

# Fair Observer

Monthly



March 2019

**FAIR OBSERVER**<sup>®</sup>  
make sense of the world

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# Fair Observer Monthly



March 2019

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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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# Should Sport Let Go of the Idea of Binary Sexes?

Ellis Cashmore  
March 4, 2019

*We now seem poised for a change: Instead of understanding women and men as two different halves of a binary, we will see them as different points on a spectrum.*

“A man can decide to be female, take hormones if required by whatever sporting organization is concerned, win everything in sight and perhaps earn a small fortune, and then reverse his decision and go back to making babies if he so desires,” the former tennis star Martina Navratilova wrote in an op-ed for The Sunday Times. “It’s insane and it’s cheating.”

Navratilova is an out lesbian, a stalwart advocate of LGBTQ rights and, up to the article’s publication, a woman renowned for her liberal sympathies. She has since apologized for using the word “cheating,” but her argument brought immediate rebuke, most defiantly from Rachel McKinnon, a male-to-female (MtF) trans track cyclist, who claimed: “She [Navratilova] imagines a nonexistent cisgender man who will pretend to be a trans woman, convince a psychologist and a physician to prescribe hormone therapy, undertake the process for legal gender recognition, then wait the minimum 12 months of testosterone suppression required by the current IOC [International Olympic Committee] rules, compete, and then change his mind and

‘go back to making babies’?” (Cis relates to people whose sense of personal and sexual identity corresponds with their natal, or birth, sex.)

McKinnon is probably right: Even the most motivated male athlete is unlikely to self-identify falsely as a woman and maintain the masquerade for, say, 20 years (the approximate duration of a sports career) just to win medals and money. To then proclaim that he’ll now go back to being a man seems utterly preposterous.

There is arguably a more relevant objection, which suggests that trans athletes, especially MtF, would be physically advantaged over natal female athletes. The assumption is that trans athletes who were once males have raised levels of testosterone, which confers on them advantages in terms of physical strength and speed. Testosterone is the hormone that stimulates the development of male secondary characteristics and is part of a group called androgens. Estrogens promote the development and maintenance of female characteristics in the body. Here’s where the issue intersects with another contentious situation that’s divided sport.

## **ELIXIR OF ATHLETIC SUCCESS**

Caster Semenya is a South African who was born, reared and socialized as a woman, was legally recognized as a woman and competed on the track in women’s events. In 2009, Semenya,

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then 18, dominated the 800-meter events at the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) world track and field championships, winning by more than two seconds. A fellow competitor called her a man. Pierre Weiss, the general secretary of the IAAF, track and field's world governing body, said, "She is a woman, but maybe not 100 percent." Actually she has a condition known as hyperandrogenism that causes an excessive secretion of androgens.

In 2011, the IAAF introduced a policy directed at women who had unusually high concentrations of testosterone: female athletes above the testosterone threshold of 10 nanomoles per liter — considered at the lower end of the male range — faced measures if they wanted to continue competing. Hormone-suppressing drugs and surgical removal of internal testes, which can produce testosterone, were among the unpleasant options.

Testosterone is popularly regarded as an elixir of athletic success. Exogenous testosterone is the most popular performance-enhancing drug and is forbidden in sport. There's little or no overlap between typical male and female ranges on endogenous testosterone levels. So women who, for natural reasons, have levels of testosterone outside the usual female parameters are considered to hold an unfair advantage. At least that's what the IAAF concluded. Other naturally conferred advantages — height, increased red blood cell count, low

resting heart rate, for example — are not considered unfair, of course.

A complicating factor is that success in sport is not the result of just one physical trait. Sport psychologists never tire of reminding us that mental attributes such as motivation, mental toughness and locus of control are crucial. Add to this environmental influences — cultural as well as geographical — and the role of testosterone becomes harder to discern in isolation. Endocrinologists explain the difference between the sporting performances in men and women by reference to testosterone, but they have no interest in context. Context-sensitive accounts of sporting excellence provide more complex algorithms of social, psychological and physical factors.

## **ON THE BASIS OF SEX**

Caster Semenya is understandably aggrieved at being forced to take drugs, which would probably get other athletes disqualified, just to get to the start line. Last month, she took her complaint to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Switzerland. She no longer wants to take testosterone-suppressing drugs in order to compete. If she's successful, IAAF will have to admit Semenya and other athletes with naturally high testosterone levels — and brace itself for the howls of protest from countless other women who will claim they'll be disadvantaged.

If the court rules against Semenya, it will be a decision that distances athletics —



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and possibly sports generally — from the rest of society, which has moved toward self-identification as the main criterion for sex. Rather than being assigned their sex, people can choose how they wish to be addressed and treated. It's possible that reforms to the UK's Gender Recognition Act will relax the demand that anyone has to prove they have a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and lived in their preferred sex role for a minimum of two years. Sex would become a matter of self-declaration.

Effectively, if someone expresses a wish to be considered a man, a woman or neither, that will be sufficient, regardless of one's biology. The military, educational organizations, places of employment, the criminal justice system and other social institutions will be taxed to make accommodations. That includes sport. Some sports have integrated men and women into single events. Ultramarathons, equestrian events, some forms of cycling and sailing are just a few examples. But who can be serious about sport embracing gender fluidity? It has flexed its muscles and reaffirmed its reliance on the traditional binary. The fact remains: Sport will be obliged to change.

## **FULL CIRCLE**

Ironically, this may draw us close to a cultural full circle. It seems staggering to think that the division of the species into two kinds — what we now call the binary — is largely a product of the past 350 years. Before then, the stress was on

similarities, the female body being just a “gradation,” or nuance of one basic male type. “Medical theory taught that there was but one sex,” wrote Jeffrey Weeks in his 2009 book, *Sexuality*.

The female body was a kind of an inverted version of the male, a clitoris imagined to be an underdeveloped version of the equivalent structure in men — the penis. The big difference was that women could reproduce children. Anatomists in the 19th century searched for the sources of women's difference and apparent inferiority. It wasn't until 1903 that two English biologists discovered a substance produced in the body and carried in the blood to stimulate various cells and tissues into specific actions.

They called the substance hormones. Sex hormones were responsible for differences in development between males and females. Over the next three decades, sex endocrinology created a completely new understanding of sexual differences based on hormones. Eventually, hormonal differences became accepted as natural facts. Women were different to men in most profound, categorical and immovable way.

We now seem poised for a change: Instead of understanding women and men as two different halves of a binary, we will see them as different points on a spectrum. People will be free to identify as they wish, not necessarily as a male or a female, but combinations of both or neither. Under conditions of gender

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fluidity, there will be no impermeable groups, nor rules that constrain movement between self-assignments.

How will sport respond? We will get a clue later this month when the CAS rules on the Semenya case. Caster Semenya is not trans, but her unusual hormonal makeup raises far-reaching questions about how sport visualizes itself for the rest of this century. Will it change in a way that keeps it consistent with the rest of society? Or will it cling to its traditions and invite more challenges?

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**Ellis Cashmore** is the author of "Elizabeth Taylor," "Beyond Black" and "Celebrity Culture." He is honorary professor of sociology at Aston University and has previously worked at the universities of Hong Kong and Tampa.

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## With Climate Change Comes Extreme Weather

Arek Sinanian  
March 5, 2019

*The question to consider is how global warming and climate change are affecting the weather around the world.*

Droughts, wildfires, sea levels rising, storms and floods, ice caps melting, heat waves, cold snaps: Many people are asking whether these are being caused by climate change. This is the wrong question to ask, because

obviously there have always been droughts, wildfires, heat waves, storms and floods. The question we need to consider is how global warming and climate change are affecting the weather around the world.

Not that this is an easy question to answer, but at least it's an appropriate one. It's appropriate because if climate change is indeed contributing to these events, we need to understand the extent of such impact, and then work out what resources and efforts we need to put into mitigating it. And then a more difficult question arises about how the responsibility of addressing this global problem can be fairly and equitably managed amongst the many nations and economies of the world.

Let's answer the easy one first and leave the more difficult question for another time.

## KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE

Before I go any further, let me quickly remind us of the differences between global warming, climate change and the weather. As the saying goes, climate is what you expect, weather is what you get. In other words, climate is a long-term trend of events, while weather is what happens on a daily basis.

For example, the weather can change in a few minutes, but the climate changes over much longer time frames. But they are linked, and we measure and record weather events which then give us an overall view of the long-term trends such

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as hotter days, more severe droughts, etc.

As for global warming, it is the increase in average global temperatures above what we would expect without the greenhouse effect, which is a result of increased levels of greenhouse gases — mainly as a consequence of human activity.

As I have done in all of my previous articles and will continue to do, I'll start with the facts we have available. Yes folks, facts — this currently illusive concept — and not opinion, and certainly not belief. To develop appropriate measures and policies, to act on them and to do this properly, we will need a rational and scientific approach, and not be driven by ideology. We have no other choice than to have to rely on the science we have, as imperfect as it may appear.

So, let me summarize a few of the facts about extreme weather we have in front of us. According to the BBC, just this year, the UK has seen the warmest February day on record at 20.6°C (69.08°F) — the first time the country witnessed a temperature of over 20°C (69.08°F) in winter, breaking the February 1998 record of 19.7°C. On the other side of the globe, Australia's Climate Council's Weather Gone Wild: Climate Change Fuelled Extreme Weather in 2018 report states:

“The increase in global average temperatures has increased the probability of hot extremes (including

record-breaking hot temperatures) and decreased the probability of cold extremes. In Australia, the ratio of observed hot to cold temperature records was 12 to 1 between 2000 and 2014. The annual number of hot days (above 35°C) and very hot days (above 40°C) has also increased strongly over most areas since 1950. Heatwaves are also lasting longer, reaching higher maximum temperatures and occurring more frequently over many regions of Australia.”

In a report by The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia recorded its hottest summer on record when average temperatures exceeded 20C (3.60F) above the long-term averages.

## **WE MUST ACT**

Are these isolated events, or do they indicate a trend that we must consider carefully? If we choose to ignore these trends, we risk the possibility of getting to a point in time when it will be too late to act effectively. At what point of being presented with evidential data that indicates a serious problem do we say that we must act.

The 2017 US National Climate Assessment report, which consolidated key messages and supporting evidence from 16 national-level topic chapters, 10 regional chapters and two chapters that focus on societal response strategies, concludes that the impacts of climate change are already being felt across the country, with more “frequent and intense extreme weather events and

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climate-related events, as well as changes in average climate conditions, are expected to continue to damage infrastructure, ecosystems, and social systems that provide essential benefits to communities.” Whereas not all regions will be affected equally, “Future climate change is expected to further disrupt many areas of life, exacerbating existing challenges to prosperity posed by aging and deteriorating infrastructure, stressed ecosystems, and economic inequality.”

The report predicts that “without significant global mitigation action and regional adaptation efforts, rising temperatures, sea level rise, and changes in extreme events are expected to increasingly disrupt and damage critical infrastructure and property, labor productivity, and the vitality of our communities.”

Numerous new studies are being presented around the world at a great rate and, increasingly, the data they provide on extreme weather events are unprecedented. As a US-led team reported in *Nature Climate Change*, the evidence of global warming attributed to human activity has reached what is termed “gold standard” or a “five-sigma” level, which provides a very high degree of certainty.

## **THE PRICE TAG**

The sector that knows more about this hard evidence than any other is the insurance industry. According to Munich RE, a global insurance company, the

overall losses from natural disasters in 2017 amounted to \$330 billion worldwide, \$215 billion of which was claimed by hurricanes. The five largest natural catastrophes relating to climate change in 2017 were Hurricane Harvey, which caused 88 fatalities and \$85 billion in damaged in the US; Hurricane Irma, with 128 fatalities and a \$67-billion loss across the US and Caribbean; Hurricane Maria, which devastated the Caribbean islands, causing 108 fatalities and a loss of \$63 billion; the California wildfires, which claimed 25 lives and a loss of \$10.5 billion; floods and landslides in China, with 56 fatalities and losses of \$6 billion. As a whole, North America shouldered 83% of overall losses — an increase from a long-term average of 32%.

So, back to our philosophical question: Now that the scientists have identified a certain link between fossil fuel burning and climate change, what are we to do with this information? What are the practical and sustainable options to decarbonize the world’s economies?

My answer to these vital and difficult questions is simple: Clearly, there needs to be a global solution. Each of us must take full responsibility for our actions and, wherever and whenever possible, make decisions in our own lives to reduce our own carbon footprint and that of our community.

But, more importantly, we must exercise our democratic power to select politicians and leaders — political and

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corporate — who have the will and the intent to make the hard decisions.

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**Arek Sinanian** is the author of “A Climate for Denial” and an international expert on climate change, greenhouse gas abatement and carbon accounting, and he has extensive experience in resource efficiency, waste minimization and sustainable development. He is a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) expert panels of the clean development mechanism (CDM) Methodology Panel and the Accreditation Panel, providing advice on new methodologies and projects for CDMs submitted for registration under the Kyoto Protocol.

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## **India and Pakistan Have a Choice to Make**

Priyanka Pandey  
March 6, 2019

*India and Pakistan can either make peace or continue in an endless cycle of violence.*

On February 14, a suicide bomber killed more than 40 paramilitary police in Indian-administered Kashmir. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a militant group based in Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. While Islamabad has denied having any role in the incident, India has long accused Pakistan of backing insurgents.

The way India chooses to respond to the attack in Pulwama has consequences for its future and its relationship with Pakistan. In light of a speech by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on February 19, India has a chance to consider the offer he made. While defiantly warning against an attack on Pakistan, Khan said the long-running dispute over Kashmir between Pakistan and India could only be “solved through dialogue.” He added that Pakistan is ready to cooperate in an investigation and would hold those accountable if evidence is found that anyone from his country was involved in the incident.

India said his speech was inadequate, lacking in offering condolences for the victims’ families and that JeM’s claim of responsibility was proof enough that Pakistan was involved. From India’s point of view, this perception of the inadequacy of Khan’s offer of dialogue is understandable given the magnitude of loss encountered. Instead of dialogue, the Indian government seems to be intent on revenge. Its air force has already struck deep into Pakistan.

Khan’s offer of dialogue might have been more credible if he had acknowledged the suffering of Indians. But let us put aside for a moment the sentiments of sadness, fear, anger and resentment that we are justifiably feeling after the Pulwama attack. The relevant question to ask for India is whether the offer is good enough to get both sides to the negotiating table.

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## HOW SHOULD INDIA RESPOND?

To decide how India should respond, we need to step back and look at the Pulwama incident in the context of the bigger picture context. Since partition in 1947, tensions between India and Pakistan have increased. They have fought three bloody wars. Hateful language is commonly used for the other side in mainstream media and by politicians on both sides of the border.

India and Pakistan have paid a huge price for the unending conflict. Khan acknowledged in his speech that it has cost Pakistan tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars. He also said it is in his country's interest to address the conflict. India is in the same situation and has lost countless lives too. So, it is also in India's interest to move toward a peaceful solution.

As hard as it would be, this is an opportune time for both sides to rise above the mindset of right and wrong, judgment and blame, and instead come together and work to build peace. The media, in both countries, bear a huge responsibility in the way they report stories and play them over and over. They can either promote conflict or help de-escalate it.

India must take its cue not from the media or its politicians, but leaders who have worked tirelessly for peace. More than ever, Mahatma Gandhi is a good role model for the country. He recognized that violence was subject to a universal law. When used as a means

to bring peace, violence always leads to more violence. Nonviolent means to bring peace lead to more peace. So, if we respond to violence with violence, we would never reach peace.

Looking at historic and contemporary examples in the world, peace leaders have been clear on one principle: the antidote to violence is nonviolence. Desmond Tutu, the South African anti-apartheid activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, defines violence quite simply: words or actions that separate us are violent and those that bring us closer together are nonviolent.

If we apply this definition to the words that Indian leaders are using in response to the Pulwama incident, their violent rhetoric will escalate the conflict. Pakistan is doing the exact same thing by using a similar tone. Of course, a tragedy where numerous families have lost loved ones makes us feel anger, resentment and hatred. But if we pause and reflect, we can clearly see that to address the problem at its root, we need to seriously consider responding non-violently. This is in India's self-interest. It may sound a cliché, but it is easy to observe from past experiences that if India responds to hate with hate, we will secure more violence for our country in the future.

## PROS AND CONS OF INDIA'S RESPONSE

In weighing up which India should respond, the question to consider is what the pros and cons of retaliation

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compared to a nonviolent approach are? If India retaliates, the pro is we may be able to stem the immediate tide of anger and resentment in the country arising from the loss of lives, as well as derive solace that we have exacted revenge. The con is we would just contribute to another cycle of violence in the long run that has huge costs for us. If India chooses a nonviolent response, the pro is we may end up shifting the trajectory of the relationship between the two countries to a path of sustainable peace. The con is such a response may look weak, but this is not really so. In Gandhi's view, nonviolence requires much more strength than violence.

A nonviolent response does not in any way mean condoning the Pulwama attack or letting go of seeking justice and accountability. Investigating and holding the perpetrators accountable need to be part of any solution toward peace. However, if done carefully, such a response holds the possibility of a win-win situation for both sides in the long term. This is the power of a restorative justice approach that holds the potential to shift the subcontinent from a destructive to constructive trajectory.

On the other hand, a violent punitive response, can provide short-term victory for one side, but both of them will lose in the long run. The parents of the suicide bomber in Pulwama have stated their son took the route of violence after being beaten up by the Indian army a few years ago. This is yet more proof that violence begets more violence.

India can make the choice of responding with empathy to the seemingly deficient Pakistani offer of dialogue in order to get the two countries to the negotiating table. Any international dispute that has been settled with mediation and resulted in a win-win outcome that is sustainable has involved responding to the other side with empathy and using some form of nonviolent communication. This is at the heart of a restorative option that needs, at the very minimum, empathy because it requires understanding where the other side is coming from and finding common ground. This does not imply condoning or minimizing the gravity of what has happened.

James O'Dea, former Washington office director of Amnesty International, writes in a post on Facebook: "It is a fundamental basis of conflict resolution that you must give the other party the space to be the very best person they can be. If you confine the other person to the very limited view you have of them you will never have dialogue or a breakthrough in communication with them."

Using a restorative approach would mean we fully denounce the Pulwama attack and, at the same time, take up the offer of dialogue without compromising on investigation and accountability. Making peace is by no means easy in the face of such a destructive event, but it is possible and worthwhile because the stakes are very high.

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In 2016, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech that it “is much harder to make peace than to wage war.” It is time that the government, media and people of both India and Pakistan took the hard option.

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**Priyanka Pandey** is an economist and researcher with an interest in conflict resolution and restorative options. Her field of work includes economic and social inequality as well as education. She holds a PhD in Economics.

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## How Human Collaboration Can Beat Screen Addiction

William Softky  
March 7, 2019

*The tsunami of fake news, spam, phishing, cyberstalking and screen addiction motivates Douglas Rushkoff to write a manifesto for restoring live human collaboration.*

The tech honeymoon is over. Students in Brooklyn, New York, walked out in protest against a tech-heavy educational program. The very first conference on “screen addiction” attracted 200 teachers, parents and psychologists from three continents, almost all paying their own way. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was grilled on the US Senate floor. France banned cellphones in schools.

The more technology tries and claims to “connect” people, the more distrustful and disconnected people seem to be. Metrics of mental misery are rising worldwide, from loneliness and depression to suicides and suicide-killings. Many ordinary people blame technology.

Douglas Rushkoff’s new book, *Team Human*, decries the human damage done by digital technologies, some of which I helped create. He says the nemesis of humanity is “team algorithm,” and I was Silicon Valley’s first “algorithm officer.” He denounces smartphones, and I collaborated with the guy who invented them. He says we need to get back into lived, touchy-feely experience — for years I wrote my own code and still live by math.

Rushkoff, an American media theorist, has been writing books criticizing technology for years; two of the most recent were *Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus* and *Program or Be Programmed*. You get the idea. The current hardback is bright red and yellow, the colors of McDonald’s, or communism, take your pick.

*Team Human* is cleanly organized into 14 chapters containing a hundred two-page, bite-sized ideas, such a tight design that with the first sentence of each essay you can fairly represent the whole book’s arc. His entire case can also be extracted from the first two pages, forming a different but equally crisp miniature.



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Rushkoff's theses together form a manifesto against "the machine," a social broadside reminiscent of Martin Luther's 95 theses on the church door 500 years ago. The Wall Street Journal caricatured Rushkoff's book using the phrase "Users of the World, Unite!"

Perhaps The WSJ painted him as a has-been hippie because of this quote: "Capitalism's vision of the individual as a completely self-interested being, whose survival was a Darwinian battle royale, is at odds with our social evolution and our neurobiology."

Or maybe this quote from Team Human's final chapter: "As much as we think we're separate individuals, we're wired from birth and before to share, bond, learn from, and even heal one another. We humans are all part of the same collective nervous system. This is not a religious conviction but an increasingly accepted biological fact."

## **RUSHKOFF IS RIGHT**

There are all kinds of scientific "facts." The most common so-called facts are at the evidence-end of the truth spectrum, facts gathered with time and money, often incentivized and organized to serve an agenda and, therefore, even worse than hearsay.

At the other end of the truth spectrum, only a rare few scientific are formal, mathematical facts — facts about numbers themselves, facts so absolute even Albert Einstein would accept them sight unseen. Facts that would be true

on Mars or on Alpha Centauri. What Rushkoff doesn't tell you is that hard-wired human sociability is the second sort. Human social resonance isn't hearsay or paid-for propaganda, it is a mathematical fact.

That is the conclusion of one peer-reviewed paper Team Human cites, "Sensory Metrics of Neuromechanical Trust." In fact, that paper concludes with an anti-capitalist claim as totalizing and absolute as Rushkoff's final fanfare: "Like all other nervous systems, ours evolved to forage, not produce. Humankind uniquely produces things which captivate its senses, and now they do."

In fact, that second statement goes beyond being anti-capitalist, all the way to being anti-productive. I know because my wife and I wrote it. Criscillia Benford and I agree with Rushkoff, he interviewed us on his podcast Team Human and we like him. Most of all, we reached the same conclusions as Rushkoff independently, a single answer originating from three different disciplines (media theory, literature and neurophysics).

These are the same basic conclusions also expressed ages ago in stories like *The Machine Stops*, *Brave New World*, *Fahrenheit 451* and recently in an essay by computer-historian George Dyson's called "Childhood's End." A universal set of truths is emerging, a coherent consensus among intellectuals about the existence and spread of inherently toxic patterns in the modern human

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behavior and communications system. Historically, when so many smart people independently reach the same answer, it's the right one.

Rushkoff is the first to distill the coherent consensus into book form, and I know he's right. Plus, among the world-class brilliant people I've interacted with, I think he's even more brilliant, high in the firmament near Freeman Dyson. So, this review is biased toward Rushkoff.

While I can't remove my bias toward mathematical truth (my parents were both nuclear physicists), I can explain where math supports Rushkoff, and where it doesn't, by explaining a few of his culture/media-theory ideas in our information-theory, data-science terms. I'll start with what's obviously in Team Human, then what is implied but not elaborated and then end with some specifically wonderful solutions even Professor Rushkoff doesn't know yet.

## **TECH, SCREEN ADDITION AND HUMAN INTERACTION**

Team Human's core warning is that human-created technology on the whole, including even words and writing, damages human interpersonal interaction and affection via a tangle of runaway vicious circles that are accelerating year on year. Its core advice is to revive and practice our hard-wired natural capacity for social resonance.

More specifically, Rushkoff says that one-way communications like broadcast

media undermine human resonance and trust in a particularly specific vicious cycle: Technology makes us feel and act less human, and thereby makes us see and treat others as less human too. This erosion of trust caused by indirect (mediated) communications began thousands of years ago with micro-insults like memorization and writing, but is now exploding in potency to dazzle our anxieties with fake news and cyberstalking.

Math says Rushkoff is right. Mathematically, trust is built from lots and lots of back-and-forth interactions among autonomous individuals. Trust accumulates statistically, from data, as it does in any data-processing algorithm. Through that lens, two people talking and touching face-to-face share so many millions of micro-messages a minute they have plenty of time to lock in and confirm that they're on the same page. They can trust each other's "content" (whatever that is) because they can see and interact in real space and real time at maximum sensory-motor bandwidth, which is the native communications protocol for homo sapiens' 3-D nervous systems.

Math also says, therefore, that when you break the interactivity, you break trust formation. Because broadcast is one-way, no interaction, therefore the medium of broadcast provides no trust and only consumes it.

To be sure, broadcast does have uses. Among the antelope on the savannah, when one white tail whips, all antelope

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around take note and flee. No time for interaction during an alarm, just fear or fight or flight. Since even antelope can broadcast, obviously humans can too, so broadcast isn't bad in and of itself.

But broadcast only works for sending fast negative signals like alarm or hostility. No instant, one-way signal could ever carry the back-and-forth signals that slowly accumulate into positive human qualities like empathy, trust, affection, collaboration and love.

Humans don't actually suck. We aren't bad people, and people aren't bad. We've just spent so much time looking at each other through a weird kind of glass that filters out the good parts, that we've forgotten what the good parts look like or even where to find them. That's the problem Team Human poses.

## **TEAM HUMAN VS. TEAM SPREADSHEET**

What Team Human doesn't and cannot pose is the awful, epic, apocalyptic scale of a problem that originates in the statistical structure of life itself, and whose built-in feedback traps precede all the human ones that Rushkoff cites a million-fold in time. To wit:

1) When self-replicating patterns like RNA and DNA first emerged, the chemo-sphere became a biosphere, starting its slide down a slippery slope called entropy reduction, otherwise known as plummeting diversity. Raw diversity is in fact going down, and not just in human things like languages,

ethnic groups and political parties. Diversity was going down in species, genotypes, body architectures and such ever since DNA beat out some other chemical. Survival of the fittest means death of diverse others. It means diversity reduction.

2) When moving animals emerged and roved for nutrients, their only choice in life was stay and focus your search or go afield and blur it out. The catch is that too much focus gets you stuck. Now, modern human brains fall into funneling focus on pinpoint pricks of pixels saying "liked" or "viewed" or "clicked" or "purchased." Or claiming to say that.

3) Communicating animals reset their nervous systems by making ever-grander attention-seeking gestures, interrupting others to receive a confirmation that they're really there. Like turning up a megaphone. Making extra noise to be heard is an informational instinct, not a human weakness.

Unfortunately, when everyone starts interrupting and yelling at once, especially in an echo-chamber, the communications channel collapses and everything gets worse. For example, the mobile SMS/text channel is already collapsing from undelivered or auto-miscorrected messages; the email channel is collapsing from spam and fraud; and the phone channel is collapsing from robo-calls, dropped calls and gurgling over-compression.

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Communications technology is getting worse, and thereby disconnecting us.

4) Although automated algorithms (Rushkoff's "team algorithm") generate the most anti-human signals, even they aren't the enemy. The real enemy is the metric values that algorithms calculate to supplant human values: the anti-human values embedded in the spreadsheets used by both algorithms and executives. The real enemy of Team Human is "team spreadsheet."

That's a lot of gloom and doom. Fortunately, the same mathematical axioms that deliver the bad news promise many miraculous cures: ultra-resonance, ultra-breathing, ultra-acupuncture, ultra-grounding. Poke your skull at this one spot, make this funny face, hold this muscle just so... and pow — instant relief (sometimes). The good news is that a nervous system which can be hacked by social media and digital deception can be un-hacked too, best through the spine, instantly rebooted to feel instead of to see.

This is the only message missing from Team Human, the most optimistic message of all. Yes, humans are drowning in a tidal wave of toxic technologies separating us. But there are also cheap, simple, safe touch techniques and technologies, right under our noses, which give relief surpassing drugs or surgery, which connect us and which help us heal each other. The really good stuff exists already, unmonetizable and thus unexploited. Finding it, inventing it and

collaboratively spreading it in time to help will be the challenge of the ages.

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**William Softky** is a biophysicist who was among the first neuroscientists to understand microtiming, and among the first technologists to build that understanding into algorithms. Thousands have cited his scientific work, his PhD in Theoretical Physics is from Caltech, his name is on 10 patents and two of the companies he inspired were acquired for \$160 million total.

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## **Unless Britain Is Better Informed, a Second Referendum Will Only Make Things Worse**

Jack Riddick

March 11, 2019

*As facts and civil discourse are abandoned for misinformation and hysteria, the democratic waters are becoming murkier.*

On March 12, Theresa May will be given another opportunity to get her Brexit deal through Parliament. The British prime minister's position is not envious. Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, is still to blink on the question of the so-called Irish backstop, designed to ensure the Irish border remains open after Brexit. The provision is a deciding factor for many within the Conservative Party, and May's refusal to abandon her negotiating wild card — the economic

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self-flagellation in the form of a no-deal Brexit — has led to more resignations from both the party and the cabinet.

Meanwhile, following the defeat of Labour's Brexit proposal and May's pledge to give MPs a vote on extending Article 50, a second referendum is becoming a plausible outcome.

But is this really a way out? Even if a larger youth turnout and a few swing voters were enough to secure a "remain" vote, this would still leave a large minority feeling that their voices had been constitutionally undermined. The only way to secure the direction of Britain's future is to achieve consensus, both in Parliament and among the electorate.

To find a way forward, we must consider why Britain has been split so neatly in half. Presumably, the 48% of those who voted to stay in the European Union do not have radically different interests to the rest of the population.

At least in terms of the impact of Brexit, there is more to unite Britons than to divide them. Of course, contrary to what economists would have us believe, not everyone acts in one's own self-interest. Immigration, the most frequently cited concern among "leave" voters, divided hearts and minds long before June 2016. For others, questions of British sovereignty simply trumped economic concerns.

So, is the UK just a freak nation of diametrically opposed individuals who

happen to share an island? Possibly. But perhaps we should look the roots of social polarization in the information provided to the general public.

## **PARTISANSHIP**

Partisan newspapers might have a role to play. With perceived left and right-leaning papers such as The Guardian and The Telegraph (respectively) commanding loyal audiences, many of their readers do not have the time or inclination to seek out different perspectives. The result is that readers are led to believe that those on the other side are unreasonable and ignorant of the "real situation."

This problem is compounded by tabloid newspapers that, unsubtly bated with pictures of scantily-dressed women and celebrity gossip, often reap the awards of their wide circulation by peddling one-sided populist agendas.

However, tempting as it is for "remain" voters to portray The Daily Mail as a silver-tongued lingo of the impassioned Brexiteer, it is difficult to identify where newspapers influence, as opposed to merely reflect, public opinion.

In this age of the digital, we also cannot afford to discount the power of the internet. The argument that social media breeds echo chambers is often repeated — despite research indicating otherwise — but this is by no means the only factor. News reporting, once the domain of a few conglomerates, has been democratized. This shift has been

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marked by a deluge of content, all competing for our clicks with enticing headlines and shallow controversy. In the quest to go viral, simplistic and emotionally charged perspectives inevitably triumph over nuanced debate.

Yet though sensationalist media may be a source of fertile manure, politicians are needed to sow the seeds of polarization. In the lead up to the referendum, this was performed with aplomb. Vote Leave's demonstrably false claims included the threat of an extra 5 million people potentially moving to the UK after countries like Turkey join the EU, as well as the infamous £350 million (\$460 million) that would be saved weekly from going to the EU and redirected toward the National Health Service, derided by the UK Statistics Authority as a "clear misuse of official statistics."

On the other side, the so-called Project Fear of the pro-EU camp successfully alienated those it wished to convince with outlandish claims of economic collapse.

## **MISINFORMATION AND HYSTERIA**

As facts and civil discourse are abandoned for misinformation and hysteria, the democratic waters are becoming murkier. A spate of resignations has reduced the government's working majority in Parliament to just nine. On the web, a campaign of disinformation about the contents of the Lisbon Treaty, which comes into force next year, has gone

viral. Meanwhile, the People's Vote campaigners continue to preach to the choir of a cosmopolitan middle class with promises of a return to pre-Brexit prosperity, failing entirely to address the non-economic priorities of those who voted to "take back control."

Without a greater degree of unanimity, a second referendum would serve only to aggravate existing tensions. The first step is to ensure the public understands what it is voting for. Even a single widely trusted, non-partisan source of information read by every voter would go a long way to ensuring the health of British democracy. One way to achieve this would be to produce a cross-party referendum manifesto.

But what would this look like? In order to be as politically neutral as possible, it would necessarily involve no value judgments. The material would be produced by topic experts, their findings subject to peer review and a regulator. It would need to deal with a wide range of issues important to voters, from questions of trade and immigration to effects on specific industries and employment. Where there is a degree of subjectivity, both sides would need a voice.

Impartiality is fairly achievable, at least in writing. The real challenge would be to secure public trust. It is for this reason that the findings would need to be put to Parliament. To ensure against a monopoly on truth, it would likely require more than a majority. Clearly, this

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crucible could only be passed if the contents were entirely uncontroversial.

Needless to say, this is idealistic. And even if it were possible, there would still be discord. A manifesto that appeals to both sides would be ipso facto unpersuasive. Nevertheless, it would enable voters to weigh their own values against the facts. For example, those who feel that Britain should have greater control of its borders would have a better idea of how Brexit would change this, as well as the possible impact this might have on trade and the job market. Moreover, statistics that contradict the contents of the manifesto would be called into greater scrutiny, thus giving politicians less freedom to twist the truth.

In a democracy, giving the electorate a clearer understanding of its vote is about as far as one can go. A second referendum would still risk further division. Even with a reliable source of information, the unanimity of a referendum relies on common values and the wisdom of the crowd. That said, better informing the voter would at least give us a chance to see what remains of both.

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**Jack Riddick** is a student of philosophy. Having recently completed school exams, he will begin studying philosophy in 2019. He is currently working as a writing volunteer at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

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## The New Zealand “Gunman” Is a Terrorist

S. Suresh

March 17, 2019

*Everyone who spews vile, hateful rhetoric have their hands tainted with the blood of the victims from the mosque attacks in Christchurch.*

On March 15, 50 people were killed by a Christian, far-right, white supremacist when they were engaged in Friday prayers at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. More than three years ago, when gunmen killed 130 people in France, media had no issues calling the perpetrators what they were, Islamic terrorists, highlighting both the faith and the ideology of the attackers.

The whole world stood by France in its moment of grief, with social media feeds going through the roof as people embraced the French flag in their identity, especially on Facebook. There was no ambiguity in the grief expressed across the globe at the predominantly Christian lives that were lost at the hands of terrorist perpetrators belonging to the Islamic State group. While there is outrage expressed at the New Zealand massacre, it seems the world is more shocked at the fact that a terrorist attack happened in the small island nation, rather than the hate crime targeted at innocent Muslims.

Standing in solidarity with New Zealanders where worshippers were killed by an Australian citizen, Prime Minister Scott Morrison described the

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perpetrator as an “extremist right-wing, violent terrorist.” It is remarkable that the Australian prime minister went as far as using the word “terrorist” to describe him.

In contrast, the irresponsible, indifferent and Islamophobic Australian senator from Queensland, Fraser Anning, had no qualms about blaming the attack on New Zealand’s immigration policies from the past that allowed Muslims to immigrate into that country. “The real cause of bloodshed on New Zealand streets today is the immigration program that allowed Muslim fanatics to migrate to New Zealand in the first place,” Anning said in a statement soon after the Friday massacre.

US President Donald Trump had this to say of the tragic incident: “My warmest sympathy and best wishes goes out to the people of New Zealand.” Warmest sympathy? Best wishes? Even the tragic loss of lives could not move Trump to call out the Muslim identity of the victims and express at least some perfunctory sympathy for them and their families.

Trump has never hidden his disdain for Muslims while openly promoting white nationalism. It is farfetched to expect the president to call out the gunman for what he is: a Christian, white, right-wing terrorist. In fact, when Trump was asked if he saw white nationalism as a rising threat in the world, he doubled down on his core fundamentalist beliefs and responded: “I don’t really. I think it’s a small group of people that have very, very serious problems.”

It is no wonder that the Christchurch shooter’s 74-page manifesto lauded Trump as a “symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose.” Whether Trump acknowledges it or not, his hateful rhetoric following his ascension to power has had serious consequences, and his hands are tainted with the blood of the Muslim women, men and children who lost their lives while praying in mosques on that fateful Friday.

## **WHY HATE CRIMES AGAINST MUSLIMS WON’T STOP**

As long as there are leaders like Trump and Anning who unabashedly spread falsehood with their vile rhetoric against Muslims, the world will continue to see more incidents where innocent people are targeted with hate crimes.

As long as countries defend and accept hate speech as an individual’s right to freedom of expression, the world will continue to breed more of the likes of Brenton Tarrant and Anders Behring Breivik — the terrorists behind the New Zealand massacre and the 2011 Norway attack.

As long as the world refuses to acknowledge that guns have no place in a civilized society and allow people to own weapons that can extinguish multiple lives in a matter of moments, the Christchurch attack will not be the last of its kind.

As long as the world media continues to paint Christian, white, right-wing



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terrorists as outliers and tries to “humanize” them, Caucasians and Christians will never have to bear the brunt of the actions of people like Tarrant. They can offer their prayers and sympathies to those killed and move on with their lives without fear.

As long as the media continues to describe the actions of every Muslim extremist as a reflection on the entire Islamic population, every Muslim in the world will have to live in fear of bearing the brunt of those actions just because they share the same faith.

March 15, 2019, was a sad day not only because of the loss of 50 innocent Muslims engaged in prayers at the hands of a hate-filled man, but the world got to witness yet again the double standards in media reporting and the words of fanatics in positions of power like Trump and Anning.

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**S. Suresh** is a product executive with more than 25 years of experience in enterprise software. He is also a writer who devotes much of his time analyzing socioeconomic issues and shares his viewpoints and experiences through his blog, newsletter and Fair Observer. He is a volunteer at HealthTrust, a nonprofit that works towards building health equity in Silicon Valley. Suresh holds graduate degrees in Computer Science and Chemistry from Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, India.

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## Meet the “Moderates” the EU Is Trying to Empower in Iran

Alejo Vidal-Quadras  
March 18, 2019

*The appointment of Ebrahim Raisi as head of Iran’s judiciary is the latest proof that the country’s moderates and hardliners are united in the main goal of the regime: its survival through repression at home and export of terrorism abroad.*

Recently, two events that have taken place at the highest level of the Islamic Republic of Iran have once again demonstrated the failed strategy and the massive misreading of Tehran by the European Union. Earlier this month, we witnessed the farce enacted by the Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who threatened to quit his post only for his resignation to be rejected by the country’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The threat, prompted by a non-invitation to meet the Syrian dictator and war criminal Bashar al-Assad when he visited Tehran, ended with the confirmation that the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic acts with the explicit blessing (and of course guidance) of the supreme leader. Wasn’t Zarif the face of the supposed moderates confronting the faction of those close to Khamenei — the hardliners?

This fake rift — separated on minor issues but united as a block in the survival of the system on which they all

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depend — has been more troublingly exposed with the shameful confirmation this month of Ebrahim Raisi as head of the judiciary of Iran. According to Amnesty International's recent damning report, *Blood-Soaked Secrets: Why Iran's 1988 Prison Massacres Are Ongoing Crimes Against Humanity*, Raisi was actively involved in the massacre of thousands of Iranian political prisoners, most of them members of the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) — the main opposition to the mullahs. This new head of the judiciary was, in 1988, the deputy prosecutor general of Tehran and member of the "death committee" that sent tens of thousands of political prisoners to the gallows, denying the families even the basic right of knowing where the bodies had been buried after the secret executions.

This case, widely recognized as a crime against humanity, was brought back to the front pages when in the summer of 2016, the son of Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, who in 1988 was the appointed successor to Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini, published an audio tape recorded during the months of the massacre where his father openly denounced it as "the biggest crime in the Islamic Republic."

Directly addressing the "death committee" in Tehran, of which Raisi was a member, Montazeri said: "History will condemn us. The worst crime has been committed at your hands, and they'll write your names as criminals in history."

But in a country ruled by religious hardliners, this crime against humanity is not only insufficient cause for investigation and punishment of the perpetrators, but a source of pride for its instigators. When in 2015 Raisi ran, unsuccessfully, for president, he boasted about his role in the massacre and said that he was proud to have executed the members of the MEK. Now he will lead the judicial system of the regime. Weren't the European Union's efforts to appease Iran and all these years of dialogue and concessions supposed to empower moderate figures and isolate the hardliners?

All this is the result of a fundamentally flawed policy, based on a bad reading of the internal composition of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The European External Action Service has conducted a strategy based on a mirage of a rift between two sides that are "in confrontation," falling into a trap set by Tehran by appeasing and conceding benefits to the mullahs' regime, hoping naively that all this would lead to a change of behavior that never came.

These two sides, while ferociously competing for internal parcels of power, are united on the main goal of the regime: its survival through repression at home and export of terrorism abroad.

Last week, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh and other human rights defenders in Iran. Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer, winner of the Sakharov Prize and a mother of two,

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was condemned to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes this month for defending the human rights of her compatriots.

The resolution also raised attention to the case of Maryam Akbari Monfared, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2010 for so-called “enmity against God” and denied medical care despite suffering from various illnesses. Her three brothers and sister, who all supported the MEK, have been executed by the regime of Iran, two of them during the 1988 massacre.

So far, the EU’s foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has failed to speak out against the appointment of a mass murderer as Iran’s judiciary chief. Ebrahim Raisi and other officials responsible for human rights abuses in Iran should be added to the EU sanctions list. Europe must work forcefully for the right of Iran’s people to live in freedom and democracy.

The EU was founded on the principle of human rights. It is high time for the EU to understand its failure and to rethink the way we deal with this inhuman theocracy.

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**Alejo Vidal-Quadras** is the former vice-president of the European Parliament, serving from 1999 to 2014. A Spanish professor of atomic and nuclear physics, he is currently president of the Brussels-based International Committee in Search of Justice (ISJ).

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## Will Evo Morales Win Again in Bolivia?

Javiera Alarcon  
March 21, 2019

*Evo Morales’ re-election bid will be a referendum on his current administration.*

Evo Morales, the president of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, is currently in his 13th year in office, with aspirations of remaining until 2025. He is the longest consecutively serving head of state in Latin America, whose expert deployment of clientelism has continued to reward the discipline of party members and civil servants. Morales is not immune to the so-called politician’s dilemma — a term coined by Barbara Geddes to explain partisan strategies of survival. Even though granting plum appointments to loyalists appears to create a competent bureaucracy, burden sharing is tearing at the seams of a delicate political climate.

It is not just political elites that exclusively benefit from President Morales’ expansive network of partisan maneuvering. Civil society organizations are mobilized specifically to achieve political expediency with promises of accessibility or economic prosperity. The Bolivian economy has steadily grown, and a significant reduction in poverty serves to bolster the administration’s achievements. World Bank data from 2006 indicate poverty affected 59.91% of the population; in 2016, it was down to 39.5%.

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Historically, indigenous people have been shut out from economic opportunities. Morales, who is the country's first indigenous president, has taken deliberate action on the distribution of public goods. Grassroots leaders at the helm of the progressive movement continue to work with supporters to reassure them that the current government is on their side.

Moreover, the Movement to Socialism party (MAS) is struggling to maintain a stronghold. MAS activists curry favorable votes and perpetuate the spoils of a MAS victory. In their political vision this can only be possible with Morales as the guarantor.

The National Coordination for Bolivia (Conalcam) is a Tammany Hall-style political machine responsible for turning out people to various local activities. These visibility events are organized by supporters from all sectors of the electorate to boost enthusiasm for the Morales administration.

## **POLITICAL MACHINE**

The president has overcome corruption scandals, including charges of inadequate fiscal transparency. The 2014 International Monetary Fund report on Bolivia documented poor reporting of tax expenditure and mismanagement of external audits.

Diminishing transparency is also an example of weakened democratic institutions. In this environment, Morales

seems unscathed by these fiscal and judicial problems.

In *How Democracies Die*, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt describe conditions of institutional forbearance, including violation of constitutional rules. Bolivia embodies a populist government that has weakened judicial independence, where the rule of law is repeatedly bent to subvert democracy. Manipulating popular support, as Levitsky and Ziblatt outline, is a page from a populist's playbook on claiming political legitimacy. Overreach of civil liberties in a populist government has consequences for its stability and leaves the door open for authoritarianism to creep in.

Both the 2009 and 2017 overhauls of the Bolivian Constitution are examples of how the Morales administration has forged the ideas of a social movement into state building. A government-controlled court, backed by Morales, authorized the 2017 constitutional reform and subsequently eliminated presidential term limits. In part, the 2009 constitutional reform facilitated a judiciary shakeup, especially following the 2011 judicial election. A point of pride for MAS is furthering successful representation of marginalized communities, and the newly reformed constitution was able to claim a historic number of female judges elected into office, including many of indigenous origin.

In Bolivia, judicial activism has a greater likelihood of bending toward

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authoritarianism. The judiciary is, in principle, independent from the executive, but in practice it is yet another mechanism for expansive powers. Judicial independence has been eroded through unrestrained constitutional reform that lacks transparency in the selection process of judges, which just one example of corruption involving powerful interests. Judges must be able to freely apply the rule of law, but for the last few years, judicial independence has not been a guarantee for Bolivia's federal judges.

In April 2018, the Organization of American States (OAS) took up Morales' declaration that re-election is a human right based on his interpretation of Article 23 of the American Convention on Human Rights. Arguing that term limits inhibit political participation and representation, Morales hoped to substantiate his bid to a presidential re-election, but the OAS report rejected the claim.

The immediate challenge for Morales in a re-election bid is the unmistakable referendum on his current administration. The outcome of the presidential primary in January reveals just how deep the political rifts are. One viable contender for office is the former president, Carlos Mesa, and it will be interesting to see how he's able to redefine civic participation. The results of the January primary show Mesa to be neck and neck with Morales.

Besides Morales and Mesa, the other presidential contenders include Óscar

Ortiz and Jaime Paz Zamora, both a distant third and fourth in the primary, representing strong opposition factions determined to vote Morales out of office. In the final tier of candidates with 2% or less of the primary vote, Víctor Hugo Cardenas is notable for having experience as Bolivia's vice president from 1993 to 1997. Cardenas is also an Aymara activist, representing the Solidarity Civic Unity opposition movement.

As can be seen by the fierce presidential competition, there's a robust sector of the population that is keeping pressure on the Morales administration. Most recognized are the protests that question the legitimacy of the February 21, 2016 referendum (21F), which made it possible for Morales to remain as president. These protests signal continued grievances, but to date they have failed to oust Morales. Bolivia's supreme electoral tribunal, with its partisan support for Morales, plays a role. The January primary election results reported a 45.51% turnout — or some 451,026 — of registered MAS voters. Not even a recent election monitoring visit from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has been able to diminish what Morales believes is an unwavering support from a traditional base of indigenous militants and other coalition members.

## **REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The election date has been set for October 20, and will prove to be consequential for the future of Bolivian

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politics. Deliberation over the election date was affected by international politics. In terms of optimizing electoral turnout, some speculated that the Bolivian government and the electoral tribunal will make sure that the election date would not conflict with other elections, like the one in Argentina, which is home to a large Bolivian expat community.

If MAS is able to consolidate power for Morales, such a win could have benefits for neighboring Venezuela as well. Having an ally in the region should ideally help Caracas to stem mass migration by securing resources and aid. At the moment, Morales is steering clear of the Venezuelan crisis, with his failing government focused on Morales' own uncertain position in the upcoming election. Given the political unrest in Venezuela, it is most likely that Bolivia's election plans will proceed without much international pressure.

The recent primary results show that this will not be an easy electoral season. Morales must tread carefully when it comes to both domestic and foreign policy. Missteps could easily provide Mesa with the tailwind he needs for electoral success. In a region that is seeing a return of right-wing conservatives, one of Mesa's most valuable attributes is that he is not Morales. The region is wary of the crisis in Venezuela, and attempts to contain the spillover could prove consequential for the survival of a populist government like the one headed by Evo Morales. The "No Evo" block of voters will have

their pick on October 20, and Mesa does have the advantage of executive experience. In baseball terms, Mesa could end up a five o'clock hitter, but a home run over Morales might prove harder to swing.

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**Javiera Alarcon** is a political analyst on Latin American and security affairs. She received her MA in International Relations and Comparative Politics with a specialization in Latin American politics from the University of Maryland, College Park. She also has an advanced degree in environmental law and international relations from the University of King Juan Carlos and Georgetown University. She was a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

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## **What Makes a Christchurch-Style Attack Feel So Likely in Britain?**

Bethan Johnson  
March 25, 2019

*The sentiments at work in the manifesto of the Christchurch terrorist can be found in Britain with increasing frequency.*

"It absolutely could happen here." This was the Minister of State for Security Ben Wallace's response on BBC Radio 4 to the question many in the United Kingdom and around the world have asked themselves in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of 50 people praying in two

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mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand: Could it happen here?

Superficially, a response like this may appear to be the perfunctory answer to such a hypothetical, particularly given that it was posed on a broadcast entitled “Threat of UK far-right” and given the discernible rise in popularity of far-right movements and ideologies throughout Europe.

However, it behooves analysts and lay observers alike to consider exactly what this response says about the state of Britain’s ideological landscape today. Why could it happen here, and what makes it feel so possible?

It is important to acknowledge that Wallace’s answer might be the result of intimate knowledge of the condition on the ground in Britain that wider society does not, or even cannot, know. Law enforcement foiled 18 alleged terrorist attacks since March 2017, four of these planned by so-called far-right actors. Likewise, the European Union’s law enforcement apparatus, Europol, also uncovered five terrorist plots planned by right-wing individuals in 2017.

There are undoubtedly many individuals still under observation at present for indications that they are planning a terrorist attack. While the exact threat level thereby remains obscure, additional or alternative avenues must be explored to consider the possibility of fatal, far-right terrorism.

## **MANIFESTO**

Terrorist attacks such as the one in New Zealand are the manifestation of underlying biases in society, articulated at an extreme. Although law enforcement and government officials have placed serious pressure on social media platforms and search engines to restrict access to the manifesto written by the perpetrator of the terrorist attack in Christchurch, the substance of the text can be analyzed in order to discern driving forces behind his actions.

According to the manifesto, the man viewed European society (which he deemed to include also non-European states that were populated by white Europeans, such as Australia, the United States and New Zealand) as imperiled by the alleged replacement of (white) Europeans with non-Europeans, namely non-white Muslims. The text articulates at length ideas of how immigration, high birth rates among immigrants, and European beliefs in multiculturalism were facilitating the erasure of white societies in Europe, something the author felt threatened the existence of various elements of culture and tradition unique to white Europe.

The author takes pains in the opening pages of his manifesto to claim that he does not object to Islam nor to the existence of non-white people in the world, but rather argues against immigration and ethnic heterogeneity in society based on the belief that multiculturalism is incompatible with human nature, and that immigration and non-Europeans in European countries threaten the survival of Europe’s

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cultures, traditions and people. “The attack was to ensure a preservation of beauty, art and tradition,” he writes. “In my mind a rainbow is only beautiful to due [sic] its variety of colours, mix the colours together and you destroy them all and they are gone forever and the end result is far from anything beautiful.”

The author entitles one section of his manifesto “Europe for Europeans,” in which he endorses the forced removal of “Roma, African, Indian, Turkish, Semitic, or other,” people “regardless from where they came or when they came” to Europe.

The terrorist articulates the reason for attacking Muslim immigrants in particular because they “are the most despised group of invaders in the West, attacking them receives the greatest level of support. They are also one of the strongest groups, with high fertility, high in group preferences and a will to conquer.” Inherent in these and many of the other claims found in the manifesto is the fundamental rejection of multiculturalism, a staunch belief in the incompatibility of Islam or Muslim immigrant communities’ cultures with a European culture, and a nostalgic belief in the idea that European states were more peaceful when more racially homogeneous as they were in previous centuries.

Similar sentiments can be found in other manifestos from perpetrators of far-right terrorism in the last decade. The most prominent one cited by the Christchurch terrorist is the manifesto of the man

responsible for the deaths of 77 people in Norway in July 2011. At more than 1,000 pages, this manifesto opens with an assertion about “the ongoing Islamic colonisation of Europe,” the “Islamisation of Western Europe” and the perceived evils of multiculturalism.

Another example can be found in the mass shooting at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, where the attacker, motivated by the belief in an “impending racial holy war,” killed six worshippers and injured four more before killing himself. In Sweden, a lone-wolf attacker shot and killed two people and injured 13, largely in a 10-month period between 2009 and 2010; he espoused anti-immigrant ideologies and selected targets based on their race.

## **BRITISH WAY OF LIFE**

The sentiments at work in the manifesto of the Christchurch terrorist can be found in Britain with increasing frequency. According to the Hope Not Hate’s State of Hate 2019 report, a July 2018 poll found that 35% of Britons believed that “Islam is generally a threat to the British way of life.” A January 2018 survey found that 30% felt that either “almost all Muslims do not want to integrate” or that “most Muslims do not want to integrate despite the few that do.” Furthermore, on the idea of Muslim immigration and replacement theory, only 13% of Britons are able to correctly approximate the size of the Muslim population in Britain (5%), while 40% of Britons overestimate that percentage.



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An additional survey of Britons conducted by ComRes in October 2018 found that 43% agreed with the statement that “Western liberal society can never be compatible with Islam,” with 25% strongly agreeing.

The Council for Arab-British Understanding and the Arab News newspaper also conducted a poll, finding that 64% of Britons believed that “Arabs have failed to integrate” in Britain, and that 69% of Britons believed the United Kingdom had accepted “too many refugees.” Studies such as these indicate the prevalence of ideologies that would be foundational to anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim terrorist attacks in Britain.

Statistics from the Home Office show that these ideas are being acted upon with a greater prevalence. For example, reported hate crimes motivated by race nearly doubled between 2011/2012 and 2017/2018, while religiously-motivated hate crimes have more than quadrupled since 2011.

According to reports, the majority of specifically religion-related hate crimes last year were perpetrated against Muslims, and previous government findings show that Muslim adults were disproportionately more likely to be targets of religiously-motivated hate crimes. Additional reporting demonstrates a degree of interconnectivity between racial and religious hate crime in Britain, a component of the attack in New Zealand.

Analysis of “racially motivated hate crime by religion” found that Muslim adults in Britain were significantly more likely to be the subject of such race-related hate crimes. (It is important to briefly acknowledge that these rising rates may be due to an increased willingness to report hate crimes, but they still fail to capture the entire picture as almost half of all incidents allegedly go unreported to the police.)

Most often, reported hate crimes involve verbal abuse or threats, graffiti on places of worship or homes, and physical assaults. Evidence of this is perhaps most palpable in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in New Zealand. According to statistics from the charity Tell Mama, the group has received reports of 95 hate-based incidents between the day of the attack on March 15 and March 21, with almost 90% of these incidents making explicit reference to the violence in Christchurch. The police, meanwhile, are investigating attacks on six mosques in Birmingham.

Considerable or even fatal physical violence has flared up in multiple instances within the last half decade alone. In mid-March 2019, an incident of far-right violence allegedly took place in Surrey when a heavily-armed man yelling racial abuses stabbed a young man. In June 2017, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a man drove a van into a group of Muslims in Finsbury Park, killing one and injuring nine others; he was allegedly incensed following the terrorist attacks in London

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earlier that month. Although not exclusively motivated by Islamophobic or anti-immigrant beliefs, the member of Parliament for the Batley and Spen constituency, Jo Cox, was also murdered by a far-right extremist in June 2016.

## **HATE CRIMES**

An additional finding of hate crime statistics from the government shows that Islamophobic and anti-immigrant attacks rise in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, with notable upsurge following the murder of Lee Rigby (May 2013), the Westminster Bridge attack (March 2017), the Manchester bombings (May 2017), and the London Bridge attack (June 2017). Increases in hate crimes related to religion were also evident following the Charlie Hebdo attack in France in January 2015, though there was no surge in the weeks after the November 2015 attacks in Paris.

Another factor identified in cases of violence against immigrant and Muslim communities in Britain has stemmed from reports relating to sexual abuse and grooming scandals in which the perpetrators were reported to belong to Muslim communities. Finally, an additional spike in police-classified “racially or religiously aggravated offences” occurred in the immediate aftermath of the EU referendum in July 2016, following an already steady rise in offences throughout the campaign.

Statistics such as these demonstrate a concerning rise in manifestations of

aggression based on Islamophobic or racist beliefs in Britain and exist along the continuum that motivates far-right ideologues to commit acts out of hatred. However, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between these incidents and a terrorist attack such as the one in New Zealand. Increases in race and religious-based hate crimes often occur in the immediate aftermath of major, emotional events. These attacks are what some in the counterterrorism community would call sudden extremist violence, a phenomenon whereby a person’s violent action is unplanned or only briefly planned, and is the result of a reaction to specific trigger.

Likewise, numerous instances of verbal abuse and threats are the result of the manifestation of anger or hatred in unplanned moments, invective interjections with no intent or a lack of requisite planning to cause physical or mass, fatal harm.

Attacks including the one perpetrated in New Zealand or the other locations referenced are the result of additional and specific form of radicalization, one that condones and even valorizes bloodshed and takes considerable planning. Mass violence exists at the most extreme end of the spectrum of far-right ideology and necessitates a series of structural and institutional supports to achieve the requisite level of grooming.

As the Christchurch terrorist explained, “young men and women see this suicidal nihilism and isolate themselves

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from this mainstream, ‘multicultural’, egalitarian, individualistic insanity and look for allies anywhere they can find them, in the flesh or online. They congregate, discuss, despair, strategize, debate and plan. They decry weakness, mock fecklessness and worship strength, and in this worship of strength they radicalize and find the solution.” These institutions and material requirements are also essentially met in Britain.

While currently banned by the government, for years far-right extremist organizations such as National Action, Scottish Dawn, NS131 and Combat 18 disseminated radical material, connected far-right thinkers and promoted violent activism from members. Despite their proscription that hinders their ability to openly recruit and radicalize, these organizations and offshoots still operate.

For example, System Resistance Network and Sonnenkrieg Division, which adopt neo-Nazi principles, continue to engage in violent activities and to endorse violence. Many other, smaller (sometimes regional) groups likewise serve to reinforce prejudices in such a way that compels some toward violence.

## **PROPAGANDA**

Consistent exposure to propaganda that does not expressly advocate violence but reiterates anti-immigrant or anti-Muslim sentiments alongside language that encourages immediate action to

“protect” or “defend” the nation can still contribute to a person’s willingness to commit a terrorist attack. For example, in the case of New Zealand, the perpetrator claimed that he was not in fact a member of any hate groups but rather used the internet to listen to and talk to like-minded people around the world who spoke about the urgency of the issue and the futility of non-violent means of reform.

In Britain, videos produced by Tommy Robinson, the English Defence League, UK Independence Party and a range of other videos produced by less well-known names are easy to find on YouTube and Facebook, speaking to ideas about “replacement” and calling upon Britons to act to preserve a “British” way of life threatened by Muslim immigration.

Radio broadcasts such as Radio Aryan also relay extreme nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments. While deprived of a platform by many social media outlets, many online forums remain readily available to connect far-right thinkers in Britain, whereby they can mutually radicalize by reinforcing prejudices and encouraging each other toward violent action, much like the Islamic State and other radical groups.

Beyond the British context, there are many more far-right organizations, message boards, social media platforms and informal networks that serve to radicalize viewers. As was the case in New Zealand, Norway and the United

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States, far-right terrorists accessed and took inspiration from radical materials from many countries. Moreover, the many organizations and activists that contribute to the counter-jihad and identitarian movements — generally speaking movements endorsing the need for a white, non-Muslim Europe — which can be found in many Western countries and may contribute to the radicalization of Britons.

Finally, the manifestos of far-right terrorists can be found through traditional search engines, and these texts are known to help crystallize radical ideologies in readers, as was the case for the man responsible for the killings in New Zealand.

The difficulty that the British authorities face in preventing far-right terrorism is tied to the array of means by which a person may become radicalized and the reality of lone-wolf style attacks. Policing and banning far-right organizations, as well as government programming aimed at monitoring and deradicalizing individuals and communities, may prevent the level of violence witnessed in New Zealand recently. However this is hardly certain, especially given the reality that terrorists like the Christchurch shooter may never have joined any hate groups and managed to gain access to radical materials unbeknownst to the authorities.

British authorities in the aftermath of the violence in New Zealand have pledged to issue official threat warnings with regards to far-right terrorism, the

question remains as to how effective this and other measures will be. Finally, while gun control measures in New Zealand and Great Britain are different, terrorists are inherently so committed to the cause that they are willing to circumvent the system to stockpile arms. As the trials of National Action members show, for example, far-right groups remain able to attain guns. Moreover, it is important to recognize that far-right terrorism may inflict bloodshed using a variety of means other than guns.

Just as Wallace's response is a reflection of the unknowable future, so too are studies such as this that recognize the potential for violence but see it as by no means definitive. However, given the robustness of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic sentiment, an assortment of far-right groups endorsing violence, and a technology sector that has failed to (and may never be able to) remove those broadcasts and manifestos designed to incite violence, there can be no other reasonable answer to whether a high-fatality, far-right terrorist attack could happen in Great Britain than that it "absolutely could."

*\*[Note: The author has intentionally excluded the names of perpetrators of terrorism, as well as the titles of their manifestos, so as to focus the attention on the ideologies they espoused, and also because many far-right terrorists, including the perpetrator of the Christchurch attack, claim to have been*

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*radicalized after using the internet to find these manifestos.]*

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## **Anti-Muslim Hate Crime Is a New Form of Racism**

Imran Awan

March 28, 2019

*Anti-Muslim hate crime, which spikes following terror attacks, is inextricably intertwined with racism.*

This article has been difficult to write because I was hoping that, in 2019, I would not need to start talking about international terrorism and how it can impact the streets of Britain. Instead, we are focusing on the terrible events that happened in Christchurch, New Zealand, where a far-right extremist shot and killed 50 Muslims during Friday prayers at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques on March 15.

My worry was that these attacks would trigger further violence and a perception of a “them versus us” culture. What we know is that — following terrorist attacks in Paris and Tunisia, and in Woolwich in 2013 — we tend to see a sharp rise in anti-Muslim attacks. Indeed, Britain’s biggest force, the Metropolitan Police, recorded 500 anti-Muslim hate crimes following the Woolwich attack, in which British Army Fusilier Lee Rigby was brutally murdered by two British nationals who recently converted to Islam.

These incidents include those where mosques have been targeted — the latest incidents taking place just last week in Birmingham — Muslim women have had their hijab (headscarf) or niqab (face veil) pulled off, Muslim men attacked and racist graffiti scrawled on Muslim graves and properties. Muslims, particularly those with a visible Muslim identity, are more vulnerable to anti-Muslim hostility, intimidation, abuse and threats of violence.

The prevalence and severity of such anti-Muslim hate crimes are influenced by trigger events of local, national and international significance. The danger is that hate crimes are often provoked by antecedent events that incite a desire for retribution in the targeted group — and toward the group that shares similar characteristics to the perpetrators — will form again. From this perspective, hate crimes increase following trigger events as they operate to galvanize tensions and sentiments against the suspected

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perpetrators and groups associated with them.

In my joint research project, looking at anti-Muslim hostility, we found that after the Woolwich attack, the people we interviewed often cited terrorist antecedent trigger events that induced a significant increase in their anti-Muslim hate crime experiences. Sarah told us: “I know sisters who have been punched, being shouted at on the street, being pulled and pushed around by people, had their houses being burned down.” Ahmed stated: “I have figured out over the years that this happens when there is a terrorist attack in the news committed by Muslims so Islamophobia happens even more.”

We also spoke to people who had suffered anti-Muslim hate following high-profile terrorist attacks around the world such as the 2014 Sydney hostage crisis, the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, and the shootings in Copenhagen and Tunisia the same year. Reflecting a spike in both online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime, Hamza stated: “I have received Islamophobic abuse in social media and on the street on various occasions. After the Sydney incident, I received Islamophobic remarks on four separate occasions in the space of two weeks.” According to Asma, “After the Paris attacks, I got a lot of nasty comments especially on social media.”

In a globally connected world, the actions by one terrorist group such as the so-called Islamic State (IS) can lead

to counter-reactions and impacts on Muslims in the UK. Participants we spoke to pointed out that they were “bombarded with online abuse and offline threats” as IS rose to prominence, especially following the release of videos showing beheadings, or when there was a terror threat made against the UK linked to the group.

Sarah told us: “I was on my way to the shops and people shouted at me, ‘Why don’t we chop your head off?’” In another case, people on the street shouted, “Your head will be much better on the floor.” Along similar lines, Aisha said: “The cancer of ISIS and the atrocities that Boko Haram commit in Nigeria, when these incidents happen anti-Muslim hate crime does rise too.” She added that on her birthday, “a group of white men shouted at me and my sister, ‘You Muslim scums, supporters of ISIS, tell us how much you hate Britain!’”

In addition to the significance of trigger events and the visibility of the Muslim identity, this highlights that both race and religion are interlinked in anti-Muslim hate crime. Within this framework, the Muslim identity has been subject to a process of racialization whereby this identity is defined on the basis of the individual’s race rather than exclusively on the basis of their religion. Indeed, we found that anti-Muslim hate crime and racism were inextricably intertwined.

From this perspective, anti-Muslim hate crime is understood as a “new” form of

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racism, which can be attributed to Islamophobic, anti-Muslim attitudes as well as to racist sentiments. In this regard, it is crucial that we counter the negative viewpoint that all Muslims are “bad,” and that law-abiding Muslims in the UK should suffer anti-Muslim hostility because they believe in Islam. Instead, we need to show signs of solidarity and unity in the face of terrorism and work together to prevent further reprisal attacks against all communities. Because if we don’t, we only play into the hands of the extremists who want to divide and conquer.

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