TRANSFORMATION

The audience not only watched the Diana fairytale reach its denouement, but saw themselves as bit part players in that same fairytale. This narrative transformation was both revealing and concealing. The media's part in the death of Diana might have been laid bare, but audiences' complicity, though recognized, was left unexamined, at least not in a deep or critical sense. While audiences might have agreed with the Earl of Spencer and condemned the media, they rewarded them with high sales and record viewing figures.

Perhaps transformation overstates the change. Anyone who was aware of Diana — and it's difficult to imagine anyone who was not — was forced to inspect the way in which news values

had been subverted by entertainment values. After all, Diana's greatest triumph was not so much in ushering in world peace or saving the planet, but in offering so much pleasure to so many people.

Yet the inspection was momentary. It did not bring to an end the gathering interest in figures who, like Diana, offered pleasure while presenting absolutely nothing that would materially alter their lives or the lives of any other living thing. The interest in recognizable people was probably interrupted by Diana's death. Then, after a spell of earnest introspection and critical evaluation of the media, the interest resumed.

In the 1960s, when Elizabeth Taylor was the world's most famous, most scandalous and perhaps most revered woman, the most adventurous clairvoyant would have been hard pressed to predict the tumult of interest in Diana. Diana was news: not just what she was doing or saying or even wearing; people seemed to gasp in wonder at the very mention of her name.

Something happened. Not to Diana, but to *us*. We, the living human beings who attributed her with so much celestial power, were the ones who changed. And, after her death, we would go on

changing. Following the death of Diana and al-Fayed, *Time* magazine writer Margaret Carlson observed: “By the time of the couple’s dinner at Paris’ Ritz Hotel, the rules of engagement sometimes observed between the photo hounds and the princess had gone completely by the board, as the street value of a grainy shot of Diana with al Fayed reached six figures.”

Carlson’s phrase carries connotations of the principles that bind the actions of parties involved in some sort of conflict or competition. That was not the case here, though the circumstances of Diana’s death certainly had the elements of opposition. Carlson’s point is that “the run-ins between celebrities and those who take pictures of them are growing increasingly ugly.”

The paparazzi were not exactly received with open arms by stars of the 1960s, but they became parties to an initially uneasy accommodation, which later became symbiotic, benefiting both.

The glare may have tormented Diana, but her children, William and Harry, learned to live with it, both in their different ways, responding to an environment populated by an expanding number new species of the paparazzi genus.

There were other evolutionary diversifications. For example, the *National Enquirer* and other tabloids with their relentless focus on the exploits of famous personalities were reducing the scope of world events to individuals. We, in turn, became habituated to a softening of news in which entertainment — and I use this in its widest sense: anything that amuses or occupies us agreeably — became an increasingly large staple in our intellectual diets. Our interest in politics took on a personal focus, as we were drawn to politicians as much if not more than their politics.

We started to understand the world through people rather than events, processes or actions. Interest that, in the 1960s and perhaps 1970s, would have been seen as unwholesome or downright salacious became much more commonplace. The scandals precipitated by Taylor’s affairs may not have started this, but Diana’s emergence was the single most important episode in the transition to a culture in which almost everything we knew arrived via the media and everything we did was designed to take us closer to a life of endless novelty, pleasure and consumption.

As celebrities go, Diana was ne plus ultra — the highest form of such a

being. No woman or man had ever commanded such reverence, respect and collective love from such a wide constituency, in her case the world. Even the most sober account of her life and death seems like a fairytale that got out of hand. It has the staples of love and death, as well as liberation, tragedy and immortality. Like most great fairytales, its central motif was transformation.

As raggedy servants are transformed into glass-slippered belles of the ball, and sleeping beauties are awakened by the kiss of handsome princes, Diana was changed from ingénue kindergarten teacher in a London school to the nearest the 20th century had to a goddess.



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Why the Nirbhaya Verdict Will Not Deter Rape in India

Ankita Mukhopadhyay

August 6, 2017

Capital punishment is not a deterrent for India's rape culture.

In May, India waited with bated breath for the verdict on one of the most brutal and horrifying cases in the nation's recent history: the gang rape that led to the death of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh Pandey, who earned the moniker "Nirbhaya" (fearless).

While the outcome was what most people expected — the Supreme Court of India upheld the death sentence for the four accused — what raised a debate was the way the court approached the verdict. In sentencing the perpetrators to death by hanging, the judges called Jyoti Singh's case "rarest of the rare," and hoped that the verdict would speed up the process of justice for other rape victims and survivors.

Jyoti Singh and her family got justice after five years in an extremely rusty Indian judicial system that has more

cases to solve than lawyers to solve them. But has her verdict really changed things in India?

A few days after the verdict, a 20-year-old woman was gang raped in Rohtak, in the northern Indian state of Haryana; her head was smashed to pieces, her body crushed under a car. In July, a 16-year-old girl was brutally gang raped and murdered in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. Protests erupted across the state after the incident, with police stations burnt down in outpouring of anger.

Despite general awareness about how heinous rape is, punishment is not deterring the crime. Women still get gawked at, stared at and harassed in urban and rural cities alike. India's economy is developing at a rapid pace, but the social problems are yet to be solved. Despite increasing foreign direct investment and the creation of more industries, women all across the country continue to feel scared to venture out at night.

Women continue to be more likely to remain illiterate and drop out of schools, while patriarchy continues unabated in Indian households. Girls are killed before they are born (a study by The Lancet estimated that 12 million female fetuses were aborted between 1980 and

2010), and if they are born, they are subjected to a life of subservience to the overarching male figure in the family.

Patriarchy needs to be dissolved at the root, from within the familial system. It's no surprise that the prominent owner of a popular magazine can digitally rape a woman in a lift of a hotel, since consent as a term is hardly taught to men in Indian society. Marital rape still goes unnoticed, as the law states that only forced sex on women over the age of 15 can be considered a crime. This rules out child marriages. According to India's 2011 census data, a shocking 12 million child marriages were recorded in the country.

WHY INDIA NEEDS A FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Jyoti Singh's case was not the rarest of the rare. The degree of violence toward a rape victim should not be the gold standard for issuing capital punishment. However, this does not mean popular opinion should be discarded in such cases. Rather, the punishment for rape should be made harsher than a life sentence, to factor in other rape cases that are currently pending in the courts.

Rape cases are being reported in Indian media more widely than ever before. Every day seems to be bring more

horror, with neither nuns, children nor babies being spared the wrath of rape. It is time now, more than ever before, to let ethics and feminist values permeate the Indian classroom — a building block for children’s ethical consciousness. Remedial classes in prisons and feminist teachings in schools and colleges need to be introduced with immediate effect.

Indian feminism is commonly looked at as a strand of Western feminism, one that does not fit into the “standards” and particularities of Indian society. More than a foreign concept, the use of feminism needs to be understood first. Feminism is about equality across all genders. It is about viewing people as human before anything else.

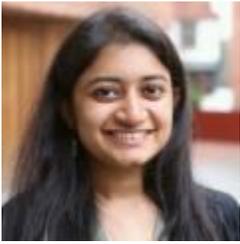
Strong-headed women with opinions are treated as anomalies in Indian societies and feminists are shunned for their “radical” opinions. The Indian concept of tradition is restricting women and creating more barriers around them. Little or no interaction between genders and viewing rape as an attack on a woman’s “honor” are just some of the myriad problems behind the psychology of rape.

Rape is a continuing problem across the world, but that doesn’t mean the system

should give up on working to prevent it. India needs to accept the innate problem it has with patriarchy and conduct an in-depth analysis of the areas, age groups and social sectors rapists belong to before proceeding with further law-making. The situation on the ground needs to improve.

Petty regional politics and bad administration are letting crime go unchecked. Corruption within the police in many areas disrupts case proceedings, and political mud-slinging tends to garner more attention than justice for the victim and her family. India’s laws still continue to marginalize victims and create divides between them. Rape victims from lower castes and strata of society are usually the last ones to get justice.

While those rape cases that get airtime in the media need to be dealt with, the Indian administration has to understand that the media always doesn’t need to publicize an event for it to take action. The Nirbhaya verdict should create a domino effect in taking swift action to solve the situation for women across the country rather than waiting for protests after yet another rape to take corrective action.



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Qatar Confuses the West With Record Neymar Deal

Charles Hoskinson

August 7, 2017

Qatar is playing simultaneously on both sides of the global pitch, leaving Westerners unable to decide if it's a friend or foe.

The record-breaking move of Brazilian football superstar Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain likely would not have been possible without the financial support of a tiny Gulf nation under fire for its perceived support of Islamist terrorism: Qatar.

That Qatar is even capable of being a key factor in the No. 1 telenovela of the summer transfer season is why the equally dramatic, but far more significant, geopolitical crisis has been so hard to solve more than 60 days in. The petroleum-rich emirate's investments in world football rival those its accusers say have been offered to

keep Islamist extremist movements alive. And the same state-funded company that owns the Al Jazeera news outlet — a focal point of the political controversy — also controls the beIN Sports network, one of the major global broadcasters of football games.

In the match-up of global politics, Qatar is playing simultaneously on both sides of the pitch, leaving American and other Western officials unable to decide if it's primarily a friend or foe.

On one hand, there's the nation that has bankrolled the massive five-year, \$500-million transaction that brought one of the world's best players to Paris and fueled hopes of a UEFA Champions League triumph. It's the same country that is set to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup as the latest effort to brand itself as a modern Muslim state.

Ownership of PSG by an investment firm linked to Qatar's ruling al-Thani family is just one of many massive financial bets the tiny nation has made in Western economies to secure the

future of its 313,000 citizens, who make up only about 12% of its 2.6 million residents.

Qatar has also made political investments in the West. It's a full member of the international coalition fighting the Islamic State, and hosts the US military headquarters in the Middle East at Al Udeid Air Base near Doha.

But it's the other side of the coin that prompted Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to abruptly break off relations on June 5 and impose both a trade and travel ban on Qatar.

At the core of the dispute is Qatar's support for Islamist movements throughout the Middle East as a means of bolstering its diplomatic influence, primarily the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots. Specifically, Qatar stands accused of supporting groups and individuals who pose security threats to the governments aligned against it, along with terrorist movements including Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban, al Qaeda and even the Islamic State. Qatar is also accused of violating secret agreements with its neighbors to curb that support.

Doha denies all the allegations and has rejected a list of demands that includes

an end to financing of terrorist groups and harboring of individuals seen as linked to terrorism, along with shutting down Al Jazeera, which stands accused of inciting violence throughout the region and of being a mouthpiece for the Brotherhood and other extremists.

The Saudi-led group has also pushed for Qatar to be stripped of hosting the World Cup, and its media have criticized Doha's attempt to "politicize" the Neymar move to bolster its image.

Much of the evidence offered by Saudi Arabia and its allies echoes that which US officials have offered over the years to bolster their case that Qatar is at the very least not doing enough to curb support for terrorism. In an October 2016 speech, Acting Treasury Undersecretary Adam Szubin said Qatar "still lacks the necessary political will and capacity to effectively enforce their [countering the financing of terrorism] laws against all terrorist financing threats regardless of organization or affiliation."

But Qatar's role as a nominal ally and its massive investments in Western economies have given leaders pause to go as far as the Saudi-led group in trying to punish Doha. It's the source of the confusion in US policy that has President Donald Trump emphatically

declaring that Qatar supports terrorism “at a very high level” while his Defense and State Departments work to negotiate a resolution to the crisis.

In much the same manner, many football fans who believe Qatar’s money

supports terrorism will watch on beIN Sports as Neymar takes the pitch at the Parc des Princes. And when he does, he’ll be wearing on the front of his jersey a message from PSG’s prime sponsor, the national airline of the UAE: “Fly Emirates.”



Charles Hoskinson is a Washington, DC-based journalist who has written for Politico, the Associated Press, Agence France-Presse and Congressional Quarterly, specializing in politics, international security affairs and terrorism.

Kenyan Elections: The Most Hotly Contested Since Independence

Peris Tarus

August 8, 2017

Despite familiar faces, this election might mark the end of an era and the emergence of new actors in Kenyan politics.

The general elections on August 8 are the most competitive and hotly contested in Kenyan history. This year, President Uhuru Kenyatta is seeking re-election while opposition leader Raila Odinga is probably running for the last time. It may be the last time Kenyatta is running too because the constitution prohibits a third term.

Opinions polls place Kenyatta and Odinga neck and neck. According to an Infotrack poll, Odinga could beat Kenyatta. He is merely one percentage point ahead with support of 47% of voters in contrast to the 46% that Kenyatta commands.

However, an earlier opinion poll by Ipsos Synovate had Kenyatta at 47%, with Odinga trailing at 43%. Both polls agree that no candidate is likely to get more than 50% of the vote that each needs to be declared the winner. Each candidate also needs to win the support of at least 25 out of the 47 counties in the country. Another poll by the Centre for Africa Progress puts support for Kenyatta at 53% and Odinga commanding a mere 42%.

CAN OPINION POLLS BE TRUSTED?

Opinion polls are largely favoring Kenyatta. However, there are doubts over whether they can be trusted. Many incumbent leaders have been voted out in Africa over recent months. In The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, who ruled as a dictatorial president from 1994 to 2017, was defeated by Adama Barrow. In Ghana, people voted in Nana Akufo-Addo, ousting John Mahama. An opposition victory is possible in Kenya too.

In the 2013 general election, Kenyatta and Odinga were the top two presidential candidates. William Ruto and Kalonzo Musyoka were the running mates of Kenyatta and Odinga respectively. They have lined up again in 2017.

In 2013, criminal charges were filed against Kenyatta and Ruto at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the violence that erupted in the country after the 2007 general election. Both of them were later acquitted, but the charges brought the two of them together. This is ironic because Kenyatta is Kikuyu and Ruto is Kalenjin. These are the two tribes that have been rivals for resources such as land, especially in the Rift Valley. They clashed ferociously

after the 2007 elections, leading to much violence and destruction. Once both Kenyatta and Ruto faced charges at the ICC, they kissed and made up. Both gave yet another lease of life to the adage that politics makes strange bedfellows.

Mutahi Ngunyi has declared his “tyranny of numbers” hypothesis, which allowed Kenyatta to win because of Kikuyu-Kalenjin support, to be dead. As per this hypothesis, winning Kenyan elections requires the backing of two big tribes and one small. Kenyatta has two big tribes but no small one. Besides, Ngunyi points out that there is “zero passion; zero excitement” in the Kalenjin nation to “wake up at dawn” and “ferry the sick to polling stations in wheelbarrows” to protect Kenyatta’s presidency.

According to Barrack Muluka, a political analyst and expert on public relations, the new tyranny of numbers in voter registration favors Odinga. Kenyatta’s strongholds have 7.4 million registered voters while Odinga’s bastions have 8.2 million. Battlegrounds like Nairobi have another 4 million. Opinion polls may be wrong and Kenyatta might not win as easily as many expect.

Kenyan politics is dynastic. Its first president was Jomo Kenyatta, the father of the current head of state. Jaramogi

Oginga Odinga, the father of the opposition leader, was the opposition leader. Initially, both were members of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), which was the leading party that fought for independence against the British. Odinga served as the vice chairman of KANU, while Kenyatta was the party president. KANU's membership was then dominated by the Kikuyu and Luo tribes.

After independence in 1963, Kenya became a one-party state with Kenyatta as president and Odinga as the second-in-command. Harmonious relations between the two soon gave way to ideological differences and political enmity. Odinga criticized Kenyatta, marking the beginning of opposition politics in the country.

When Pio Gama Pinto, then a member of parliament, was assassinated in 1965, Odinga became more vocal against Kenyatta's government. Pinto was the first Kenyan politician to be assassinated after independence and his family migrated to Canada two years after his death. In 1966, Odinga formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) to challenge Kenyatta.

Matters got tense in 1969. During Kenyatta's visit to Kisumu, a confrontation broke out between

Kenyatta and Odinga. As a result, the crowd started throwing stones at the president. Kenyatta's security fired at the crowds, causing what is now known as the Kisumu Massacre that reportedly left many dead and hundreds injured.

Kenyatta followed this massacre with the banning of KPU and the arrest of Odinga. Till date, the Luos have neither forgotten nor forgiven the Kenyatta clan and the Kikuyus for the violence of 1969. Similarly, the Kikuyus continue to distrust the Luos.

Kenyatta Jr. and Odinga Jr. continue the rivalry their fathers started. This election might be the last time that the Kenyatta and Odinga clans clash in this generation.

Even if the Kenyatta-Odinga feud ends, Kenya's tribal politics will continue. Since independence, Kenya has been ruled by presidents from two communities. In a country of 44 tribes, the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin have maintained a duopoly on power.

Kenya's first, third and fourth presidents have all been Kikuyu, while its second president was Kalenjin. Kenyans vote on tribal lines. For instance, Kenyatta's Jubilee Party has a following among the Kikuyu, Kalenjin and the Cushitic communities in the northern part of

Kenya, including the Somali, Borana, Rendile, Ormo and Gabra peoples. Raila Odinga's National Super Alliance has followers from the Luo, Abaluhya, Abagusii, Turkana, Kamba and Mijikenda tribes, dominating the coastal part of Kenya in particular.

To be fair, voting is not entirely along tribal lines. The Abaluhya support candidates from any tribe and have a reputation for being the most democratic of all Kenyan communities. Yet tribal identity matters. Those who are not Kikuyu or Kalenjin often feel neglected and marginalized by the government because the dominant two tribes have garnered a lion's share of the country's resources. These two tribes tend to vote as a block and so do the others. That is unlikely to change significantly in the forthcoming election.

FEMALE AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Women are greatly underrepresented in Kenyan politics. In 2013, the only female candidate for the presidency came sixth. This year, the only woman who was

running for president was banned for failing to abide by election rules.

Kenya forms part of a pan-African pattern. Out of the 54 African countries, Liberia is the only country with a female president. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first elected female head of state in Africa, is unlikely to have any company from Kenya.

A record number of independent candidates are running for office. Of the 15,082 candidates in the 2017 general elections, 3,752 are independent candidates. In 2013, this number was 350. Three independent candidates are running for the presidency itself. The promulgation of the new constitution in 2010 has led to the delegation of powers to the counties of the country. This increased democratization has been accompanied by a huge rise in independent candidates.

Women may not yet be competing for the top job in Kenya, but the Kenyatta-Odinga feud is coming to an end and democracy is deepening, even if messily.



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North Korea Threatens Guam: A 21st-Century Pearl Harbor?

Dario Moreira

August 17, 2017

Under the premise that Pearl Harbor has been a grave miscalculation, we find similarities between 1940 and what is happening with North Korea today.

The parallels between pre-World War II US foreign policy in Japan and what we are observing today in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are daunting. Economic sanctions, a consensus that "the enemy" won't dare to attack the US and the "they're mad" rhetoric are all resemblances revealing of the similitude of these scenarios. Could this indicate that North Korea is on the verge of repeating history in the form of a 21st-century Pearl Harbor?

"Whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad." These were the words uttered by the American Congressman Hamilton Fish in 1941 after the Japanese had just launched an attack on Pearl Harbor and war doomed on the country. Similarly, a Google search with the keywords "North Korea" and "crazy" will showcase numerous articles arguing how 'insane' nuking the US would be.

Is it that crazy though? Probably. But that is beside the point. Like in Japan in the 1940s, the question is not whether striking the United States is a rational move or not, but whether North Korea is left with any other choice.

If Pearl Harbor were to be taken as a lesson for US foreign policy, it would lead to the conclusion that deterrence policies can have a counterproductive and adverse effect. As a side note, there is an ongoing debate on whether the US purposely pushed Japan beyond its limit to use it as a back door to enter World War II.

Under the premise that Pearl Harbor has been a grave miscalculation, we find similarities between the events in 1940 and what is happening now. The first and most striking similarity is the overarching consensus that Japan would never declare war on the US. This was partly justified: Simply comparing the size of both armies would show that the American artillery, for example, was 20 times bigger than Japan's. This overarching accord serves to explain the "they're mad" rhetoric that grew in the US after Pearl Harbor, since only very few believed the Japanese would go that far.

Similarly, North Korea's military budget, which according to recent accounts

amounts to a whopping 22% of its GDP, is dwarfed by the US annual military expenditure, estimated to be around \$700 billion. This amounts to at least 70 times the DPRK's estimated budget of \$6 to \$10 billion.

Further consolidating the analogy between the two East Asian countries is the often cited criticism of Western-centrism. Japan's domestic political scene was often left unrecognized, ultimately leading American policymakers to neglect the nationalism, ideology and psychological factors swaying Japan. A Western framework that analyzes accounts in terms of balance of power severely underestimates statements illustrative of the Japanese mentality "death rather than humiliation."

Obviously, one major difference in current days is that we lack access to records of what is being discussed in the inner circles of North Korean policymakers. It is in no way my intention to assume similar statements are being uttered by DPRK officials but, rather, to stress that without appropriate cultural and societal insight foreign policy is bound to be misguided. Without any cultural and societal insight, paired with the lack of information, any understanding of North Korean foreign policy is bound to be misguided.

Lastly, the major parallel, which inspired this comparison in the first place, can be found in the diplomatic tools adopted to deter North Korea's nuclear ambitions: economic sanctions.

HISTORY LESSONS

On June 25, 1940, American official Stanley Hornbeck is quoted saying "nothing short of or less than the language of force." Likewise, the incumbent American ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, has been celebrating the recent "strong message" to the DPRK that the most recent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, which determined the cutback of North Korean exports, has sent. The emphasis on force and strength comes across as remarkably analogous.

In response to the Japanese occupation of Southern Indochina in July 1941, an executive order was issued to freeze all Japanese assets in the US. The effect of the sanctions was severe. Prior to the sanctions, approximately 80% of Japan's fuel supplies were imported from the US. Having been cut off from most of its fuel supplies, Japan launched a pre-emptive attack on the US at Pearl Harbor to consolidate its position in the subsequent invasion of

modern-day Indonesia, an alternative source of oil.

Comparatively, the sanctions delineated in the UNSC Resolution 2371 are estimated to cut North Korean exports by a third. Whether the impact of the sanctions can be juxtaposed or not is a matter up for debate. However, the historical parallels are undeniable.

Though historical parallels can be drawn, some key differences between both situations are salient. The DPRK, unlike Japan in the 1940s, does not have any expansionary ambitions. The nature of its fight differs and seems to be about regime preservation and establishing some kind of political leverage. Therefore, a pre-emptive strike in Guam — the US military base in Micronesia, *ad imaginem* Pearl Harbor — would serve merely the purpose of showcasing its force. Moreover, the Japanese never announced to the world that they were going to launch an attack on Pearl Harbor. This key distinction suggests that North Korea's aim is not so much to tangibly harm US troops but to attack what constitutes every democracy's

military Achilles' heel: public opinion. The American public is largely opposed to a war in North Korea, and it is in the DPRK's interest to foment internal contention through provocative statements.

So, how should the US cope with the DPRK? Admittedly, the US finds itself in a precarious position. Avoiding nuclear proliferation in nonaligned countries comprises one of its most indispensable axioms. However, the contrary — namely, developing a nuclear arsenal — is axiomatic to North Korea's foreign policy. How does one go about negotiating irreconcilable premises?

Pearl Harbor taught us that clashing motivations are bound to lead to war, unless a common ground can be found. Crucially, this is a reciprocal exercise; any unilateral approach taken by the DPRK or the US will only heighten tensions further. Deterrence policies, if applied too extremely, can lead to wars out of desperation, and chauvinism renders policymakers blind. Returning to the words of Congressman Fish, let us hope that, on both sides, sanity will prevail.



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Racism in America Is Alive and Well

S. Suresh

August 18, 2017

Fifteen decades after abolishing slavery, a non-contrite America is still a slave to its racist past.

It is 152 years since the bloody civil war that tore America apart ended and slavery officially abolished. While blacks are no longer slaves today, are they truly free? In a country where all are equal, why would we still need movements like Black Lives Matter?

The truth is America has not really come to terms with its ugly, racial bigotry and injustices. Certainly not in the way South Africa has managed to heal and rebuild after enduring one of the most brutal racial divides of the 20th century. South African poet and writer Don Mattera explains succinctly how a nation can take collective responsibility in righting the wrongs of its past: "Sorry is not just a word — it's a deed, an act." It took leaders of the stature of Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu to not only lead South Africa out of apartheid, but aid in its subsequent healing.

In strong contrast to that caliber of leadership, America has elected Donald Trump as its 45th president. His rise to

ascendancy was driven by a campaign that not only lacked basic human decency, but was filled with xenophobia, Islamophobia and misogyny. His hateful rhetoric has successfully managed to stoke the simmering racial tensions in the country, culminating in the events in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12.

SENSATIONALISM OVER SUBSTANCE

American media have never helped the nation look within and confront the ghosts of the past. While it is no surprise that right-leaning media choose to turn a blind eye to the truth, it is disappointing that the left-leaning ones also choose sensationalism over substance. The handling of Trump's campaign and his ill-thought-out tweets has made a mockery of news, creating a reality presidential show.

Still, when it comes to describing hate perpetrated by white men, the media choose their words carefully. You will not hear the words terrorist, racist and riots when it comes to describing actions of white men. Instead, you will hear the phrases freedom of speech, shooter and mentally disturbed. A year after the Charleston church shooting massacre, covering the trial of the racist, white supremacist perpetrator, CNN's

headline read: “Mass shooter Dylann Roof, with a laugh, confesses, ‘I did it.’”

Yet when it comes to protests driven by the need to stand up for basic human rights and dignity, riots and unruly behavior are the terms that will dominate the airwaves. You will be hard pressed to find a headline that describes the incidents in Ferguson following Michael Brown’s death as “unrest.” The killing of Brown, who was shot dead by Officer Darren Wilson, caused the Ferguson unrest in August 2014. When a grand jury comprising nine white and three black people did not indict the police officer, a second wave of unrest followed in November. While there are innumerable instances of blatant racism, what happened in Ferguson epitomizes the racial injustice prevalent in America today.

FREEDOM TO HATE?

While the First Amendment guards an individual’s right to free speech, should it also protect extreme viewpoints that espouse hatred toward others? Certain aspects of speech such as obscenity, defamation, blackmail and threats are considered unprotected.

What happened in Charlottesville, Virginia was not an expression of freedom of speech. Calling themselves

white supremacists and assembling to “Unite the Right” to take back the country is a veiled threat that ought not to be considered free speech. That this rally was organized to protest the dismantling of Confederate statues speaks to the lingering racial tensions from decades past that have never been properly quelled.

A compilation by the Southern Poverty Law Center has identified that there are 917 hate groups functioning within the US. These groups hate others in the name of race, religion, color and sexual orientation. The explosive growth seen in the number of hate groups since the turn of the century is in part attributed to the rise in immigration and the prediction that by 2040, whites will no longer be a majority in the country.

America is at an inflection point today. Led by a combative president who unabashedly aligns with white supremacists and an attorney general who promises to toughen its already broken criminal justice system, it is now up to the people of this nation to take on healing this racial divide lest it becomes an insurmountable chasm.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

A nation of immigrants that committed unspeakable acts of horror that virtually

decimated the indigenous people of the land has no moral right to exclude people fleeing persecution elsewhere or seeking to improve their economic well-being by coming to America. The collective responsibility of the nation, its lawmakers and the president is to welcome them with compassionate policies, perhaps taking a measured approach, rather than build walls around us.

Abolishing slavery in 1865 did not mean the dawn of equality. On the contrary, America witnessed systematic racial and ethnic cleansing aimed not just at African-Americans, but Native Americans and Chinese-Americans during the lynching period until 1930s. African-Americans were also subjected to persecution and segregation by Jim Crow laws until 1965. In the post-civil rights era, racial tensions are high strung from the War on Drugs and

police brutality against African-Americans. The period since 1980 has seen a staggering increase in incarceration rates following the War on Drugs with a disproportionate amount of African-American and Hispanic population being locked up.

With so much blood in its hand, America will, at some point in time, have to stop everything in its tracks to acknowledge its failings and atone for sins of its past.

Life, liberty and pursuit of happiness are unalienable rights given to all human beings. Not just white men. Pursuing happiness in life cannot be at the cost of hating others because of their race, color or sexual orientation. And if we must explicitly call out hateful rhetoric as no longer protected by freedom of speech, it is our collective responsibility as a nation to make it happen.



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The Billion-Dollar Problem in India

Bestin Samuel

August 21, 2017

While India teems with billionaires on one end, many are left counting pennies.

When the Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index was released in July, it did not make for merry reading for the second most populous country in the world. India cut an alarmingly sorry figure when it came to the gap between the rich and the poor.

As per Oxfam's calculations, if India were to reduce inequality by a third, more than 170 million people would no longer be poor. But the report only confirmed what was well known: While a tiny fraction of India revels in its riches and glory, the vast majority struggles in deplorable conditions. It does not look set to change any time soon. The government's commitment to reducing inequality was ranked 132 out of 152 countries in the index.

The Indian rich are on a roll, though. On March 20, the Forbes 2017 Billionaires List was released, and India ranked fourth in the number of billionaires, with a whopping 101 Indians, up from 84 in 2016. Of course, the country celebrated

the news with barely conceded pride. "[Mukesh] Ambani leads India's 101 billionaire club," declared India Today. The headline for MensXP was quite interesting: "101 Indians Made it to the Forbes Billionaires List & We're Still Here Counting Pennies," it said. Perhaps unintentionally, it pointed to the ugly truth of India's glaring rich-poor divide.

A day later, on March 21, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released the 2016 Human Development Report (HDR) that saw India slip down to 131 from 130 out of 188 countries ranked in terms of human development. In a span of 24 hours, this piece of information had emphatically put in perspective the truth of the matter. It would have doused the euphoria of the "101 Club," one would imagine, despite that gnawing knowledge deep inside that, in the age of post-truth, facts seldom matter anymore. The report was scarcely discussed in the mainstream media.

The contrast between Forbes and the UNDP report is as enlightening as it is disturbing; few data sets could be as explanatory an answer to a wide variety of questions around India's pace and quality of development as this particular pair. While the nation teems with

billionaires on one end, many are still literally “counting pennies.”

An Economy for the 99%, a report released by Oxfam earlier this year, revealed another shocking figure: India’s richest 1% hold around 58% of the country’s wealth. The report details that 57 billionaires in India have the same wealth as that of the bottom 70% population of the country — the combined income of more than 847 million Indians.

While the richest 10% have seen their income rise by more than 15%, the poorest 10% have seen their share of income fall by more than 15%, as per Oxfam. With both the richest and the poorest moving rapidly toward opposite ends of the spectrum, it is inevitable that India will struggle under the deepening rich-poor divide in the years to come. It is also to be noted that this pattern is not unique to India, though it does not lessen the gravity of the situation in any way.

According to Oxfam, eight men now own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world. Inequalities in income influence inequalities in other dimensions of well-being, and vice versa, the HDR highlights. A comparative reading of the reports suggests that the rich-poor gap is

inversely proportional to human development levels.

For a clearer picture, look at Norway. The Scandinavian country, which ranks first in the HDR report, has 14 billionaires, as per Forbes. Second-ranked Australia has 33 billionaires, and Switzerland, ranking third, has 36. India has more billionaires than all of these three countries put together. But then, is a country only about its billionaires?

Despite having a much smaller number of billionaires than India, these countries have fared unbelievably well when it comes to the life expectancy, schooling and per capita income. Agreed, there are other nuanced reasons to the situation, ranging from colonial baggage to demographic differences to sociopolitical climate and many others, but let us keep those on hold for the moment. How does India improve its human development performance? The answer revolves around the notion of universalism that no one should be left behind in the growth narrative.

UNDP believes that universalism is key to human development, and that human development for everyone is attainable. As is evident from the numbers, universalism in both theory and praxis seems to be an anathema to the preferred monetary machinery of India,

for reasons best left unsaid. “Human development focuses on the richness of human lives, than the richness of economies,” says the HDR. That means we need to take the predictions that India’s economy would be the fastest growing in 2017 with an almighty pinch of salt.

Finally, does being ranked fourth in terms of the number of billionaires make Indians happier? Apparently not. The World Happiness Report places India 122 among the 155 countries ranked, with some of the key parameters being GDP, physical and mental health, and life expectancy. (Incidentally, Norway ranks first in this report too.)

What India needs is focused and deliberate investments in social security measures for every one of its citizens. The National Health Mission, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and the

Right to Education Act need to be in full flow, ensuring equal access to health, income and education outcomes across the country.

The fact that India has recorded a substantial improvement in the health sector — especially infant mortality rate, the number of institutional deliveries and immunization coverage — over the last 10 years (as per National Family Health Survey data) shows that the country is on the right track. India ranking 131 in terms of human development and 159 out of 230 countries in terms of per capita income (as per the Central Intelligence Agency) simply means even topping the Forbes Billionaires List might not be worth the smallest of celebrations. Until a time the country’s priority balance tilts in favor of the 41.3% who are multidimensionally poor, some Indians will indeed continue to be more equal than others.



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Guam: Today's Cuban Missile Crisis?

Emmett Sullivan
August 23, 2017

US grandstanding over Guam would not be so worrying if it were not for the possible involvement of nuclear weapons.

The standoff between North Korea and the United States has been brewing since the leadership changed in both countries. Kim Jong-un has been consolidating his position and extending his family legacy since inheriting the leadership in 2011. The Obama administration dealt with that escalation with diplomatic belligerence but little saber-rattling. In contrast, President Donald Trump has been not so much rattling the saber as displaying it unsheathed, with swishes in the air.

This grandstanding would not be so worrying if it were not for the possible involvement of nuclear weapons. It is now 33 years since Ronald Reagan's ill-judged quip: "We begin bombing in five minutes" at the height of the Cold War on August 11, 1984. Today, the leaders of both countries involved in the latest geopolitical dispute use media to set policy in an unprecedented way. Just as with the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962,

the world watches as these tensions play out.

THEN AND NOW

The threat posed to Guam now and that faced by Cuba in 1962 have so far played out differently. The Central Intelligence Agency's disastrous 1961 Bay of Pigs adventurism forced Fidel Castro into the willing arms of Nikita Khrushchev. The deployment of Thor missiles to Britain and Jupiters to Italy and Turkey in the late 1950s and early 1960s produced an asymmetric threat level, which Khrushchev answered with Soviet missiles and nuclear warheads in Cuba. Despite John F. Kennedy's "missile gap" rhetoric during the 1960 presidential election, the Soviet Union only had 15 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in the USSR at the time of the crisis, of which only four were ready for deployment. The Americans arguably overreacted to their own policy of containment being applied back to them.

Kennedy, in contrast to Trump, kept a measured media profile. JFK is portrayed as the archetypal "cold warrior," and initially saw the Cuban missiles as leverage to get the West out of Berlin. However, secret White House tapes the Kennedy brothers kept between 1961 and 1963 show the

president was the only member of his cabinet not to advocate bombing Cuba at some point. That includes his attorney general brother, Robert (the posthumously-published *Thirteen Days* was an attempt by Robert Kennedy to appear a dove at the height of the Vietnam War). Kennedy was cautious with his public language, for example, by using the term “quarantine” rather than “blockade” to describe American action against Soviet ships.

Under Kennedy, a candid series of public pronouncements took place within the accepted norms of the time. “Fire and fury,” “locked and loaded” and “be very, very nervous” were not part of White House language in 1962. Today’s incumbent lacks comprehension of America’s nuclear potential. Misunderstanding what the nuclear triad meant in Republican candidate discussions with the media, staffers suggesting that if you have nuclear weapons you should not be afraid to use them, and various post-election comments by then President-elect Trump about a new nuclear arms race indicate that Barack Obama’s suggestion that this was not a man you should trust with the nuclear codes might have warranted more attention.

Kennedy maintained restraint in public and in private. This was in spite of

General Curtis LeMay’s repeated jibes as the head of the US Air Force that the president’s stance was akin to appeasement — a direct reference to Joe Kennedy’s role as US ambassador to the UK between 1938 and 1940. By contrast, China is now calling for reduced rhetoric from the White House.

None of this should overshadow the belligerence of Kim Jong-un and the North Koreans. They have been hardened by years at the center of international rhetoric. George W. Bush’s decision to include North Korea in his Axis of Evil confirmed one thing above all else to Kim Jong-un’s father, Kim Jong-il: If you have nuclear weapons, the US will not ignore you, for good or otherwise. Possession of nuclear weapons became the new imperial standard in the 1950s and 1960s, with France and Britain trading colonies for H-bombs to retain their relevance in a bipolar superpower world. India, China, Pakistan and Israel arguably have done the same in a regional context. The North Koreans have simply followed that precedent.

Could such rhetoric and posturing develop into conflict? The Doomsday Clock is two minutes 30 seconds to midnight in 2017, precisely because the potential for one-off exchanges has increased. By this measure, we have

not been so close to conflict since 1953 (two minutes to midnight) — the last year of the Korean War. President Harry Truman discounted the use of atomic weapons against China at that time, partly constrained by the thought of authorizing another A-bombing of an East Asian nation. The Doomsday Clock was at seven minutes to in 1960, and moved out to 12 minutes to in 1963 (as a consequence of the Cuban Missile Crisis). Calmer heads in the White House then were able to stabilize the situation.

In 2017, we know that North Korea can detonate an atomic device; and it has a long-range missile capability. What we don't know is whether North Korea has a warhead small enough to fit on its current missiles. That is just a matter of time. A multiple-missile test to an area near the island of Guam — a US territory and military site of long standing — would be a miscalculation. In the same way, the Kennedy administration allowing a nuclear test to go ahead during the Cuban Missile Crisis sent the wrong message in 1962.

The difference now is that the North Koreans would deliberately go ahead with a test now to gain further concessions from the US in behind-the-scenes diplomatic negotiations. No one doubts that the North Koreans would use nuclear weapons when they judge the time is right. Che Guevara condemned the Soviet Union as cowardly in not pursuing a nuclear war in 1962. He saw it as a lost opportunity — socialism would win in the apocalyptic aftermath. This echoes Chairman Mao's speech given in Moscow in 1957, advocating "nuclear mass extinction" as a way of furthering the communist cause. We can be certain that China no longer holds this position 60 years on. In Kim Jong-un's North Korea, the sacrifice might be deemed appropriate.

The issue is how the United States would respond if Guam were targeted with nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are not simply large explosives, which seems to be current White House thinking. An eye for an eye would set a dangerous precedent for the future.



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What the US Should Avoid in Venezuela

Zachariah Dickens

August 25, 2017

America's Cold War-era policies won't work against Venezuela.

If the United States government was intent on choosing an ineffective and damaging response to the crisis in Venezuela, it need only use its foreign policy toward South and Central America during the Cold War as a blueprint. Potentially pre-empting the nascent anti-Maduro, Organization of American States coalition that his trip to the region sought to anneal, Vice President Mike Pence threatened Venezuela with an all-encompassing sanctions-based prescription to modify the behavior of the Maduro regime. This was likely meant as a more reasonable alternative to President Trump's suggestion of possible military force.

Yet both of these suggestions are unwelcome in a continent afflicted by the memories of excessive intervention by the United States. Maduro's attempts to impose autocracy have provided the United States with a historic opportunity to pursue a course salutary to Venezuelan society while improving its reputation. It should orient its foreign policy decision with this history in mind.

The situation Venezuela finds itself in today was predictable, attributable to policies pursued by the "Bolivarian" administration of Hugo Chavez. Powered by record oil profits, Venezuela was able to engage in the mass subsidization of essential items from food to medicine well below market price; Chavez and his successor, Nicolas Maduro, compounded these policies with the nationalization of private business and the creation of cheap government supermarkets.

Unsurprisingly, the collapse in oil prices meant that the goods subsidized so munificently by the Chavez regime could no longer be provided in the same quantity. Corruption, debt and wholesale nationalization continue to prevent Venezuela from responding to the economic crisis. Though a robust political opposition exists, it has been blocked from meaningful reform by a supreme court packed with pro-Maduro judges.

Knowing that the mass majority of Venezuelans are now suffering from an economy for which they hold Maduro responsible, Pence's threat of broad-based sanctions are both tone deaf and counter-intuitive. A full-scale sanctioning of Venezuela's oil industry would decimate the already dilapidated

economy and send it into shock. This would allow Maduro to shift the blame from his administration to the “imperialist” United States. With an approval rating consistently hovering around 20%, it’s hard to see how a policy that causes further suffering would help.

Maduro doesn’t need the United States to be unpopular. A negatively perceived intervention by the US government, however, would boost his popularity by lending credence to his claims of US meddling. For the most applicable reference, a half century, full-scale embargo failed spectacularly to change the behavior of socialist Cuba, a country that Venezuela has attempted to mirror since 1999. While an embargo-reminiscent policy toward Venezuela would be unwelcoming, the mere suggestion of military intervention is a non-starter. Even in instances where the stated goals of the United States were met, the overall effect on the country in question was less than positive.

OLD HABITS

The invasion of Panama in 1989 to oust Manuel Noriega, an erstwhile American ally and dictator, was touted in the immediate aftermath as a success by then President George H.W. Bush. However, the consequences include

suing of the United States by companies for postwar looting, a civilian death count ranging from the hundreds to the thousands, and a denunciation of the United States by most members of the United Nations General Assembly. Just as the Trump administration does not have the cache with the international community to risk further damage to its reputation, the people of Venezuela cannot risk the chaos that would follow even a “successful” military intervention.

Clandestine support for military opposition to Maduro should be discarded in the same vein. The Venezuelan military was able to easily quash an attempted military revolt by Captain Juan Caguaripano and other Venezuelan army defectors. If the United States were to pursue a strategy of arming and encouraging rebellion against the Maduro regime, it might want to look at several realities. A reservoir of armed, pro-government vigilante groups, known as colectivos, are in place to protect the Maduro government, willing to murder civilians opposing him. Promoting counter-Maduro vigilantism would undoubtedly tear at the seams of Venezuelan society to a point of no return. US Cold War policies supporting military dictatorships and right-wing death squads in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala have left those countries enveloped in a

cycle of violence; the attainment of US goals for those countries hasn't remedied the violence and poverty that they continue to face.

So for what result should the United States aim to achieve? The most auspicious outcome, out of the four outlined as likely by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, is quoted as follows: "A split within Maduro's inner circle, the establishment of a stable and united political opposition lead[ing] to credible elections under a new National Electoral Council (CNE), monitored by the Organization of American States (OAS) and other observers and backed by a Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ) with new members selected in accord with the current Constitution."

POWER GRAB

So how would the fracturing of Maduro's inner circle start? At the heart of the Maduro government's power grab is the creation of its rubber-stamp Constituent Assembly. This is where direct US action should focus any initial, punitive action as it is the visible symbol of Maduro's arbitrary power. Sanctions specifically hitting every member of the Constituent Assembly along with those close to Maduro will focus specifically on those that are inherently autocratic.

Unlike extensive sanctions that hit the Venezuela's oil sector (and by that extension its economy writ large), these sanctions would likely be supported by the OAS. More importantly, the impact wouldn't result in added suffering for the Venezuelan populace.

As a prerequisite to ending these sanctions, the US should require the Maduro regime to lift the current barriers to allowing direct humanitarian aid to reach the Venezuelan people. Otherwise, Maduro would continue to pay a personal price for entrenching autocracy while being a visible barrier to the flood of necessary supplies. Directly goading OAS member states to involve themselves in the aid effort would strengthen the visibly beneficial US effort. Neighboring Colombia, for instance, has temporarily granted legal status to some Venezuelans desperately crossing the border in search of food and medicine. Regardless of the outcome, this would have the salutary effect of aligning the Venezuelan populace with the United States.

Venezuela has chronic problems beyond its current crises. However, the United States has an opportunity to push the country in a direction so that the people of Venezuela have a chance to institute the change they have

demanded and voted for. Since the foundation for a working government is there, the Trump administration should work with it. It neatly coincides with an “America First” repudiation of nation building from scratch. With the international community largely aligned against the Maduro regime, the policy it

chooses should capitalize on this short-term consensus in the event that this chance proves ephemeral. Impacting the region for the better while improving its image will pay dividends. With that said, Cold War foreign policy should remain where suitable: as a blueprint for what not to do in South America.



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The Nigerian Health Sector: A Cat with Nine Lives

Oyepeju Abioye
August 28, 2017

Nigeria's health industry struggles on despite the odds.

In order to understand the full extent of Nigeria's health crisis, all you need to do is walk into any hospital in the heart of Lagos or any city across the country. What you will see is the real-life meaning of a cat having nine lives.

Nigerians have learned to survive by going through the motions when it comes to the provision of health care. With patients in dire need of services

and health practitioners in dire need of rest, the whole system mirrors what you would call a colossal misdirection of fate. The prayers of ordinary Nigerians are directed toward the betterment of the situation in this critical industry and, as a matter of fact, of most other public sectors. But with maternal mortality rate as high as 560 per 100,000 live births, under-5 mortality at 117 per 1,000 live births, and overall mortality rate of 12.7 deaths per 1,000 people, these prayers seem rightly justified.

Some of the reasons for the high death rate include the lack of funds, both from the government and among the general population, with over 60% of people living below the poverty line of \$1 per

day. The troubling part is that despite this widespread absolute poverty, over 90% of payments for health care are out-of-pocket, with concerned doctors often contributing the outstanding payment for patient care. With health insurance virtually nonexistent across the country, out-of-pocket payments have severe consequences for health care access and utilization and are especially catastrophic for the poor. According to the 2010 World Health Report, “millions of people cannot use health services because they have to pay for them at the time they receive them. And many of those who do use services suffer financial hardship, or are even impoverished, because they have to pay.”

In Nigeria, health care is seemingly partitioned, and while the rich can of course get excellent services from top-notch private hospitals, the poor have to resort to the relatively affordable government hospitals, where they sleep in the hallways while their relatives are receiving care. Government officials visit these only on commissioning and during unavoidable public events, but never to be treated. Although these institutions provide relatively affordable care when compared to privately-owned hospitals, the level of care provided is often below par.

Nonetheless, the poor flock to these institutions because this is all they can afford. In fact, most of the doctors who work in these public institutions own private practices where they provide a high standard of care while doing very little in these government institutions, most of which are dilapidated.

Why does it have to be this way? Take for example the moral quagmire of a doctor who finds him or herself bound by hospital policies not to attend to patients, even in cases of dire emergencies, simply because they are unable to provide down payment. Or think about how impossibly frustrated a health professional must feel when he or she cannot perform a simple procedure because of the lack of funds to buy materials and basic equipment needed. This is not a situation someone in the developed world would ever find oneself in.

Or how about parents watching their 7-year-old son die of Burkitt's lymphoma because they cannot afford chemotherapy, or the entire family crying at the ward's doorway because the mother of the household is slipping away through the tight ropes of breast cancer as it ravages her body because there is no money for either surgery or chemotherapy? We don't even need to go as far as talking about radiotherapy:

Only two radiotherapy machines are working in the entire country.

No one is more befuddled than the 16-year-old pregnant girl who is not granted permission to go to the hospital without her 47-year-old husband's knowledge and, therefore, she might end up losing her baby due to obstructed labor. Even if she were to defy orders, you can be guaranteed that she would lack the means to settle her hospital bills.

Yet the Nigerian health sector has managed to shoulder its responsibilities, albeit shakily, mostly because these shoulders have been hardened by time and spite. Still, medical professionals

are churned out of the system on an almost daily basis, totaling over 2,500 annually, but only a limited number will practice in the country. And having been born with a mentality that embraces struggle, Nigerians try as much as possible to make do with whatever little materials in their possession — even if surgery has to be performed with the aid of a lantern in a hot theater without scrubs and only a pair of gloves serving as the precautionary measure, in extreme cases.

Somehow, the Nigerian health sector stays alive, in spite of all this. It stays alive because this cat, you see, has nine lives.



Oyepaju Abioye is a doctor by day and a writer by night. She is an observer and a documenter of life as it occurs in her environment, believing that every medical case is a story and that there is a story in every moment of our lives. Her pen is her most prized possession.