

BEST OF 2014

Fair Observer

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Contents

01 Culture

Off the Radar: Stealth Conflicts and the Media (Virgil Hawking).....	10
No One's Lucky in War: An Interview with Robert King (Anna Pivovarchuk and Robert King).....	14
Private Information and Outline Security: How to Disappear From Big Brother (Anna Pivovarchuk and Frank Ahern).....	22
What Inspires Creativity? Reason Enough (Jonathan Vickers and Chris Mann).....	27
Tibet: A Nonviolent History of War (Carole McGranahan).....	28

02 Asia Pacific

Britain Betrays Hong Kong... Again (Sophie Richardson).....	33
How America & Britain Crushed the Government of an "Ally" (John Pilger).....	35
China's Educational Challenge When Going Global (Ulf Henning Richter and Shan Xiaofeng).....	37
Democracy and Southeast Asia are not Incompatible (Jarno Lang).....	40
Ensuring Decent Work for Domestic Workers in Singapore (Jolovan Wham).....	43

03 Central And South Asia

Afghan Children: Growing Up With Drones and Landmines (Even Kuross).....	47
Modi Wins Big as India Aspires for Prosperity (Atul Singh).....	50
India's Election 2014: Mainstream Privilege and the Northwest (Pema Abrahams).....	54
The Politics of Literary Censorship in Afghanistan (Omar Sadar).....	58
Arguing the Unarguable: Indian Policy in Afghanistan (Prakhar Sharma).....	62

04 Middle East And North Africa

War and Peace: The Youth of Gaza (Nour Omar Shaban).....	67
Local Perceptions of Syrian Refugees (Hana Asfour).....	69
Kurdistan: Where Poets Are More Than Poets (Alana Marie Levinson LaBrosse).....	75
The Banality of Colonization: The Metropolitanization of Israeli Settlements (Marco Allegra).....	79
Bush Obama: Ignorance and Errors Compound Middle East Problems (Gary Grappo).....	83

05 Europe

Barking at Russia is Easy, Biting is Not (Nishtha Chugh).....	87
France's Gung-Ho Policy in Syria (Clotilde de Swarte).....	90
The Ukrainian Revolution's Neo-Fascist Problem (Gordon Hahn).....	93
Independent Scotland: A Wish for the Chance to Make Our Own Mistakes (Tom Webster).....	100
Finland's Economy is in the Middle of a "Lost Decade" (Kourosh Ziabari and Jutta Urpilainen).....	104

06 Africa

South Sudan Turns Three: Gaza, Obama, and South America (Aguil Blunt).....	111
Jack in the Box: The Failure of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Maria Khwaja Bazi).....	113
Local Justice in Africa: Out of the Spotlight (Brian Waswani Odhiambo).....	117
A History of Violence: African Asylum Seekers in Israel (Natasha Roth).....	120
Central African Republic: Who Will Heal the Wounds? (Natalia Bowdoin).....	123

07 North America

Power, Race & Police: Deconstructing Ferguson (Sarah Colome).....	129
A Commentary on Torture (Landon Shroder).....	133
Will the US Government Ever Leave the Middle East Alone? (Larry Beck).....	135
The Case for US Intervention in the Middle East (Gary Grappo).....	137
US Space Capabilities: Maintaining the High Ground (Daniel Lakin).....	141

08 Latin America

Social Inequality in Brazil: The People, Politics, and the World Cup (Victoria Livingstone).....	145
Chile and Romania: Censorship in Dictatorships (Caterina Preda).....	148
The OAS: The Forgotten Continent's Forgotten Organization (Samuel Guzman).....	151
Argentina and the Economic Crisis Cliff (Nicolas Sarlenga).....	154
Bolivia Has Failed to Keep It's Promise on Indigenous Rights (Jessika Eichler).....	156

Editor's Note: A Tumultuous Year

In 2014, many parts of the world suffered conflict. Chief among them were Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, Gaza and Central African Republic. Each of these conflicts was significant for different reasons, but Ukraine shook the international order the most. Ukraine descended into civil war with the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk voting for independence. Apparently, so did Crimea where 96.7% voted to join Russia after annexation, making the referendum redundant.

Even the four-year fiesta of football held in Brazil was marred by protests against corruption. Brazilians took to the streets because much of the money for stadia and the FIFA World Cup was siphoned off by politicians and contractors who were cozy with them. Protests also broke out in the US, when an African American man was shot dead in Ferguson by the police.

Like any year, 2014 witnessed some historic moments. On January 1, US President Barack Obama's signature health care reform, the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, took effect. On the same day, Colorado legalized the purchase of marijuana for recreational purposes. Five days later, Janet Yellen became the first woman to head the Federal Reserve. Same-sex marriage was legalized in 12 states, starting with Oregon. By the end of the year, a majority of Americans were living where same-sex marriage was legal.

By contrast, many African leaders decided to stamp out the scourge of sin from their societies. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signed into law a bill that banned same-sex marriage and imposed punishments for homosexual activity. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni decided to outdo Jonathan and signed a law imposing sentences of 14 years to life imprisonment for homosexual acts.

The year was also marked by the increasing power of the Islamic State (IS) and Boko Haram. Radical Islam found support among marginalized populations who fell prey to charismatic clerics promising a better future by returning to pristine purity of the past. In a stunning advance, IS surged through Iraq and took control of Falluja, Mosul and even Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's hometown. It also decapitated journalists, released gruesome videos and imposed fanatically intolerant puritanical rule on the areas under its control. Meanwhile, Boko Haram captured 270 teenage girls from a boarding school in northeastern Nigeria. In fact, more people died in Africa's most populous country in 2014 than in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Even as violence plagued many parts of the world,

democracy deepened elsewhere. In Scotland, a referendum was conducted with fanfare to decide the future of the country. People voted to stay in the United Kingdom in a referendum. In Hong Kong, protests for democracy broke out and were not crushed by tanks. The relative restraint of Chinese authorities came as a surprise to many who feared another Tiananmen. In India, the Nehru dynasty was booted out for a former teaseller from Gujarat. Voters chose Narendra Modi because he promised better governance, more jobs and improved living standards.

The year ended on a positive note. Finally, 53 years after the Cuban Missile Crisis that nearly brought the world to nuclear war, Obama announced plans to normalize diplomatic relations with Cuba and ease economic restrictions on its long-beleaguered neighbor. In a courageous move defying hard-line Republicans, the president declared the end of an “outdated approach” to US-Cuban relations.

Even as the rollercoaster year of 2014 ended, we have continued to hold true to our ideals. We focus on issues that matter, provide context and bring together perspectives from around the world. Human beings are complicated, the world is complex and our motto is to make sense of it.

8

In this magazine, we have chosen the best articles of 2014 that examine the key issues, events and trends of the year. As you will see, our contributors come from around the world and mark the progress we have made toward creating a truly global discourse. Please enjoy this magazine and let us know how we can do better.

Atul Singh

Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief

1: Culture

Off the Radar: Stealth Conflicts and the Media

Virgil Hawkins

While certain “chosen” conflicts attract media attention worldwide, many “stealth conflicts” remain largely underreported.

Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and Gaza — these are the world’s conflicts that will be remembered as those that “mattered” for the year 2014. Or at least that is what the high levels of policy, media and public attention devoted to these conflicts would suggest. Conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR), on the other hand, is largely absent from the public consciousness in the world outside the region, and its future place in our collective memories is tenuous to say the least. The same can be said for the remaining 20-40 armed conflicts the world hosts at any given time, depending on who is — and how they are — counting.

Stealth Conflicts

With a limited capacity for attention and resources, selectivity is sadly inevitable. But what is it that makes a handful of these conflicts worthy of special attention, and the others essentially “stealth conflicts” — those are played out off our radar screens, beyond our consciousness? While there are several factors that need to be considered, one thing we can say with confidence is the scale of the conflict, measured in the loss of human lives and overall humanitarian suffering, is not a substantive factor. This is somewhat paradoxical, given that much of the media coverage of these conflicts focuses, often in an emotive manner, on the humanitarian suffering of the victims. It is clear there are other reasons for which these conflicts are “chosen.”

The reported death toll from conflict in the CAR for this year stands at over 5,000 — and this is only counting reported violent deaths, and is “almost certainly a fraction of the true death toll.” In terms of the number (and brutal nature) of violent killings, this conflict is perhaps roughly comparable to the offensives by what is now known as the Islamic State (IS). But even this exceptionally conservative death toll is roughly double that of the Israel-Gaza conflict, and of the conflict in Ukraine. And were we able to factor in the non-violent conflict-related deaths from the CAR, the gap would undoubtedly grow much further. After all, non-violent deaths, caused by sickness and starvation, often account for as much as 90% of conflict-related deaths in African countries.

The trigger for the current phase of the conflict dates back to March 2013, when Francois Bozize’s administration fell to a rebel coalition known as Seleka. But the new government’s ability to stabilize and govern the country was found sorely wanting. Abuses by Seleka fighters (primarily Muslim) saw the rise of a powerful counter-coalition, known as the anti-Balaka (primarily Christian), and the conflict quickly became polarized along religious lines. The Muslim minority was targeted en masse by the anti-Balaka for brutal attacks, including massacres and even the beheading of children. By early 2014, some 20% of the country’s population had been displaced, and as many as 2.5 million people were thought to be in need of humanitarian assistance. The word “genocide” began to appear in reports assessing how the conflict would progress.

For a time, the conflict attracted a moderate degree of media attention. From January to the end of April 2014, *The New York Times*, for example, produced 33 articles (including blogs) on the subject of the CAR. But by April, the bulk of the Muslim population had been either murdered or forced to flee from the capital city, Bangui. Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council authorized a medium-sized peacekeeping force to complement and eventually replace African Union and European peacekeepers that were already on the scene. These two factors seemed to act as a cue to news editors that the story was over, and that it was time for this modest carnival of sympathy and outrage to move on.

From the beginning of May until today, *The New York Times* has published only five articles on the subject. Whatever interest there once was, has clearly gone. The reality is, however, that the violence has simply continued its spread beyond the capital city, resulting in an ever-growing death toll and a dire humanitarian situation – observers on the ground noted that the situation had become worse. Furthermore, the UN peacekeepers were not scheduled to begin arriving until September.

Choosing Your War

But even considering the time when the conflict in the CAR did manage to garner some media attention, the level of coverage falls woefully short of that for the chosen conflicts. The number of articles published by *The New York Times* on the Israel-Gaza conflict in just one month (from the time of the outbreak of violence in July – 134 articles), for example, was more than three times the number published on the CAR for the year so far (38 articles). *The New York Times* has published more than 500 articles on the subject of Ukraine from January to date.

A look at other African conflicts over a longer-term reveals a much starker con-

trast. A tally of best estimates of conflict death tolls throughout the world from the end of the Cold War until 2007 found that 88% of the world's conflict-related deaths occurred in Africa. This includes the world's deadliest conflict, possibly since the Korean War – that in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This conflict is thought to have resulted in an incredible 5.4 million deaths in the period from 1998 to 2007, making it hundreds of times deadlier than conflict in Israel-Palestine. The organization behind the mortality surveys, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), stopped counting in 2007, but the conflict continues until this day. Considering how little media coverage this conflict has received over the years, it is indeed the ultimate stealth conflict.

Israel-Palestine, on the other hand, is the ultimate chosen conflict. It occupies a unique position with regards to conflict-related attention. Studies have shown this conflict alone has been capable of attracting more media coverage by Western media corporations than all of Africa's conflicts combined. There was never any question that this year's Israel-Gaza conflagration would be met with saturation media coverage, including a blow-by-blow account of the violence, accompanied by a fierce public battle for the moral high ground. Every aspect of the conflict was scrutinized and assessed – even celebrity clashes of opinion on the matter were treated as news. *Media, War & Conflict*, an academic journal that analyzes media coverage, felt compelled to release a virtual special issue on the matter. Several political cartoonists even produced cartoons lamenting that the conflict was being neglected because the world's attention was occupied by the World Cup football festivities in Brazil – at a time when it was still the world's most-covered conflict.

Likeable Victims

So if the scale of a conflict (in terms of humanitarian suffering) does not

contribute substantively to decisions regarding our allocation of attention to conflict, then what does? National and political interest is an obvious and powerful factor. A conflict involving the “home” country or its citizens (as belligerent or victim) automatically becomes a chosen conflict. The Israel-Palestine conflict is unique in the breadth and strength of its attraction based on political interests beyond the direct “home” country interests.

National/political interest may also include other perceived macro-level narratives – the notion that a new Cold War is brewing, and that the conflict in Ukraine is part of this, for example. Similarly, the IS onslaught in Iraq and Syria has come to be viewed by many in Western governments as a threat to national interests because of a perceived link with terrorism. This only applies to a particular variety of “terrorism,” of course – that which is perceived as being a threat to Western interests. The terror used by the anti-Balaka militia to expel the Muslim population from their homes in the CAR does not fit the preferred Western frame for terrorism, and as such, the conflict is presented as being unrelated to “terrorism.”

The ability to identify is another key factor. This is a matter of the existence of a shared identity between the victims and potential spectators of conflict in one or more of the following forms: race, nationality, language, religion, culture and socioeconomic status. Whether it is Bosnia, Kosovo, or Ukraine, conflicts occurring in Europe, for example, will always be chosen conflicts, not just in nearby European countries (something that can easily be explained by national interests and proximity), but also in distant countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, where perceived racial and socioeconomic similarities make them worthy of attention. The identity gap that exists between a predominantly white and affluent audience in the West, and

predominantly black and impoverished victims of conflict in Africa, puts these conflicts at a large disadvantage in attracting and sustaining attention. The CAR is no exception.

The ability to sympathize is also a factor that must be considered. While the vast majority of the victims of most of the world’s conflicts are non-combatants, and should thus in theory be able to attract our sympathy, we tend to see the victims not as individuals, but in terms of national, ethnic or religious groupings. Our allocation of sympathy is therefore based on the level of “innocence” or victimhood that we ascribe to each of the particular groups that are involved in the conflict. As a non-combatant group under threat of being massacred by the IS in Iraq, the Yazidi people besieged on Mount Sinjar in August, for example, were able to garner considerable sympathy from the outside world. Connecting the notion of “genocide” to a particular conflict, which did occur at one point for the Yazidis, carries tremendous weight in this regard.

While the word “genocide” also appeared briefly regarding the conflict in the CAR, the association did not last. It must also be noted that conflicts in Africa tend to be at a disadvantage in terms of the ability to sympathize, because, regardless of actual underlying causes or conflict dynamics, they are often perceived as being “tribal,” involving different groups “killing each other,” thereby depriving groups, and their members, of victimhood.

The intention here is not to negate the inevitability (or perhaps even validity) of certain factors, such as national/political interest and the ability to identify or sympathize, when choosing the conflicts in which we will take an interest. Nor is it meant in any way to belittle the suffering of the victims of conflicts that are relatively small in scale. Any conflict-related death is a tragedy and worthy of our condemnation.

But, by the same token, we should not use the suffering of the victims of “chosen” conflicts to pretend that our motives for bestowing sustained and concentrated attention on a particular conflict and its victims are primarily humanitarian, when it is clear there are other factors that play a much greater role in determining our choices. The fact of the matter is, we tolerate conflict-related death in Africa on a level that would be unimaginable for almost any other part of the world.

The scale of the suffering as a result of the very-much ongoing conflict in the CAR, both in terms of the sheer number of deaths, displaced and those in need of humanitarian assistance, and our muted response to it, serve to demonstrate that our allocation of attention, indignation and sympathy, is less a question of what has been done, and more a question of who has done it, and perhaps most importantly, to whom it has been done.

No One's Lucky in War: An Interview with Robert King

Anna Pivovarchuk and Robert King

There will be ramifications to the international community's approach to the Syrian conflict.

Since starting in Sarajevo in 1993, Robert King has covered every major conflict as a photographer and filmmaker. He has been kidnapped twice in Iraq and Afghanistan, but has recently returned to the region to cover the Syrian conflict. His book, *Democratic Desert*, and the film *Syria: Ground Zero* are a harrowing account of the civil war avoided by the international community.

In this interview with Fair Observer's Anna Pivovarchuk, King talks about the state of the media industry, running food trucks in Rwanda, dealing with combat stress and the concept of luck in a war zone.

Anna Pivovarchuk: You went to art school. What made you pick up your camera and go to Sarajevo in 1993? That's quite a big step to make: from art school to a war zone.

Robert King: Well, yeah. But we were well-read. I think we had a lot of classes in humanities and sociology, so that kind of piqued my interest. I was always kind of interested in global events, so before I graduated in 1993, I went to Israel for the 1991 Gulf War, and kind of waited to see what Saddam Hussein would do. And then I had to go back to finish my studies, and obviously I hadn't made it in journalism to be able to afford not to go back to school — you know, to finish the opportunities. So I went back, and that

summer I started traveling — I went to northern Iraq, after the Kurd story took place. I did stories on the Kurds, and a bit of traveling into Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, trying to get into the Nagorno-Karabakh. I met some different journalists along the way, but more an exploratory kind of experience with the camera. Came back, and sold a picture to *The New York Times*.

When I was in school, I studied film and painting, and also started work on a multimedia documentary about a minority volunteer ambulance corps in Brooklyn. I think I started in 1991, so I was doing large-format 4×5, 35mm and shooting video and 16mm. I used to work on film — video sets in New York. That's where my experience was and nobody was gonna hire me as a photographer at the time: I had sold one picture! I got more days doing video. I should have just listened to that in the beginning, but I was determined to be a photojournalist.

Then I received a travel grant when I graduated to return to the Zygres mountains in northern Iraq. But when I got there the border was closed, and a friend I met in Turkey helped me get into Sarajevo.

That's when it was a struggle. That was when the filming for *Shooting Robert King* began. We got all our stuff stolen, so I had to leave.

I went back to New York, started doing some other stuff, working again, got some cameras, and then went back to Sarajevo. Had some success, found another agent, got with Camera Press in the UK in 1994. Went

to Africa for eight months after that, from Johannesburg to Zaire. Most of the time I traveled on a motorcycle — still wasn't selling much — and then I would ride a bean truck to subsidize my photography. When the war started, Solidariteit needed drivers, so they weren't doing background checks — so much chaos going on that whoever was available could drive the beans. It was awesome. It was the most amazing experience ever, where I had never had so many people happy to see me. You have 8,000 tons of beans!

And then we would transport people, during the big Rwandan exodus in the Zaire. For logistics, you had to work with the military, and the French military had the best logistics, so we would help. They would set up these enclaves for Tutsis surrounded by Hutus, so the Hutus made this mass push into the Zaire. The French were not able to secure the area, so we were asked to transport the Tutsis to safe places. So in two days we moved a lot of people. I drove well over a thousand to safer areas in Rwanda. It was fun. We would break through Hutu military barriers. It was a good experience.

After, when I went back to Sarajevo, I started stringing for AP. I made good images, they got a lot of play, helped a little girl out who was bleeding in her eye — got evacuated to Italy for the PDS party, made her the guest of the Polio festival. I would bring this work back to art school, but I didn't know the difference. Nobody said, "Hey, this is journalism and this is art." This was always a fight for me: The photographic process was therapeutic when I did it as a kid, and even into high school it was even more therapeutic. The moment I said, "This is the direction" was in Natchez Mississippi in 1990 on New Year's Day. I was in Mississippi taking pictures, and I had this collection of the photographs

of the year, and that was it. That was the moment I said okay, "This is what I want to do, what the hell am I doing in art school?" I graduated, and I'm better off because I did.

Pivovarchuk: You mentioned that it was therapeutic for you to be in conflict zones. That the war didn't "fk me up, I was already f**ked up before I went," and that's why you were so good at it. Do you still think that's true?**

King: Absolutely! I lived in a house of alcoholics, where victims are made and survival is the mindset. There are certain people who are attracted to that type of environment where the voices have no voice, the suffering has no voice. They make it a duty or take the responsibility to use their trade to provide a voice for people who might not have it otherwise.

Pivovarchuk: Was that your main motivation?

King: I thought I could make a difference. I thought I could change something. Maybe not in war, but at least bring attention to subjects that might otherwise be ignored.

Pivovarchuk: Is that still your motivation now?

King: Yes, in many ways. I still like it. Not so much the voice — obviously with Twitter, cellphones — they still need us, but not as much. Now everybody has their own voice. But I do think that new technology allows for the people to tell their own story. So before, you could give them a sound byte, but now you can give them a documentary — a platform to tell their own story. I still believe in that.

Obviously there's a format that traditional TV companies believe younger people want, and they're not listening

to the populace who want people to tell their own stories, for the most part.

Pivovarchuk: Your first agency fired you while you were in Sarajevo. What weren't you giving them that they wanted?

King: I was asking too much. This was my first experience, and I was following people whose experience I could trust. Obviously, it doesn't matter how much experience you have in wars. There's a lot of chaos, and sometimes it doesn't work like it should and you get pinned down and it's bad news. We didn't even really have an objective other than "let's try to draw fire." I was traveling with video guys, and obviously that's what they need. They need a mortar zipping through the air, cutting through the trees, and some smoke and some fire. That was pretty scary. But more scary was getting shot up on that road in Cacilliac Vitez with Richard Parry [director of Shooting Robert King]. We planned everything — just bad place, wrong time. We're just lucky that no one got hurt.

You can get frustrated with the industry because a lot of us are idealists when we get in. It's always a disappointment when you get to see that you're not a part of the party, so to speak.

Pivovarchuk: What does it take to be part of the party?

King: A part of the party means you're on expenses: two bottles of wine each night while eating Camembert and escargot and fresh bread. That's a party. Playing cards and smoking Monte Cristos in the evening. In Sarajevo, journalists were making money running water, running cigarettes, running food. It was unregulated, not taxable cash, and this was the way things were done in an analog environment.

It's a struggle for everybody, these bad places. Sarajevo was no party for every-

one, I can tell you. They were drinking and smoking — good for them. When you're in it you're a bit cynical, and you can laugh at yourself and not take yourself too seriously. I take the job seriously, but not myself. I can poke fun at my job, because it is just a job. I think you can be cynical about it, and I think it's healthy. It's a healthy examination. You have to laugh at yourself. How do you grow? How can you evolve? How does technology evolve if you can't be cynical and analyze it, and really be critical and deconstruct the industry? If you can't deconstruct it I don't think it can improve.

Pivovarchuk: You said the media is a decaying industry, that it underestimates what the people want to see. Is this the main problem?

King: Absolutely! I think the people demand and want total interconnectivity. Look at the porn industry. The public want an archive; they want searchable visuals. They desire to have their speakers vibrate in their hands. It's content. What do the people want? They want video. What are the TV companies gonna do? We've already bought their HD TVs, their flatscreen TVs, their 3D TVs, their 4K TVs. Next they're gonna sell the world on Internet-ready TVs. It's done. Bam. Finished.

Media corporations don't control the channels, they don't control the feeds into the Internet, they can't control the YouTube feeds. All they can do is aggregate the content and hope to sell ads on it. That's really changed and also created new opportunities for editors, such as social trending editors. These are positions that never existed before, for better or for worse. As they got rid of all the photographers, they hired social trend editors so they can aggregate trending content. Then the media corporations realized, "Oh, shit,

we need original content. Where did all the photographers go?”

And then they realize their product is s**t because they weren't willing to send their writers to technical school to learn the basics, and the majority of them didn't have the desire to learn video production on their own because we are creatures of comfort.

You have a multi-billion dollar industry that lacks direction and innovation, no vision whatsoever to anticipate the movements in our industry. There's no charity in the news business.

Pivovarchuk: I went to a talk where the chief editor of one of Britain's biggest newspapers said no one wants to read in-depth analysis, in response to being criticized for a CNN-like, sensationalist approach to their website. Do you have anything to say about what editors pick out in terms of content?

King: I think the public is visually literate. They want long form journalism, they want informative journalism, but they don't want CNN. CNN doesn't work. We don't need another English accent telling us what's going on in the world. We don't need people doing these think-groups to see if viewers trust his blue eyes, or what happens when he or she looks to the left or right. What works is when a journalist is reporting next to a mother who just lost ten of her children. The character and integrity of that individual reporter is what's going to make the public listen and engage.

Another example of how old media lacked vision and anticipation is as they all gutted their photography departments. Instagram evolves and sells for billions of dollars. The people didn't get tired of good photography, it was the institution – the news industry that didn't know what to do with photog-

raphy. At the time, the only handful of dyslexics you'd find in a newsroom were photographers. Now that photographers were shown the door, I hope the industry realizes it takes a bit of creativity to reinvent their band in the eyes of the public.

Their best choice would have been to keep their photography department and transition them into video. If these media visionaries of yesterday had made the changes ten years ago, a lot of newspapers might have their own TV shows, and they might not be in the position they're in today. They'd have online ad revenue, and lots of it. Maybe YouTube would have given them a hundred million dollar advance to produce content. But they'll never know, because they never had the vision to prepare such infrastructure that would allow for such a financial investment. You look at new media, and traditional media's just got it wrong. They just buy whatever's successful and kill it.

They buy the brand and kill it. Old media is just a different world! They're more conservative with their angles and edits. The people's visual language is so much more intelligent — they're filming through their cellphones, they're not even looking at the image. So your mind is freer than the most professional photographer, because they are working both sides of the brain and their imagery is free and honest. It is my opinion that the public is more intelligent visually than a journalist or video reporter.

Pivovarchuk: One of your colleagues says in the film that he's come to so many front lines it's almost like taking a double decker bus. Is that an exaggeration?

King: I think the more successful you get in the business, the less time you have to process a lot of the information and trauma that you go through. In

1993, you would go from Sarajevo to Moscow. Then after that you go back to Sarajevo, then Rwanda. Then after Rwanda, I don't know, Chechnya. And then you have a freak-out in Afghanistan. So when do you have that time?

I'd sell footage to this TV company, and I thought maybe, s**t, for sure they'd be nice. I mean hell, they won a bunch of awards with the footage. So I go and see them and they hand me a pamphlet about PTSD. They did their job by following the protocol set by their lawyers to establish a non-liable working relationship.

The more successful you get in the business, the less down time you have. Each person's gonna deal with that information their own way, whether it's six months or 20, 30 years later — or maybe never. Maybe they're so good at it they just can compartmentalize it.

Do people get cynical? I think you have to, in some ways, because you're looking at such horror. Obviously, I don't find it appropriate to make jokes at the expense of victims or at the expense of your subject. I just think it's a survival instinct. It's something a survivor's going to have to do to continue moving and not become disorganized in a situation where they can't afford to become disorganized. They have to keep it together, keep it organized, and move on.

Pivovarchuk: So how do you deal with it personally?

King: I've dealt with it many ways. I've tried all ways. In my younger years, alcohol, drugs, sex, marriage, relationships, sports, as of late, drawing, therapy, sports and not so much writing. I used to spend a lot of time hunting, I would find other options to organize my down time such as when I was raising and selling heirloom tomatoes at the farmer's markets and grocery stores. I was raising a lot of tomatoes,

singing songs to them in the morning before harvesting them in the afternoon. I don't know what I was doing, other than, "Ahh! I have land to grow my tomatoes!" and that was about it. There was a reason I had to do it, but it became therapeutic.

But in the end, even the farmers in the farmers' bureau were saying "Please leave here. You don't need to be raising tomatoes. You can do so much better with your life and talents." Even the farmers were trying to kick me out. "You don't belong here!" And then I went to Syria.

But how do I deal with it? I've dealt with it for so long by remaining in something called "survival mode," and it's something you learn early on. Is it healthy? No. Does it work? Yes. And so I made a lot of decisions based upon that mentality. But it worked. And then obviously when it doesn't work you have to make adjustments, whether it's seeking outside help, or finding a different hobby — drawing, gardening, nature — but the main thing that got me through all of it was just being in survivor mode. In the worst of the sense. Not where I'm taking advantage of people, but I'm in survival mode. I deal with the past on my own terms, at my own pace, at the distance — I see fit while living in the present. It's not easy on anybody, it's not easy on my son.

Pivovarchuk: But then again, you have to do it yourself. It's not that you choose to or you don't choose to, because if you don't...

King: Yeah! You're done! I'm 45, I'm starting a new life, I've walked away from pretty much from everything materialistic that I own. Trucks, paintings, farmland, car, tractor — whatever, knick-knack bullshit. All this stuff became irrelevant, and I don't know how or why it happened.

Pivovarchuk: You said something during the Frontline talk that really touched me – I think a lot of people in the audience were as well. You said that all the money you made from your time in Syria, you put into Democratic Desert because no one wanted to publish it, and you’d rather die than make a buck off the suffering of people portrayed in it.

King: I’m not giving this money away – there’s no charity. I got 120 books. I’m not gonna make any money on it. I mean maybe, if I sell it for \$10,000 a piece. But I felt guilty — it was like blood money. Maybe that’s what happened: maybe I look at the material objects I possess as a result of blood money. Obviously not all of it, but a lot of my last 20-plus years has a relation to war.

Pivovarchuk: Before you went to Sarajevo, you said the only thing you knew about war was from books and films. Knowing what you know now, would you still have gone?

King: Absolutely, yeah. I would have been better off. I would have gone. I believed in the process, I still do. This work does make a difference. So yeah, I wouldn’t change. What was I gonna do? I don’t really have any regrets, but I guess what I learned was that open source is the only source. It’s better to include, try to include everybody. Don’t make it exclusive, make it for everybody. As my friend Rocko from Vice says, “If you can’t make money off free, then you don’t need to be in the business.”

Pivovarchuk: You’ve been through pretty much every single war since 1993, and you have been very affected by your time in Syria. You’ve been kidnapped both in Iraq and Afghanistan, and escaped. For most people

that’s an experience that might prevent them from going back, and yet you chose to go back to the region. What is it about the Syrian conflict that is it different from other wars? Does it affect you more?

King: Yeah, in some way. You still have similar players, similar ideals, but there was no ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] in Chechnya. You might have had the beginnings of what was to become al-Qaeda, with Khat-tab and the Saif, but in the beginning it was really a bid for independence. In my opinion, it was only when the Turks and Saudis came in to start rebuilding the mosques that they converted to Wahhabism. And it’s very similar in Syria, in that here you had a pretty secular group of Muslims who were Westernized in many ways from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey’s influence — and Russia’s, of course, due to the port — and then Bashar al-Assad’s close ties with the UK and all that stuff. You had this kind of self-determination by the people. We’re tired of this thug. So that’s how it was played.

Many people believed it. And then much like Chechnya, but on a smaller scale — it was the Islamists that stole the movement from the Chechens. That’s what I saw: people not intervening. Extremism happened, kidnap — almost exactly like Chechnya, other than Assad’s not going to have his Vladimir Putin comeback where he totally destroys and rebuilds the area. It was left alone, but what was more dangerous was its location to Central Europe.

The first reason I went there was when Marie Colvin died. When she passed away it seemed like media coverage stopped. I was already in movement to go there, so I just went. When I got there I was filing and filing and filing — I was very angry that potentially

she was targeted, or any journalist was targeted directly. And then the media just kind of backed off. I went there for that, and I just got so emotionally involved in the story, only because people were not buying the work. Nobody seemed to care. This is the first time I could say: “I’ve stepped over so many dead bodies today I cannot believe I haven’t made a single picture sale.” What the heck is going on? I wouldn’t say that, I was cussing really bad.

They just don’t care to encourage any type of resolution, resolve – it’s just not their problem. I think that’s a pretty dangerous approach and a pretty selfish approach. Obviously there’ll be ramifications for such approaches where they’re not willing to make the hard decisions. They’re willing to just pass the buck. Okay, thank God it’s not here yet. Or it’s not here. And they don’t understand that they forgot to put “yet.” And if there’s something that does take place, that’s related or traces back to Syria, what’s going to happen? There’s going to be an emotional reaction. If they’d been thinkers and planned it out for a long time they might have been able to come to a decision that was not reactionary, or based on pure emotion. It wouldn’t be a reactionary decision, it would have been a preventive decision; a decision where they saw the problems, they addressed the potential threats, and tried to build inroads to prevent those from taking place. It just didn’t seem like any of it took place. So I got really upset.

I saw the importance of it and no one cared, so that motivated me even more. Normally when people say “no,” you know you’re onto something good. The more people push back – then you know you’re onto something that has the potential to really open up the debate on the subject. It’s a hard story, this is asking people to make a decision. Look at this. They have to come to the discovery of what’s comfortable

for them. Is it comfortable when it’s in Afghanistan, southern Russia, or is it more comfortable when it’s in Bulgaria or Albania?

Pivovarchuk: That’s what I think is so important about your work. Your images and video are very graphic. There’s a lot of war reportage that is aestheticized. But your images are really in your face, very disturbing, very violent. Is there an importance in bringing those images to people who maybe don’t want to see them? Do you think it shocks people into action?

King: No. No. I think it can do the complete opposite. I think it can be dangerous to do it. But I wasn’t making any statement other than, “I refuse to make” – I couldn’t. I mean, how? It was everywhere. The slaughter. The pain. It was in every, every inch. Every frame. Every – oh, there were a few. But most of the time, I didn’t go out to make these. I refused to turn away from it. I refused to – I wanted this. Hold the camera away – I didn’t want to make this framing according to AP standards or some individual who I’ve never met or shared a beer with. I don’t want their morals. Because I know that a lot of the people who push morals and standards and practices — there’s a reason they do it. I didn’t go to that. I wasn’t going to edit it out; I couldn’t. There was no way. There was nothing there to edit out, other than an out of focus frame.

But obviously, I was making some adjustments to my work. I think we took out the heavy amputees. I think we tried very hard to be sensitive. These are civilians that are suffering. It’s an honorable thing to die for your country, as a soldier, but when has the last honorable war been fought? It just opens up a lot of questions, you know? I don’t want to discredit the sacrifice people

have given to their country, because people believe in it, and they have every right to go fight for their beliefs. But they don't have the right to take the life of another individual unless they're being attacked. It's another debate for another time, really.

But I wasn't trying to make icons out of suffering, and I definitely wasn't trying to make art out of suffering. I was trying to tell the story, get it out as quickly as possible as many times as possible, and stick it to Assad. Stick it to these people who were threatening the Internet, trying to control it, hacking us. It was a game. It was a game and the stakes were high. The game was you're not going to kill indiscriminately, and it will be recorded and documented.

People don't need to know me because of Shooting Robert King, they need to know my work. Shooting Robert King is an interpretation of an individual by two people or more. I didn't edit it. And I still fight for that. I go to a place, "Hey, we're going to show Shooting Robert King," and I go "You're going to show Ground Zero Syria, and you're going to be happy with it. And if you don't, then I'm not going to show up." I have to use the film to allow me to tell my f**king news story. It's pathetic. But whatever. Obviously other people recognize the work, and not the individual. And I think that's important.

Pivovarchuk: Your colleague told you back in Sarajevo that he didn't see the aura of luck in you that he saw in other journalists on the front line. I loved your response: "I can't read auras." But do you think such a thing exists? Can you be "lucky" in the war zone?

King: I don't think anybody's lucky in a war zone, actually. You're never gonna get away. It's a profession that just takes and takes and takes, and doesn't really give all that much back. That could be defined as an unhealthy relationship in war. No one's lucky. Everyone's in trouble. Everyone is suffering. It's only the very few that can escape. For those who do get out it doesn't mean that they're lucky. It means that whatever pre-planning was done, whatever contacts they had nurtured getting out of is just a job well done.

What if you were in Iraq and you found one ton of Saddam's gold? Are you lucky or unlucky? I'd say you're very unlucky, because you're probably going try to relocate the gold or take it out of Iraq, and believe you will be successful because you were so goddamn lucky to find the gold in the first place. But in the end finding the gold is unlucky because it's that lucky find which gets you killed. Nobody's lucky in war, believe me.

Private Information and Online Security: How to Disappear From Big Brother

Anna Pivovarchuk and Frank Ahearn

As our online presence increases, so do the security risks to our private information.

In today's world of mass surveillance and obsession with social media, Frank M. Ahearn's job is to help people erase their digital footprint. Initially working undercover for private investigators, Ahearn discovered he had an amazing knack for tracking people. In the world before Internet, there was an underground of gray information, which he was an expert at navigating. But, as the laws changed, and personal information became easily available, Ahearn decided to turn the tables on his old job.

Ahearn offers a unique service to people who need to leave their current life behind, such as victims of stalking or domestic violence. He specializes in not only coordinating the process of physically removing oneself from the situation, but also by blurring one's virtual identity so they can no longer be traced online. When his initial article on the subject, "How to Disappear," was first published, it provoked a massive response from all over the world.

Ahearn is the author of many books regarding Internet security, including the upcoming *How to Disappear From Big Brother: 21st Century Guide to Cyber Privacy*.

In his own words: "It's kind of weird and crazy, but that's what I do."

Anna Pivovarchuk: So a client calls you up. What is the first thing he or she asks you?

Frank M. Ahearn: Well, they email me. And it's pretty much: "Hi, I need to disappear." It's always very cryptic. There's never any real information.

And then it's almost like a courting process: Why do you want to disappear? Who are you disappearing from? The answers fall into two categories: either money or violence. Violence means being a victim of a stalker, abusive ex or a bad business situation. And then there's the money people: I've come into money and want to leave my world behind, or I lost it all. They are all looking for some sort of freedom. That's the best way to put it.

But probably in the past year or so, a third type of person has come to me. I see more individuals who want to create more privacy and fall off the grid — not necessarily paranoid, but disenchanted with government, you can say.

I can say that 99% of the people who contact me I do not do business with.

Pivovarchuk: Why is that? What is your process for screening these people?

Ahearn: Those are the people who have hidden agendas (going on the run, trying to smuggle money out of the country), who think I can give them a fake identity — or a new identity — which is ridiculous, and totally illegal. So those people are right off the bat.

And then you have people who have real problems. The violence problems are the real problems, I consider. It's a problem when you deal with a woman who has two kids — does she have full

custody of those children? If so, I need to prove it.

And then you have the other thing when people can't always disappear. You can't be Joe, the bus driver in London, and Joe the bus driver in Berlin. It doesn't work that way. You'll be traced. So the object is: How do you take the mother of two, or a single person, and put them in a different place so they can make a living and are not traced by the predator. So it's not such an easy process.

I call it the "palm tree lifestyle," where everybody thinks they are going to wake up in this wonderful life, but they forget that most palm tree locations cost a lot more money than our regular lives. And just because you want to disappear or need to disappear, doesn't mean you have the means. That is probably the biggest problem: How do you make money?

Someone like you can disappear easily because you can do what you do from anywhere in the world. You can write. But if you are a bus driver or a teacher, then you have some problems.

Pivovarchuk: So what is the actual process for helping someone disappear? What are the actual steps that you take?

Ahearn: Well, the important thing is: Who are you vanishing from and how much money do they have? Let's assume it's an abusive ex or a victim of a stalker. Stalkers are very creative, very persistent. So, what I do is try to get them to law enforcement. That's the first avenue. Most people say: "I've done that, they've done nothing." The problem is that just because you disappear, it doesn't stop the predator from searching for you. And if they have a lot more money than you do, it's problematic.

So what I do is, once we've figured out

that you're capable of going from A to B, I would tell you to start researching newspapers in Belgium and I want you to start sending out emails asking for a job. I want you to start looking for apartments for rent in Belgium. I want you to do the same thing in Oslo. With all your digital information at home, we start creating what I call "digital dirt." And that pretty much means I am going to create digital information for your predator to find, because we have to assume that your predator has access to your phone records, your bank records, your IP addresses.

I used to be in the business of extracting private information, so I know that getting your personal information is only a phone call away. We have to assume the predator is doing things like that.

And then what I do, using social media and various stuff, is start creating a bogus online profile, as if you really exist in Oslo or Belgium — something like that. The goal is to give the predator something to look for and to keep them busy. Because if you don't keep them busy, they just might find that real information.

To me, it's about becoming a virtual entity: someone who has no connection to anything physical. If you move to, say, Berlin, you will not rent an apartment in your name — you are going to sublet it; maybe rent a vacation place for a while; you are going to use pay-as-you-go mobiles; you are going to use cash.

I also teach people how to communicate using third-party services. There are these massive websites, like oDesk, where you can rent personal assistants from all over the world. So, when you disappear, there are still people you need to keep in contact with, and I teach you how to communicate with your family or your editor using a third-party service, where they are checking

your emails. If you need to do some research that can be traced back to you, they will do the research for you. So, it's both creating digital misinformation and teaching you how to exist as a virtual entity.

And then I will spend a few days with you at your new location, and I walk you through the streets and point out the vulnerable points. As a writer, you can't join writing groups, your hobbies will catch you. Your interests will catch you.

When somebody goes to a new town, I create something I call a "go bag," where they set up a mail drop — there will be prepaid debit cards and a prepaid cellphone. Because one day they are walking home and their predator happens to be sitting on their doorstep or across the street in a car, and going home will only get them hurt. So they go to their mail drop, they grab their go bag, and they pick up and split and have to start all over again.

Pivovarchuk: You mentioned that you used to extract private information. How vulnerable is that personal information?

Ahearn: Every "no" leads to a "yes." It's a matter of picking up the phone. It's happening now with all the tabloids in the UK — that is the kind of work I used to do and I have done work for tabloids in the past. You basically pull phone records, bank records and airline records. It's just a question of picking up the phone and creating a ruse or a pretext to convince the person on the other end that you need that information. And most people who work for customer service, their jobs suck. So, if you call them up and say: "Listen, I'm taking my kids on holiday and I just need to get reimbursed for my monthly expenses, so if we could just go over my phone records so I can turn them in and get paid." Some people might know you can't do that, but then other

people are like: "Sure, no problem. What do you need?" It's easy.

Pivovarchuk: Do you find that in recent years, especially following the NSA revelations, that people are more cautious about what they put online? Have you noticed a correlation between the Edward Snowden story and what you do?

Ahearn: In Europe, people are a lot more aware of privacy, but not in the US. We should be appalled at what the NSA is doing, but we are not. But what I think the difference is, in the UK, you have those cameras that are really big and they follow you on the street. See, in the US, we have small cameras. And all of our surveillance, we don't notice. So people who email, text and talk seem not to realize there is a man behind the curtain grabbing the information.

Pivovarchuk: Well, the difference here is that on the one hand, the government monitors you for security purposes, or someone actively goes out of their way to mine for your personal information. So how does social media affect people's exposure to all the dangers you were talking about?

Ahearn: Well, one of the problems with social media is you don't control the information that goes out there about you. Other people putting up information about you is one of the major issues. Since we have no control over it, the truth about us, about who we are, can be changed or controlled by others. I mean, if I had a vendetta against you, I could ruin your life in a matter of two weeks by creating all this horrible stuff about you. That's the danger of social media.

I've dealt with people whose children have seen horrible things about them.

Some of them are true, some of them aren't. We can't decide truth online. The truth is, you read something and there is no way of knowing if it's real or not. I think that's the dangers of information.

Pivovarchuk: It's pretty scary, especially with all the location services apps. Sometimes I wonder why people would so willingly advertise where they are, who they are with, and what they are doing.

Ahearn: What's the point? What do all these apps want? They all want your location. It's a matter of just collecting data. We live in a society where you wake up in the morning and you turn your light on — your electric company knows you're awake. You sign in online — your Internet company knows this. You turn on your TV — they know what you watch. You leave your house — there is a camera in the elevator, there is a camera down the street, there's a camera on the subway.

This is only the beginning of technology. Who knows where it leads? I am not a conspiracy theorist, I just think it's obvious that access to us seems to be the most important part of technology.

Pivovarchuk: We have seen all the science fiction films, we know where it's all going. They always get it right, don't they?

Ahearn: It should be more like science non-fiction. It's scary.

Pivovarchuk: How does what you do differ from the services that offer, say, positive branding online?

Ahearn: It's hugely different. There is a difference between corporate branding and personal reputation. They do website suppression; they will create all this wonderful information about you, and put it out there. But the problem

is, if you are using this service because you did something stupid six months ago, hiding it on page eight of Google doesn't do anything. What I do is create deception where I take that stupid thing and, suddenly, instead of it being Anna from London who did it, it'll be Anna from Lisbon. I take your bad reputation and give it to somebody else.

Pivovarchuk: So you basically create an online alias?

Ahearn: Fake digital identities, to a degree. It's the only answer there is.

Pivovarchuk: So how do you go about images — profile pictures? Do you use fake photographs, or how does this work?

Ahearn: Sometimes I do. Sometimes I'll give Anna in Berlin someone else's face.

Pivovarchuk: Whose face would you use? Isn't that a violation of their privacy too, in a way?

Ahearn: No, I pay them for the rights to the photo. They don't necessarily know what it's used for. There are millions of models out there who are willing to sign off the rights to their photo. I mean, listen, if you were a serial killer, I would not do that. If some horrible event took place or if some guy got accused of rape, I would never put another face to that. There is a boundary that I use.

Pivovarchuk: So where do you draw the line? Who would you refuse to work with?

Ahearn: Anybody with a sex crime. Because it is a he said, she said situation, and nobody knows the truth. I have been in business a long time and I need good karma in my life. There was a time in my life when it was all about the money, but it's not about that anymore.

Pivovarchuk: How many people contact you a year?

Ahearn: I'd say several people a day. But of those: full pickup and go and disappear — I probably help four or five a year. Then the people who need to create more privacy, I would say overall I work with 10-15 people in a year's time.

Pivovarchuk: What was the most unusual request you received?

Ahearn: They are all pretty weird. I shouldn't say they are all crazy, but a lot of them are. This woman contacted me, saying her children are trying to take her money away because she was not mentally fit. You know, there are a lot of emails going back and forth and, before you and I meet, we have a phone conversation. She seemed normal. And so we met and she was telling me more of her story. And then she mentioned the eye in her computer. She started talking about the shadow people in the driveway. She went from normal to nuts, in a second. And she wanted to give me a deposit — she had \$15,000 cash on her.

So I called the police, because I wanted someone to know that this woman had this cash, and I'm going, I don't want to be responsible. She went ballistic, started yelling, "They got to me," "You're one of them" — total conspiracy theory stuff. And I really try to avoid the conspiracy theory people, because I

don't buy into that.

The reality is that rich people have always controlled the world. No different now, no different then. They don't need conspiracies to control the world. So when people start mentioning conspiracies, I walk away.

Pivovarchuk: What's your relationship with the police? Do you work with them sometimes?

Ahearn: No, they don't pay. I am sure that some of the people who email me saying they want a new identity are former law enforcement. I am not doing anything wrong. I have a philosophy: If you want me to do something really wrong, you better give me millions and millions of dollars, so I can defend myself in the court of law in case it goes bad. People who email me wanting a new passport — I send them to the FBI.

Pivovarchuk: Give us some words of wisdom about how we should handle our private information.

Ahearn: You know my philosophy is: Don't press the buttons. If you hit Enter, Send, or Download, you've created a digital footprint. Have somebody else to do it for you. And if you put it up there, it's never going away. Digital information lasts longer than love. That's just the way it is.

What Inspires Creativity? Reason Enough

Jonathan Vickers and Chris Mann

What drives creative people to do what they do?

I'm sitting at my desk, as I have been for some time now, trying to think of the best way to describe Reason Enough. In many ways, it's quite simple: It's about what drives creative people to do what they do. But what makes it more complicated, and so fascinating to work on, is that as a writer I'm in the fairly unique position of having no idea how my book will end.

The idea for Reason Enough first came to me in January 2013, when I suddenly realized I wasn't really sure what was driving me to do what I do (I was referring to my other career in acting). How could I have made such a big choice, namely how to spend my life, and yet not really understand fundamentally why?

I mean, I enjoy acting, but is that enough of a reason to dedicate my life to it? Perhaps, by asking other people what drives them, I might be able to draw my own conclusions.

And with that, the journey began. But not alone.

Chris Mann is more than just a little bit inimitable. He too is an actor, but he is also an exceptionally gifted photographer. What makes his work so profound, especially when photographing creatives, is how deeply he understands his subjects. He has experienced all their fears, concerns and aspirations, and from this level of consideration for those in front of his lens comes his hon-

est, and somewhat ethereal portraits. One glance at his work and it was obvious to me this was a story best told in both words and images.

The idea firmly thought out, the next thing we needed to do was decide who we should speak to. We thought about who our ideal candidates would be: committed, driven actors who pursue their dreams no matter what. It didn't take us long to see that our criteria included many people outside of those working in the acting profession, and so we cast our net wider.

What has ensued has been one of the most fascinating projects I have been involved in as a writer and actor. Some people are incredibly articulate on the subject of what drives them, knowing exactly where they are heading and what they want from their life and work, whilst others are far less so. More interesting still is their level of articulation has no bearing on their success: some of the most successful people we have spoken to have no idea what drives them.

Maybe that's the heart of it. Can reasons explain a passion or a need? I don't know yet. Until I do know I'm not giving anything away; not our subjects' answers or faces. Just a few silhouettes.

Keep an eye on our Twitter page or website, if you want to know more. You won't find much on either yet, but in the not so distant future, something will pop up.

Tibet: A Nonviolent History of War

Carole McGranahan

The history of armed resistance has been controversial for Tibet's nonviolent narrative.

On April 27, 1998, Thubten Ngodup set himself on fire to protest the Indian government's forceful ending of a Tibetan hunger strike in New Delhi. Two days later, he died from his burns. Ngodup was 60 years old, a former monk at Tashilhunpo monastery in Tibet, and a former soldier in the Tibetan forces of the Indian army. Since 1988, he had worked as a cowherder and cook at a monastery in Dharamsala, living quietly in a small hut, and participating whenever possible in Tibetan independence protests and marches.

During the 1998 Unto Death Hunger Strike in Delhi, Ngodup volunteered as an assistant, tending to the needs of the six hunger strikers. On the morning of the 49th day of the hunger strike, as Indian police forcibly dragged away the hunger strikers (in line with Indian laws prohibiting suicide) and beat volunteers who protested police actions, Ngodup doused himself with a flammable liquid — shouting pro-Tibet, pro-Dalai Lama slogans — and lit a match. His immolation drew the attention of the world's media, martyrdom status within the Tibetan community, and the “deeply saddened” criticism of the Dalai Lama, who had earlier spoken against the proclaimed nonviolent hunger strike as a form of violence against one's self.

International Support

Ngodup was one of thousands of Tibetan veterans who served their country, either in the Indian army or the Tibetan citizens' army, Chushi Gangdrug. Begun as a series of inde-

pendent uprisings against increasingly oppressive Chinese reforms in the 1950s, the Chushi Gangdrug army was formally established on June 16, 1958. Resistance troops fought against the Chinese first from within Tibet, and later from a military base in Mustang, a small Tibetan kingdom in Nepal. In 1974, they laid down their arms at the Dalai Lama's request. For much of this time, the CIA covertly trained and financially supported the resistance army. From 1958-64, Tibetan soldiers flew to the United States in unmarked planes for covert training in guerrilla warfare techniques, including paramilitary operations, bomb-building, map-making, photography, radio operation techniques and intelligence collecting.

From their base in Mustang, the Tibetan army continued weaponry and warfare training, and would rotate guerrilla battalions in and out of Tibet for both military and intelligence operations. Resistance life was plagued by the uncertainties of external support, by internal squabbles and by changing relations with the local Mustang population. The king of Mustang silently supported the resistance army, as did the king of Nepal, albeit with the strong encouragement of the US government. King Birendra himself visited Mustang for discussions with resistance leaders, and Nepali intelligence officers were stationed in Mustang throughout the duration. Just as the Nepali government was aware of the Tibetan presence in Mustang, so too was the Indian government cognizant of Tibetan resistance activities throughout South Asia. The difference was that India was not just aware of these activities, but was often a direct participant in them.

Tibetan guerrilla units entered Tibet

on foot from India for intelligence gathering missions. The CIA flew planes into Tibet from which Colorado-trained Tibetans would parachute in on missions. However, unlike in Nepal, Tibetan units in India were incorporated into local militia, not independent of them. Tibetans were trained by the Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB), and after training would either stay with the CIB or go on to a leadership post in a new Tibetan force in the Indian military. The all-Tibetan Special Frontier Force (SFF), popularly known as Establishment 22, was formed during the Sino-Indian War in 1962. Also created at this time under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs was the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBF), which included Tibetans in its ranks. Both forces were stationed in border areas.

As understood by the Tibetans in the 1960s, Establishment 22/SFF was the India-based branch of the Chushi Gangdrug army. Based in Dehra Dun, this force was initially trained by both American and Indian officers, but was led by four Tibetan officers — Ratuk Ngawang, Gyatso Dhondup, Jampa Kalden and Jampa Wangdu. When the Americans pulled out of Establishment 22/SFF following political changes in their relationship with India in the 1970s, the KGB moved in, and both trainers and equipment changed from American to Russian. In 1971, the Tibetan force was used in India's war with East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Fifty-six Tibetan Establishment 22/SFF soldiers were killed in battle, and 580 Tibetan soldiers were privately decorated with medals for bravery by the Indian government.

Stories of Guerilla War

While the Chushi Gangdrug armies in Nepal, India and Tibet were ultimately no match for the Chinese, they did register some victories, including a major intelligence haul in 1961 and, most importantly for the veterans, the safe escorting of the Dalai Lama to In-

dia during his undercover escape from Lhasa in 1959.

Stories of this guerrilla war were secret for many years. Involving multiple governments, and the covert moving of men, money and munitions across international borders, it is perhaps no surprise that information about the resistance was suppressed for several decades. Yet one might expect the story of the popular armed struggle for Tibet to be a part of contemporary Tibetan history. However, while veterans widely consider the resistance to be a key part of recent Tibetan history, and their own military service as the defining experience in their lives, histories of the resistance army and their efforts to defend Tibet and Buddhism are not widely known in the Tibetan refugee community. Why is the history of the resistance sidelined in official histories of Tibet? Why has the history of the Chushi Gangdrug history been arrested?

Historical arrest is the apprehension and detaining of particular pasts, with an anticipated eventual release. As such, arrested histories are not so much erased or forgotten, as they are postponed and archived for use in an unspecified time in the future when it will be OK, safe or important to tell them. Chushi Gangdrug history was — and still mostly remains — arrested within the Tibetan refugee community for several reasons: The war effort was not successful in regaining Tibet. The CIA was involved. In seeing their military initiative as political participation in the nation, as well as religious service defending the Dalai Lama and Buddhism, the mostly eastern Tibetan or Khampa resistance force challenged the Central Tibetan status quo in unwelcome ways. And finally, the military resistance troubled practices of nonviolence.

Chushi Gangdrug soldiers saw their army service as both ethically difficult (in that it potentially involved killing) and as ethically important (in that they were defending their religion, religious

institutions and religious leaders). Monks disrobed to join the army and, in reverse, some soldiers later became monks to more effectively atone for their wartime transgressions.

The discourse of nonviolence, which circulated among the soldiers in the 1950s and 1960s, was not exactly the same as that which circulates today. Soldiers understood they were taking on violence on behalf of others, specifically the Dalai Lama. Their strategy was a joint violent/nonviolent one, in which the armed struggle was paired with a political, diplomatic effort. Soldiers discussed among themselves how to effectively fight to defend religion, including constantly seeking religious protection and guidance. They dedicated themselves to the Dalai Lama, had specific deities to whom they prayed, and called on the assistance of numerous lamas and rinpoches for special blessings, protective relics and predictions. Religion permeated the army at the same time that fighting violated a fundamental principle of Buddhism — not to create suffering for any sentient being. The allowance of violence in the case of war, as explained to this author by many soldiers, was due to the threat to Buddhism from a communist, anti-religion opponent.

In his 1962 autobiography, *My Land and My People*, the Dalai Lama directly addressed his personal and political dilemmas regarding violence and the resistance. He explains that he spoke frankly with some of the Khampa leaders during his escape from Tibet:

“In spite of my beliefs, I very much admired their courage and their determination to carry on the grim battle they had started for our freedom, culture, and religion. I thanked them for their strength and bravery, and also, more personally, for the protection they had given me. ... By then, I could not in honesty advise them to avoid violence. In order to fight, they had sacrificed their homes and all the comforts and benefits of a peaceful life. Now they

could see no alternative but to go on fighting, and I had none to offer. I only asked them not to use violence except in defending their position in the mountains.”

As soldiers then and as veterans now, Chushi Gangdrug members consistently confirm his request: Their actions were in defense of Tibet in the face of Chinese aggression.

Implications of Non-Violence

Tibetan writer and veteran Jamyang Norbu argues that the promotion of the Tibetan struggle as wholly nonviolent “ignores the sacrifice and courage of the many thousands of Tibetan freedom fighters, monks and lamas included, who took up arms for the freedom of their country.” What then are the implications of a nonviolent state policy? Norbu contends that “truth has, unfortunately, become the first of casualties.”

Nonviolence is not an intrinsic Tibetan trait. It is instead a philosophical component of Buddhism and a political component of state struggle; one the Dalai Lama himself notes is the only “practical” recourse to dealing with the infinitely more populous People’s Republic of China.

Tibet has not historically been a non-violent society. Tibetan history is full of wars and battles, of local-level skirmishes and major disputes with neighboring countries. The Tibetan government had an official army, and monasteries kept arms and engaged in armed disputes. A policy of nonviolence in the present makes it difficult to narrate violence in the past. But narrating past violence does not — and should not — cancel out a contemporary policy of nonviolence. Current Tibetan nonviolence by individuals, as well as by groups such as Tibet Action Institute and Students for a Free Tibet, provides a legitimate and inspiring alternative to violent conflict around the world. Yet it is important to understand the histori-

cal contours of this political strategy, in order to acknowledge the realities and complexities of the Tibetan experience, and thus best speak to peoples engaged in similar political struggles.

Since laying down arms in 1974, Tibetans in exile have waged a solely nonviolent political campaign in accordance with the Dalai Lama's wishes. In 1987, the Dalai Lama articulated nonviolence as the sole Tibetan political strategy in his Five Point Peace Plan presented to the US Congress. Grassroots Tibetan nonviolence consists of a series of protests, media publications and coverage, global community building, hunger strikes and self-immolation. These latter two efforts — hunger strikes and immolations — do not fit the Dalai Lama's platform of nonviolence in that unlike Gandhi, who advocated fasts as a means of political nonviolence, the Dalai Lama considers them to be violence against one's own body.

Thus, while past histories of the Tibetan resistance army clearly conflict with current commitments to nonviolence as led by the Dalai Lama, so too do contemporary actions such as hunger strikes and immolations.

Reconciling Tibetan beliefs about the need to defend country and religion with the Dalai Lama's version of nonviolence is not a simple task. The tension between violence and nonviolence is one that Tibetans thus navigate with care, sometimes by opting for a different understanding of nonviolence.

It is not a coincidence that Thubten Ngodup was not just a former monk, but a former soldier. What veterans like Ngodup are encouraged to forget, a history of war, is directly correlated to what the world is encouraged to remember — a nonviolent Tibet.

Ngodup's self-immolation in 1998 was the first in the Tibetan community. For 11 years it was the only one. Then, on February 27, 2009, a young monk named Tapey self-immolated at Kirti Monastery in Tibet on the anniversary of an attack on the local community by Chinese security forces. At present, 138 Tibetans have self-immolated. The majority of self-immolations have been inside Tibet. Tibetans consider these deaths to be sacrifices rather than suicides. Sacrifices in the sense of a religious offering, a political protest and a call to the Tibetan community for unity. Sacrifices in the sense of continuing to defend religion and country.

Tibetans meet the Dalai Lama's decision that the Tibetan struggle is to be nonviolent with a range of responses — pride, acceptance, frustration, creativity and more. When you are not the Dalai Lama — that is, not an incarnation of a bodhisattva (or even a "simple monk" as he prefers) — living nonviolence is not always easy. And yet Tibetans remain committed to nonviolence, committed to a sense of truth and justice and committed to the goal of returning Tibet to Tibetan rule.

2: Asia Pacific

Britain Betrays Hong Kong... Again

Sophie Richardson

The British government has failed to condemn China for breaking its promise of greater democracy in Hong Kong.

If you were told the Chinese government — an unelected, one-party state — will decide who you can vote for, what would your response be? Not only would you likely object, you would expect others, especially democracies, to loudly condemn the idea. But Britain has done just the opposite to the people of Hong Kong, when it failed to call China out for breaking its promise of greater democracy for the island territory.

In a September 4 statement, Britain “welcome[d]” China’s commitment to universal suffrage, and merely noted that the restrictions imposed by Beijing on candidate nominations in Hong Kong — which profoundly undermine whether elections are democratic — will “disappoint” some. If, as the United Kingdom claimed, “the important thing is that the people of Hong Kong have a genuine choice,” it ought to have unequivocally condemned Beijing’s strategy.

On August 31, China’s legislature laid down a strict process for Hong Kong’s top office, ruling out open nominations. Under this system, only those favored by Beijing can be chosen as candidates for Hong Kong’s top office. The move shatters the dream of democracy for most people in Hong Kong, who have long shown their strong desire for the right to choose their own leader. These views have been made abundantly clear in public opinion polls and annual pro-democracy demonstrations; this year, half a million people took to the streets.

The British government appears to have forgotten about the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, an international treaty. Under that binding agreement between the UK and China that set out the terms of Hong Kong’s return to Chinese sovereignty, the territory is promised a “high degree of autonomy,” and that the Hong Kong government can decide all policies on its own except foreign affairs and defense. Yet the September 4 British statement made no reference at all to Beijing’s violations of that agreement. Nor did the UK raise concerns in June when Beijing issued a “white paper” asserting that China has “overall jurisdiction” over the territory, and that Hong Kong’s level of autonomy is dependent on Beijing’s wishes.

Both developments created an immediate uproar from people in Hong Kong. But although Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited the UK shortly after the “white paper” was released, British Prime Minister David Cameron did not publicly raise the issue of Hong Kong with Li, nor did he protest in any visible way the flagrant breach of a bilateral treaty.

This most recent betrayal of Hong Kong is not an isolated incident. Despite the initial assertion of Cameron’s coalition government in 2010 that it would “stand ... firm on human rights in all our bilateral relationships” with China while seeking closer ties, the UK seems to have opted to raise issues only behind closed doors — if at all. The British government, unlike others, chose not to visibly commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre. The UK has been inconsistent in its position toward meeting the Dalai Lama since Gordon Brown’s

tenure. And it wasn't until the waning years of British rule of Hong Kong that limited voting rights were granted.

Such appeasement of China over Hong Kong's rights is implicitly and sometimes explicitly presented by British officials as necessary for better trade relations. Cameron said, during his visit to China in 2013, that the two countries should deepen "mutual respect and understanding" in order to "remove barriers to trade and investment and partnership between our two countries."

There is nothing wrong about deepening mutual respect, trade and investment. But a shocking failure to defend basic rights for Hong Kong's 7 million people has been interpreted by the Chinese government as weakness. One wonders what diktats Beijing issues to London on trade, security or major international issues, or whether London recognizes how its diplomatic, economic and strategic interests are threatened by Beijing's disdain for human rights.

An immediate concern for the UK ought to be its ability to advocate for fair trials for its citizens detained in China's Kafkaesque judicial system. In 2009, British citizen Akmal Shaikh was executed after being convicted on drug smuggling charges, despite more

than two dozen interventions by the British government arguing that his bipolar disorder warranted a forensic examination that might have exempted him from criminal responsibility under Chinese law. In August 2014, British national Peter Humphrey, who ran a well-known due diligence consultancy, was sentenced to more than two years in prison for "illegally obtaining private personal information." Humphrey had been forced to confess on national television, and was initially denied the right to have family members and consular officials attend his trial.

Prior to Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty, many warned about the slow erosion of Hong Kong's civil liberties, although Britain often failed to sound the alarm.

But "welcoming" Beijing's decision is a bridge too far, and one that no self-respecting citizen of a democracy should cross. In a March 2013 interview, Chancellor George Osborne said he wanted China to "look to the UK as a home you can base some of your activities in." Does that mean he would welcome the Chinese Communist Party to dictate who he can vote for? Most probably not.

How America and Britain Crushed the Government of an “Ally”

John Pilger

John Pilger marks the death of Gough Whitlam with the one story missing from “tributes” to a man whose political demise is one of America’s dirtiest secrets.

Across the political and media elite in Australia, a silence has descended on the memory of the great, reforming prime minister, Gough Whitlam, who has died. His achievements are recognized, if grudgingly, his mistakes noted in false sorrow. But a critical reason for his extraordinary political demise will, they hope, be buried with him.

Australia briefly became an independent state during the Whitlam years (1972-75). An American commentator wrote that no country had “reversed its posture in international affairs so totally without going through a domestic revolution.” Whitlam ended his nation’s colonial servility. He abolished Royal patronage, moved Australia toward the Non-Aligned Movement, supported “zones of peace” and opposed nuclear weapons testing.

Although not regarded as on the left of the Labor Party, Whitlam was a maverick social democrat of principle, pride and propriety. He believed a foreign power should not control his country’s resources and dictate its economic and foreign policies. He proposed to “buy back the farm.” In drafting the first Aboriginal lands rights legislation, his government raised the ghost of the greatest land grab in human history — Britain’s colonization of Australia — and the question of who owned the island-continent’s vast natural wealth.

Latin Americans will recognize the audacity and danger of this “breaking

free” in a country whose establishment was welded to great, external power. Australians had served every British imperial adventure since the Boxer Rebellion was crushed in China. In the 1960s, Australia pleaded to join the US in its invasion of Vietnam, then provided “black teams” to be run by the CIA. US diplomatic cables, published in 2013 by WikiLeaks, disclose the names of leading figures in both main parties, including a future prime minister and foreign minister, as Washington’s informants during the Whitlam years.

Whitlam knew the risk he was taking. The day after his election, he ordered that his staff should not be “vetted or harassed” by the Australian security organization, ASIO — then, as now, tied to Anglo-American intelligence. When his ministers publicly condemned the US bombing of Vietnam as “corrupt and barbaric,” a CIA station officer in Saigon said: “We were told the Australians might as well be regarded as North Vietnamese collaborators.”

Whitlam demanded to know if and why the CIA was running a spy base at Pine Gap near Alice Springs, a giant vacuum cleaner which, as Edward Snowden revealed recently, allows the US to spy on everyone. “Try to screw us or bounce us,” the prime minister warned the US ambassador, “[and Pine Gap] will become a matter of contention.”

Victor Marchetti, the CIA officer who had helped set up Pine Gap, later told me: “This threat to close Pine Gap caused apoplexy in the White House ... a kind of Chile [coup] was set in motion.”

Pine Gap’s top-secret messages were

de-coded by a CIA contractor, TRW. One of the de-coders was Christopher Boyce, a young man troubled by the “deception and betrayal of an ally.” Boyce revealed that the CIA had infiltrated the Australian political and trade union elite, and referred to the governor-general of Australia, Sir John Kerr, as “our man Kerr.”

Kerr was not only the queen’s man — he had long-standing ties to Anglo-American intelligence. He was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, described by Jonathan Kwitny of *The Wall Street Journal* in his book, *The Crimes of Patriots*, as: “[A]n elite, invitation-only group ... exposed in Congress as being founded, funded and generally run by the CIA.” The CIA “paid for Kerr’s travel, built his prestige ... Kerr continued to go to the CIA for money.”

When Whitlam was re-elected for a second term, in 1974, the White House sent Marshall Green to Canberra as its ambassador. Green was an imperious, sinister figure who worked in the shadows of America’s “deep state.” Known as the “coupmaster,” he had played a central role in the 1965 coup against President Sukarno in Indonesia, which cost up to a million lives. One of his first speeches in Australia was to the Australian Institute of Directors — described by an alarmed member of the audience as “an incitement to the country’s business leaders to rise against the government.”

The Americans and British worked together. In 1975, Whitlam discovered that Britain’s MI6 was operating

against his government. “The Brits were actually de-coding secret messages coming into my foreign affairs office,” he said later. One of his ministers, Clyde Cameron, told me: “We knew MI6 was bugging Cabinet meetings for the Americans.” In the 1980s, senior CIA officers revealed that the “Whitlam problem” had been discussed “with urgency” by the agency’s director, William Colby, and the head of MI6, Sir Maurice Oldfield. A deputy director of the CIA said: “Kerr did what he was told to do.”

On November 10, 1975, Whitlam was shown a top secret telex message sourced to Theodore Shackley, the notorious head of the CIA’s East Asia Division, who had helped run the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile two years earlier.

Shackley’s message was read to Whitlam. It said the prime minister of Australia was a security risk in his own country. The day before, Kerr had visited the headquarters of the Defence Signals Directorate, Australia’s equivalent to the National Security Agency (NSA), where he was briefed on the “security crisis.”

On November 11, the day Whitlam was to inform parliament about the secret CIA presence in Australia, he was summoned by Kerr. Invoking archaic vice-regal “reserve powers,” Kerr sacked the democratically elected prime minister. The “Whitlam problem” was solved and Australian politics never recovered — nor did the nation reach its true independence.

China's Educational Challenge When Going Global

Ulf Henning Richter and Shan Xiaofeng

Educating a generation of students who can innovate in their thinking is a cornerstone for China's future success.

At Nottingham University Ningbo China (UNNC), students are prepared for China to go global. Taught in English according to Western standards and under strict quality control of the British campus, they receive an internationally competitive education and globally recognized degree. However, while Chinese students achieve very good to excellent results in written assessments, one key cultural challenge remains. At the UNNC, active class participation is encouraged, but Chinese students are often shy and passive throughout their education, experiencing difficulties with innovative and critical thinking.

The Issues

China's current educational system is exam-oriented. Although quality-oriented education has been advocated in educational circles, it is hardly implemented in China. The aim of Chinese education is to answer questions correctly, achieve high marks and pass exams. Therefore, all questions have a standard answer, even so-called "open questions." Under pressure to prepare students for tests, most teachers will not attach importance to nurturing their creativity and curiosity. As a result, Chinese students are good at rote-learning but lack their own thoughts. They are frequently described as delivering "high scores and low abilities."

The Chinese educational mode is passive. Teachers instill the minds of young children with fixed ideas. Students are encouraged from early on to

accept all knowledge provided by their teachers, to listen carefully in class and to remember all content in exact detail. Moreover, asking questions freely is discouraged, in favor of keeping quiet in class for teachers to better transfer knowledge. Any interruptions are perceived as disrespectful, and doubt may be considered a threat to a teacher's authority. As one student put it: "If we want to ask questions, we have to hold special postures and raise the right hand [and] then wait for the teacher to ask us. Sometimes a teacher will not give us the chance to ask. Sometimes we will be criticized or mocked by classmates if the question seems stupid."

The consequence of this Chinese educational culture is that students do not like to ask questions and cannot easily open up in seminars. Most students are not good at critical thinking because they were never encouraged to think critically before, let alone communicate with teachers and their peers.

Influenced by the passive educational mode, most Chinese students have developed a habit of just listening and accepting the instilled knowledge, without independent thinking. Many students keep quiet in class because they may not even understand some questions.

In China, teachers have a high status, and students often perceive the relationship between a teacher and student as unfair. The teacher is always right. Students are told by parents that a teacher is sacred and whatever they say must be right. Students should accept what teachers say without any doubt or conflict, in order to show respect and get high marks. In many schools, slogans cited from "Di Zi Gui" — a famous standard for students in ancient

China — are put up on the wall to educate students to respect their teachers. A very typical slogan is: “When facing an elder or teacher, do not show off and challenge your teacher.” Therefore, for most students, they have the impression that a teacher’s authority cannot be challenged.

Before answering questions, most Chinese students enter a psychological struggle: Should I answer this question? If so, what will others think of me? Will they think I am showing off? This is a universal phenomenon and remaining “low key” is the prototypical behavior of most Chinese people. In other words, low key is perceived as a virtue — the virtue of humility. Too much activity is perceived as eccentric behavior, and Chinese students do not want to become alienated among classmates.

Most students like to express themselves when they are young. If they always receive praise, they will be more willing to answer questions. If they are always repudiated, it will have a negative effect. In a Chinese class, each question has only one standard answer and it is either right or wrong. As some students reflected, they have been repudiated after expressing their own opinion; although their answer is very similar to the standard one. In this situation, Chinese students are afraid to express opinions. “If I provide a right answer, there are not many benefits, but if the answer is wrong, I will be mocked and lose face — this contains [a] high risk.” So when they are unsure about an answer, they will choose not to speak up to minimize this risk.

Most Chinese students lack confidence in conversing in English. When asked a question, they might not speak up, even if they know the answer. They will organize their response first and only answer a question if they can express it accurately. However, the process of organizing language takes much time, including checking a dictionary and structuring a sentence. Sometimes, they are not confident enough and give

up. Most of the time, before they get ready to answer a question, the teacher will already have moved on. However, the language problem is not the main reason. It is simply typical for Chinese university students to always keep quiet.

Although taught in English, Chinese students tend to use their native language in class. Similarly, Western foreign exchange students use their own native tongue to communicate. The Chinese integrate little with predominantly international student groups, while international students integrate better into groups of Chinese students. This is because language and cultural differences make communication difficult for Chinese students, since they typically arrive with a lower level of English skills at the university.

Faced with these difficulties, Chinese students choose to escape. Due to the one-child policy in the generation born after the 1980s, most students are the only child in their families. Children receive more love and care than before. Parents use their experience and wisdom to make all decisions for their children, in order to help them avoid failure. However, this may limit a child’s development and deprive them of the right to experience life and make mistakes. As a result, many students become used to depending on their parents and lack independence. When facing difficulties, they tend to escape instead of taking the bull by the horns.

The Solutions

So what are the solutions? Most Chinese students are very careful about what others think of them. It is of crucial importance to show students that language is just a tool for communication, no matter how good one’s proficiency is. The aim is to communicate and exchange ideas, so that no one will mock an accent or grammar mistake. In order to encourage Chinese students to speak, it is key to emphasize content over language and grammar for written assessments. This can effectively

encourage students to express their own perspectives.

Traditional Chinese education puts a lot of pressure on students when trying to communicate with teachers. In order to change this situation, teachers need to create a lively, friendly and relaxed class atmosphere. Students should feel that having lessons is like conversing with friends. Humor can be a key component of breaking barriers. Using humor to illustrate concepts encourages students to share their opinions. For instance, some students enjoy the education style of “New Oriental,” a famous English training organization. Their teachers are perceived as humorous, friendly, lively and interesting. Students feel no pressure when talking with them and are unafraid of making mistakes.

Teachers need to encourage students to prepare before class. For instance, teachers may ask each student to prepare presentations on relevant topics as part of active class participation. For example, the UNNC graduate course on qualitative methods has almost no teaching materials; the only materials are different articles selected by the instructor to be discussed in a seminar format.

In class, seating is fixed in a circle. Students sit very close to each other, making them feel more comfortable with sharing their perspective. All knowledge is transferred during discussions and learning takes place in a conversational style. Other methods may include discussing videos, theater and role-plays. A great team-building tool can be the use of group simulations with competing teams, since Chinese students are very competitive.

To tackle the students’ fear of making mistakes, teachers need to provide

substantial praise and encouragement throughout class. If students believe that answering a question does not have many benefits, they will be deterred from doing so. Even being graded by active class participation may not be tempting enough for them. Arguably, praise or encouragement is a much more powerful type of reward. Respecting students’ answers is crucial to building up their confidence, even if they misunderstand questions. It is helpful to find a friendly way to value each answer and avoid any negation to build self-confidence.

One technique is to encourage students to contradict their teachers and give high marks to any insightful or novel perspective. Students should be willing to freely express their ideas and enter discussions. As one student put it: “Even if we believe the Earth is flat, not round, we can discuss with the teacher because we clearly know that there is no absolute right or wrong answer in his eyes.”

Looking Ahead

The new Chinese leadership puts a heavy emphasis on innovation to turn China into a competitive global player, and move away from the economy’s reliance on manufacturing cheap goods as the factory of the world. Educating a generation of Chinese students who can innovate in their thinking and be critical is a cornerstone for China’s future success. The educational experiment of the Nottingham University Ningbo China, the first true joint venture between a Chinese and Western institution of higher education, provides valuable lessons on how to educate the next generation of Chinese leaders.

Democracy and Southeast Asia are Not Incompatible

Jarno Lang

Despite historical difficulties, Southeast Asia has come a long way on the road to democratization.

The Arab Spring that started in 2011 brought the world's attention back to the diverse nature and processes of democratization, with more recent events in Thailand, Hong Kong and Indonesia putting the Asia-Pacific region under the spotlight of democratic developments. While news from Southeast Asia remains on the periphery of global media, the democratic shortcomings in the region are too often analyzed and explained through a Western lens.

Grounds for Optimism?

A look at statistical data on the development of democracy in the region offers some ground for optimism. Today, more than a decade into the 21st century, among the 11 Southeast Asian countries there are fewer authoritarian regimes than there were in the early 1990s. Here, the most notable example is set by Indonesia that shed the three-decades long dictatorship under President Suharto at the turn of the millennium, and has recently successfully completed another round of presidential elections. With East Timor regaining sovereignty in 2002, the slow but steady opening up of Myanmar's political system to the international community after 2010, together with Malaysia's relative political stability over the last few years, marked more successes for democratic processes in the region.

Today, seven of the Southeast Asian nations are counted as at least "partly free" by Freedom House. In addition, when looking at long-term develop-

ment, Southeast Asia's education and media systems have shown an overall improvement over the last few decades, as increasingly more people have access to information and the prevalent use of social media in the region has allowed greater transnational communication. Hence, judging from a quick glance at the numbers alone, and based on the global discourse of Asian nations taking charge of their own political futures, Southeast Asian democracy should be a promising story of success.

However, if one risks a closer look at the details, it quickly becomes apparent that not all that shines is golden. The 2014 World Map of Reporters Without Borders shows that in all Southeast Asian countries, with the only exception of East Timor, freedom of information is in a "difficult" or even "very serious situation", the two worst categories of a total of five. Besides, the unstable political situation in Thailand has led to an increased censorship of the country's media, and Indonesia – Southeast Asia's largest country in terms of population and area – actually lost its 2012 Freedom House status of "fully free."

It is thus worthwhile to take a look behind the scenes and what mainstream global news media usually offer as information on Southeast Asia.

Why Democracy Might Not Work in Southeast Asia

The academic, journalistic and political discourse of the last four decades has developed three main explanations why democracy and Southeast Asia might not be a natural fit. First, there is the historical explanation: Similar to other parts of the non-Western world, the

Southeast Asian colonial experiences automatically led to the development of authoritarian regimes after the suppressed populations gained independence. Therefore, even Thailand – the only Southeast Asian country that did not experience colonial rule – could not escape the inherently systemic, all-encompassing vacuum that replaced the pre-World War II power structure. As a consequence, political strife has been constant and coup d'états have been a frequent characteristic of the Thai political order.

Second, there is the explanation based on an ideological perspective. Here, the Asian value debate that started in the 1980s can be seen as the main case in point. The argument goes that the value systems of Asian countries stand in direct opposition to Western ideals such as democracy, a line of thought that is similar to the argument that Islam and democracy do not go together. Following this logic, the development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the region's multilateral institution, cannot follow the example set by the European Union (EU). In the past, some politicians referred to the concepts of *mushawara* and *mufakat*, which loosely translate into consultation and consensus, when arguing for an ASEAN way that was different from others. On a national level, Singapore and Brunei serve as perfect examples, since their argument for limiting individual rights such as press freedom or democratic participation, in order to guarantee the safety and security of the many, is based on the same logic.

Third, and lastly, there is the pragmatic explanation that argues that national economic development or nation-building is much more important than democracy development — a post-colonial argument, if looked upon strictly, that is still often repeated today. From this point of view, although democracy could be an ideal worth striving for, so long as the countries in the region have closed the gap to the economic

achievements of industrialized Western nations, lofty ideals are much lower in ranking than economic development. Naturally, until today, this logic allows many elites in Southeast Asia to publicly proclaim their belief in democracy, while actually enforcing the status quo of insecure democratic rights, thus mollifying the middle classes mostly content with the little political freedom as long as economic progress is not hindered.

Aside of Brunei and Singapore, which have developed stable political systems without granting too much freedom, Myanmar and Indonesia provide a good example of sharing a characteristically strong military and a democratization process that very much lags behind the legislatures' promises. Of course, it needs to be conceded that these countries are on two different levels of democratic development. Even considering its many flaws, Indonesia's democracy can show for accomplishments on a level that Myanmar has yet to reach. Although the junta is slowly opening up the country's economy to foreign investors and seems to be willing to allow free elections some time down the road, Myanmar's regime is still counted among the world's most repressive.

What Next for the Region?

Looking at the arguments elaborated above, the conclusion seems fairly straightforward. As a historical fact, following the worldwide power vacuum after the Second World War and the Cold War respectively, Southeast Asian countries seemed bound to end up in political turmoil and many in the West predicted that authoritarianism would be the logical outcome. Furthermore, the values of Asia are in fundamental opposition to the Western concept of democracy and even if some social groups opt for democracy, the economic elites are likely to limit their appeal by curbing individual freedoms in order to secure national (economic) development. Thus, Southeast Asia and democracy seem to be two poles in an

antithetic relationship.

This conclusion disregards the nature of democratic processes and is based on false premises: democracy is neither an “ideal type” state in the sense of Max Weber, nor is it a straightforward process without any ups and downs. Even in the long-established Western democracies like the US, Great Britain or France, democracy is constantly under pressure from various social actors. The acquisitiveness of Big Data proponents in general and espionage networks in specific are a case in point. Some people might even argue that since 9/11, particularly the US and UK have developed into police states, moving away from the rule of law.

These considerations need to be borne in mind when evaluating the progress of democratization in Southeast Asia, particularly as the waxing and waning of democratic principles is amplified in new democracies. It is as wrong to argue from an extreme clash of cultures position, seeing democracy and Asian values as incongruent, as it is to regard Southeast Asian democracies from a Eurocentric perspective, assuming that the Western world already completed its democratization process. Germany, for instance, seen as synonymous with democracy today, whereas from the middle of the 19th century and until the end of the Second World War, the concept was viewed by many social groups as fundamentally non-German and alien.

Although it might not just be a matter of time, it is also not only a matter of historical, ideological or pragmatic

antitheses. Democracy and Southeast Asia are not simply two opposing poles, although this simplification is often used by those who benefit from the current status quo. For the democracy-bound Southeast Asian societies, this means that they not only aspire to build states following the examples of Western democracies, but they also need to cope with the current demands on the rule of law that change much faster than they used to in the 20th century. The historical setting and the socio-political developments have allowed the Southeast Asian elites to suppress many calls for more political rights and freedoms. It is thus right and necessary to criticize Southeast Asia for its democratic shortcomings, but this should not lead to the dismissal of the region’s many successful contemporary democratic movements that started with the 1980s People Power Revolution in the Philippines and continues until today.

The relationship between Southeast Asia and democracy should, therefore, be a matter of perspective, taking into consideration the difficult situation the region’s democratic movements have had to overcome. It should be acknowledged that there has been an overall advancement of individual rights since the middle of the 20th century, given the region’s experiences of European colonial suppression, Japanese aggression, being the site of proxy wars during the Cold War, and putting up a good fight in the struggle to catch up with the West’s industrialized achievements. Although there is much to be achieved in the process of democratisation across the region, one can see that Southeast Asia has indeed come a long way on the road to democracy.

Ensuring Decent Work for Domestic Workers in Singapore

Jolovan Wham

Despite Singapore’s meteoric rise into a developed state, it has failed to guarantee equality for domestic workers.

There are approximately 215,000 migrant domestic workers from South-east Asia and South Asia in Singapore. These women who cook, clean and take on caregiver roles are among the least protected workers in this affluent city-state. Reports of physical and sexual abuse are frequently heard of, and activists have long criticized the Singapore government for not providing migrant workers with adequate protections.

The Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics, a Singapore-based nongovernmental organization (NGO), sees an average of 500 women every year who flee their employer’s homes to seek refuge at its shelter. Complaints include unpaid and delayed wages, excessively long work hours, lack of rest and unsafe work conditions. Threats, deception and coercion have also been reported. When such abuses happen to workers who are expected to work round the clock, it amounts to trafficking and forced labor.

Many domestic workers arrive already indebted to a recruitment agency for their jobs. Even though Singapore’s Employment Agencies Act only allows recruiters to charge no more than two months of placement fees, they continue to collect six to eight months’ worth of salaries from these women, who earn an average of \$300 a month. Wage discrimination by nationality is widespread: Workers from the Philippines are often paid the most and those from South Asia the least.

The kafala, or sponsorship system, as it is known in the Middle East, is also a main feature of Singapore’s labor migration regime. The women are only allowed to switch employers with the permission of their “sponsor.” This often makes it difficult for complaints and reports against abusive employers to be made, as they fear losing their jobs and not being able to repay their debts.

After years of campaigning by NGO activists, the Singapore government consented to legislating a weekly day off for migrant domestic workers. However, resistance to granting rest days remains strong. In a survey conducted by Singapore’s local English daily, only 37% of domestic workers were granted weekly rest days. In order to placate employer concerns, the Singapore government granted concessions to employers we would usually not accept for workers in other occupations. For example, the duration of the day off is not 24 hours but negotiable between the worker and her employer; and the employer may also pay her compensation in lieu of taking a day off.

Recruitment agents also encourage employers not to grant weekly days off. They pander to discriminatory and paternalistic attitudes, such as workers slacking off, picking up “bad habits,” having boyfriends, bringing strangers into the house, “prostituting” themselves, moonlighting and getting pregnant. Employers frequently stress the importance of trust, as these women live in their homes and care for their loved ones. Domestic workers who have weekly days off are perceived as “vulnerable” to outside influences, and need to prove themselves trustworthy before such “risks” can be taken. This is exacerbated by current government

policy, which mandates a forfeiture of 5,000 Singaporean dollars from the employer in the event the domestic worker is missing, becomes pregnant or is found to have worked illegally.

Not Yet Equal

For migrant domestic workers to gain full equality, international labor standards must apply to them. They need to be included in Singapore's Employment Act, which grants all employees the right to overtime pay, caps on salary deductions, annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave and limits to working hours. Such important reforms, which would reduce exploitation and abuse, have been rejected by the government. The Singapore government has argued that it is not practical to regulate domestic work, particularly since many women live and work in their employer's homes at the same time.

In an interview with Human Rights Watch, representatives of the government's Foreign Manpower Management Division said:

"The working hours, the nature of work for domestic workers is different from office work, which is 9-5. It depends on individual needs. Employers and employees must come to a mutual understanding ... We hope to change through employer education. There is different bargaining power. The key is to encourage best practices, working closely with intermediaries."

As Human Rights Watch rightly pointed out, although care of the elderly and children may be a 24-hour job, migrant domestic workers should not be expected to work round the clock. Other professions with similar demands, such as nursing, arrange for shift work that ensures workers receive regular periods of rest. Employers must find ways to manage their own time and alternatives like child care to ensure reasonable working hours for domestic workers.

Providing Options to Live Out

One of the key problems impeding the effective regulation of domestic work in Singapore is the government's requirement that migrant domestic workers live together with their employers. Not only does this arrangement leave the worker vulnerable to exploitation, employers themselves will find it more challenging to manage the relationship with their workers. Domestic workers and activists in Hong Kong have started campaigning for this and so should Singapore.

The live-in arrangement places employers and domestic workers in such close physical and psychological proximity of each other that it undermines what should actually be a formal employment arrangement between both parties. Transgressions committed at work are no longer just "work-related" because it takes place in the home, and it becomes more difficult to maintain an appropriate distance from it. At its worst, the relationship that is formed in a live-in arrangement may degenerate into one based on gratuitousness and emotional manipulation. When employers speak of workers who have "betrayed" them or eroded their "trust," it is partly the live-in arrangement in which such relationships are formed which allow these feelings to develop.

However, when domestic workers live out, the boundaries become clearer and it is easier to keep a professional and emotional distance from any work-related conflicts. The domestic worker would also not be exploited and subjected to excessive working hours, if a clear boundary is marked between her personal and work time and she is able to clock in and clock out of her employer's home. Living out would also ensure adequate conditions for the workers, who often find themselves sleeping in very small rooms, or with the charges that they are taking care of, or anywhere in the home where there is space for her to rest. There is hardly any privacy for the domestic worker in such circumstances.

Employers need not be required to supervise their workers the whole day. What the worker does outside of work would be her responsibility alone and the employer would not be unfairly burdened with supervising and controlling her. Moreover, the Singapore government is already investing in resources to house foreign workers by constructing dormitories. This option should also be extended to migrant domestic workers. Efforts should be made to invest in resources to build the capacities of employment agents, employers and workers to manage their relationships with each other better. At the moment, such initiatives are severely limited.

High Demand for Domestic Workers

Employers in Singapore often complain about the difficulties they have juggling the demands of work and family. Giving rights to domestic workers would somehow upset the balance and throw everything into disarray. But the pressures that employers face are also a result of inadequate government policies

that have failed to provide adequately for families who are struggling to cope with the high cost of living, caring for their loved ones, and a work culture which demands that we sacrifice our personal relationships for the sake of economic productivity.

The high demand for domestic workers in Singapore is caused in part by the absence of adequate and affordable social support services for the young and elderly, which is actually the duty of the government to provide. But domestic work should not be a substitute for the provision of institutional care and formal social support services. There is a need for greater government investment in this area, so families can make informed choices about whether to hire domestic help. However, the political will to improve social welfare policies and spend more on social services will remain weak, as long as there remains an underclass of women who are cheap and easy to exploit.

3: Central & South Asia

Afghan Children: Growing Up With Drones and Landmines

Even Kuross

Childhood in Afghanistan is about constantly living in fear of death from skies.

A Predator drone can reach an altitude of 25,000 feet and hover at such heights for up to 40 hours. Yet, fair weather permitting, the buzz of its propellers can be perceptible to those who happen to fall under its flight path. At this point in Afghanistan, everyone has come to understand what that lawnmower-like buzzing represents: uncertainty.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), as drones are referred to in the US military's nomenclature, have become a fixture of life in 21st century Afghanistan. The number of sorties flown by remotely piloted aircraft has grown with increasing frequency, as the US and its allies shift their strategy in the run-up to the removal of remaining international combat troops toward the end of 2014.

With the drawdown of NATO's International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) underway, and the July 2013 handover of national security to the Afghanistan National Security Force (ANSF) already complete, the remaining coalition forces are beginning to rely more heavily on air power, drones in particular, to stem the insurgency and help their Afghan partners achieve stability in the region.

Drones were originally developed for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes, but were quickly weaponized after their lethal potential was realized. Since the first airstrike from a UAV in Yemen in 2002, drones have increasingly been employed for surgical strikes on enemy combatants, owing to their in-

creased accuracy and ability to remove the human element from violence; thus avoiding the political unpopularity that results from the loss of service men and women's lives in the process.

These justifications, however, fail to account for the craters and bodies that decorate a blast site after a 100-lb Hellfire missile thunders out of the sky to strike a target from above. Nor do they account for the innocent civilians who perish by mistake or simply due to proximity to a legitimate target. At the same time, drones are a demonstrably more accurate method of waging war, producing far fewer casualties than conventional weaponry.

As the most vulnerable segment of the population, how exactly does the use of drone warfare affect the lives of children in Afghanistan? Secondly, do drones have a place in the future of the country?

Death From Skies

Life is certainly not easy for Afghan children. A 2009 UNICEF report named Afghanistan as the world's worst place to be born. According to the World Health Organization, there is a 10% chance a child will not make it past the age of 5. That Afghanistan has one of the worst standards of health in the world comes as no surprise. In 2011, its Human Development Index ranking was 172 out of 187 countries. Malnutrition, poor access to clean water, and the spread of communicable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis all contribute to Afghanistan's unfortunate health record.

Furthermore, extreme poverty, child labor, and limited health care services

aggravate the already poor quality of life endured by Afghan children, who make up almost half (47.42% are 15 years or younger) of the entire population. These issues are exacerbated by the ongoing violence between coalition forces and anti-governmental elements (AGE). Vulnerability has become the defining feature of Afghan childhood.

The buzz of a drone in flight is a constant reminder that violence has yet to cease. This contributes to an overwhelming sense of insecurity for children particularly in rural Afghanistan. Every time they step outside the possibility of violence exists, whether it is getting caught in crossfire, becoming the victim of a suicide bombing, or accidentally stepping on a land mine. After 12 long years of war, the concept of safety remains alien to many Afghan children.

In 2012, civilian casualties dropped for the first time since the United Nations (UN) began tracking such figures six years ago. Insurgent elements were responsible for an overwhelming 81% of those casualties. In 2012, the UN reported the number of child casualties at 1,304 (283 resulting in death): 30% of these casualties were due to improvised explosive devices (IEDs), whilst only 5.6% of child casualties could be attributed to allied air-to-ground strikes.

As the empirical data demonstrates, the number of civilian casualties caused by UAVs pales in comparison with other sources of war-related deaths. The real-time surveillance ability of remotely piloted aircraft systems enables operators to track targets in order to confirm identities and corroborate intelligence, thus minimizing civilian casualties when a strike is launched.

As Harold Koh, a former legal adviser to the State Department, pointed out in a speech recently given at the Oxford University Union: "Because drone technology is highly precise, if properly controlled, it could be more lawful and more consistent with human rights and

humanitarian law than the alternatives."

Unfortunately, the high profile nature of air strikes (death from above makes a better byline than death from malnutrition) and the tendency of media outlets to conflate American drone programs together (covert with overt) obscures the subtle effectiveness of drones in minimizing civilian casualties. It is important to make the distinction between the two types of American drone programs in existence.

The program employed in Afghanistan is publically acknowledged and is considered a legitimate tactic in an ongoing theater of armed conflict. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) run the covert program of targeted killings underway in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. This program remains veiled in secrecy and continues to provoke controversy, as the US carries out classified extraterritorial strikes outside of the acknowledged conflict-zones as part of the global War on Terror.

Drones' Collateral Damage

Drone strikes may be the most indiscriminate use of lethal force in Afghanistan at the moment, but, for obvious reasons, this fact resonates very little among the civilian population. Recent reports have shown that the drone program has provided a recruitment boon for the Taliban and other AGEs around the region.

The buzz of a UAV flying overhead signals the ongoing infringement upon Afghanistan by foreign forces, which in turn has the potential to radicalize the local populace and/or produce resentment against the West. Insurgents have harnessed this sympathy by often inflating the number of civilian deaths in order to undermine counterinsurgency efforts.

Psychologically, the persistent fear produced by drones is unmistakable. The

anxiety generated by the knowledge that a strike could occur at any moment is traumatic and many Afghan children already suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. It acutely affects daily life in rural Afghanistan.

It is difficult to separate the psychological damage caused by drones and the potential of another type of violence erupting at any moment. But the perpetual fear caused by drones in such an environment can dramatically affect a child's future development, as they shy away from school or other social activities while potentially developing mental health issues.

The most obvious risk from drone strikes is the potential for casualties. When collateral damage is incurred, the human costs are incalculable (though NATO, for the first time ever, has begun to compensate victims). The most common victims of drone strikes are men, usually the primary breadwinners of Afghan families, and resulting in an estimated 1.6 million orphans. Beyond familial loss, homelessness and disability also profoundly affect children in Afghanistan today.

The Strategic Cost

But do the tactical advantages offered by drones outweigh the strategic costs? Al-Qaeda's top leadership has been

decimated through drone strikes but the insurgency continues. Do the short-term benefits of eliminating a threat outweigh the long-term damage in the relationship with the Afghan people?

The US has made the minimization of civilian casualties a key point of its new counterinsurgency field manual published in 2006. Both military and civilian leaders recognized that if they were ever going to succeed in establishing a stable Afghan state, they would need to win over the local populace by minimizing collateral damage. The ISAF now investigates every civilian casualty in order to recognize where the operation erred and rectify wrongs done to innocents.

However, is the stated goal of civilian protection enough to warrant the use of drones? The use of drones has become a perverse form of terror. If the US' ultimate strategy in the region is stability and the elimination of elements capable of striking at the West, then the use of drones is counterproductive. The small tactical victories achieved through the targeted elimination of insurgents do not outweigh the resentment bred by the drone program — not when it results in wholly unnecessary and tragic loss of lives and obliteration of its children's future.

Modi Wins Big as India Aspires for Prosperity

Atul Singh

Modi has been elected to ensure economic growth, increase employment, lower inflation and lift millions out of poverty.

India's cacophonous and protracted elections have resulted in a clear winner. Narendra Modi will lead his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government without needing the support of any other party in parliament. This is the first time a non-Congress party has won a complete majority and signals the end of coalition politics, at least for now. A low caste tea-seller has risen to the premiership of the world's largest democracy, defeating a powerful political dynasty. Modi's government has enormous implications for both India and the rest of the world.

Goodbye to the Nehru Model

Since independence, India has had a socialist economy administered by a colonial-era bureaucracy. In the first flush of independence, there were triumphs such as India's nuclear program, the formation of educational institutions such as Indian Institutes of Technology, and industrial growth of 7% from 1950 to 1965. Jawaharlal Nehru's expansion of the state and adding to the powers of bureaucracy soon took its toll. The infamous license-permit raj soon took over and strangulated the country with red tape.

Under Indira Gandhi, Nehru's authoritarian daughter, the Indian state expanded further even as she moved closer to the Soviet Union. More importantly, Indira subordinated the judiciary, superseded the most respected officers of the military and curbed fundamental freedoms, including that

of the press. In 1975, she imposed what is known as "the Emergency," throwing all her opponents into jail. Sanjay Gandhi, her unelected 28-year-old son, was the real power behind the throne and ordered officials around. A sycophant even declared that "Indira is India, India is Indira."

Indira's vacuous economic ideas were strikingly similar to Hugo Chavez. Her populist "remove poverty" slogan led to nothing but anemic growth and mass unemployment at a time when Deng Xiaopeng was instituting fundamental reforms that would go on to transform China. She destroyed inner-party democracy in the Congress and instituted absolute dynastic rule in both the party and the country. When Sanjay died, Rajiv Gandhi took over as heir apparent and succeeded his mother as prime minister.

For the last decade, India has been ruled by Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's Italian widow. She lacks a university degree and has no administrative experience. Yet she has been de facto prime minister with Manmohan Singh playing the role of a mere puppet. Sonia has wielded power without responsibility and not appeared in a single press conference or a television interview. Over the last five years, she has promoted her son, whose callow coterie has been ruling the country by proxy.

Rahul Gandhi, Sonia's son, was the prime ministerial candidate in the recent elections. His most notable public foray before the campaign was humiliating Singh in a press conference. Despite holding no executive office, Rahul declared that an unpopular and questionable ordinance ought to be torn up, making a public spectacle of Singh's

impotence. It is an open secret that Rahul is intellectually challenged and has just presided over the biggest defeat of the Congress. Yet he is the uncontested leader of the party. Nehru's model of a big state, red tape, populist economics, low growth and dynastic rule has failed. The voters of India have chosen an alternative.

A Vote Against Patronage, Corruption and Dynasty

Around a decade ago, this author resigned because of the endemic corruption in the government. Since then, corruption has only increased exponentially. The multi-billion dollar scams under Sonia's government have been well chronicled. Cash changed hands for allocating coal mines or 2G Spectrum. Votes were even bought in the Indian parliament. Such developments led to a national anticorruption campaign and the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that has an anticorruption agenda.

A land mafia has emerged in the country. Robert Vadra, Sonia's infamous son-in-law, is rumored to be one of its most terrifying members. The government seizes land from villagers in the name of development. It then sells land to politicians and their cronies. They use this land to construct shopping malls, business offices and apartments, making fortunes in the process. Much ownership is benami, a shady practice of de facto ownership whilst avoiding legal ownership. Property is systematically undervalued, leading to massive tax evasion.

An education mafia has also emerged under the last ten years of Congress rule. Those with connections have been starting schools, colleges, technology institutes and even medical schools. This enables them to seize land, gain tax benefits and launder money, even while earning social prestige. The standard of education in these schools is often pathetic. Standards have also fallen in government schools and universities,

which have been left to rot through underinvestment and maladministration. Such is the state of affairs that vice-chancellors of prestigious universities are purported to take kickbacks in construction and other contracts.

A senior government official calls the current state of affairs "the nadir of the nadir." In the name of empowerment, Sonia's government has dispensed patronage through welfare schemes and orchestrated a decentralization of corruption. Money is given to schemes as grants-in-aid that are not subject to audit. Around 30% of the revenue expenditure is spent on grants-in-aid. Much of this money is passed on to registered societies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and trusts. Once the money is released, all the government requires is a two-line utilization certificate. It is not audited by India's reputed auditing body.

Grants-in-aid are loved by left-leaning academics, both at home and abroad. In theory, they are supposed to increase income, lower poverty, improve education, increase access to health care and generate employment. In reality, grants are made to political favorites. The Congress expected them to pocket sweetheart deals and bring in the vote in a modern day rural version of Tammany Hall politics.

Even the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program (MNREGA), the much-touted employment generation scheme loved by Amartya Sen, is a disaster. Indian auditors have found that the MNREGA fails to create many fruitful assets as most projects are abandoned midway. Even the assets that are actually created do not turn out to be durable. Far too often, the few assets that are created are for private gain, not social benefit. Most of this grant money is siphoned off by local strongmen and that is why fancy foreign vehicles can be found in remote parts of the country that lack roads, drinking water and sanitation. A sudden influx of money has boosted

the culture of crime in many parts of India.

Finally, such is the culture of impunity in India that there is no rule of law or even order left. The wife of Shashi Tharoor, a glamorous United Nations official and a darling of the media, died in suspicious circumstances at a hotel. This was after a very public dispute involving Tharoor's affair with a Pakistani journalist. His wife was reportedly found dead with marks on her body. Off the record, police officers say this was a textbook case for abetment of murder, if not murder itself. It may well be that Tharoor is innocent, but the point is the death of his wife should be investigated properly. Instead, the police have not dared to examine the matter.

Over the last decade, the police have spent much of their time guarding the powerful. They have little time for normal duties, including investigation. In the last few years, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's version of the FBI, had become "her mistress' voice," answering to the beck and call of Sonia. The judiciary does not function because lower courts are inundated with millions of cases and no file moves without greasing the wheels. Many question the integrity of the Supreme Court in private but are too afraid to say so in public for fear of being jailed for contempt of court. Even the Election Commission was suspected of losing independence because Sonia appointed all its members. Rahul's unauthorized presence in several voting booths was overlooked, while his opponent was ordered to leave town.

Indians have become fed up with the collapse of rule of law, the lack of opportunity, the arrogance of those in power, the sense of entitlement of members of the lucky sperm club, and outright theft of the state exchequer on a spectacular scale. They have voted for change.

So, Sonia Was Awful But Why

Modi?

A Fair Observer article published before the election sums up why people voted for Modi. As chief minister of Gujarat, he has presided over Chinese-style growth rates. He has instituted power reforms, built roads, developed ports, improved irrigation and created jobs. People from impoverished states have been flocking to Gujarat in search of work and these stories have started reaching their villages in an age of mobile telephones. People marvel at stories of low crime, little day to day bribery and relative prosperity. They have voted for Modi so that he can replicate the Gujarat model throughout India.

Modi's victory is also a result of great marketing and superlative messaging. His team ran a disciplined campaign that was clear about the message and targeted key voter groups effectively. Modi promised development. He projected himself as a man of the masses who rose from the bottom. He framed Rahul as an out of touch prince who did not have any vision for India. Modi campaigned tirelessly, addressing rallies across the length and breadth of the country. His oratorical skills in Hindi are exceptional, as is his ability to emotionally connect with voters. Indians who have long-been in thrall to the Nehru dynasty were gradually seduced by the Modi story. Bollywood could not have scripted it better.

But, What About Minorities, Corporates and Pakistan?

Modi is regarded as a right-wing Hindu butcher by many because of his alleged role in the 2002 Gujarat riots. Some estimate that up to 2,000 Muslims died. Those who blame Modi include the foreign media, left-leaning intellectuals, Christian leaders and a large number of Muslims, both inside and outside the country. The riots are certainly a blot on Modi's record. Yet he has worked hard to overcome them. Since 2002, there have been no riots in Gujarat. Other states have experienced more

violence, including riots. More importantly, Modi has understood the need to reach out to minority communities and is going to be far more reasonable than his opponents expect.

Already, Modi has invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his inauguration. This is a historic first and demonstrates that Modi is rising to the demands of his new office. Some members of the Pakistani High Commission in Delhi are privately glad to see Modi in power. They had despaired of dealing with Singh, who was unable to make any decision and was clearly not in command. Sonia was inaccessible and incommunicado like a Sphinx, leaving the Pakistanis with little clue as to who to deal with. With two business-friendly leaders running both Pakistan and India, this might present the best shot for peace in the subcontinent. Of course, risks remain, including that of nuclear war but they are exaggerated by fear mongers. Furthermore, Modi seems to be reaching out to India's neighborhood despite the opposition of powerful Indian politicians and will look east and put business first.

Some fear Modi as a hardcore neoliberal administrator who is going to favor his corporate friends such as Gautam Adani. They believe that gender and social equity will be sacrificed at the altar of high growth. This is simply untrue. First, a woman has succeeded Modi in Gujarat, demonstrating that India's new prime minister is not quite the chauvinist he is portrayed to be. Second, Modi himself is a member of the lower castes and is the first Indian

prime minister of such humble origins. He has demonstrated during the course of the elections that he understands reaching out to the marginalized and dispossessed. Tellingly, he broke down in parliament when talking about serving the country.

Finally, alarm bells have been raised about India's adivasis, the tribes who live in India's mineral rich forests. The government has often given their land to mining companies without consultation or compensation. Some estimate that a third to a quarter of India's districts suffer from an insurgency led by Naxalites, India's home-grown Maoists. Their core support comes from adivasis, who have been abandoned by the administration and have no recourse to justice. Under Sonia's government, veteran politician P. Chidambaram launched massive operations, including large paramilitary offensives involving airstrikes, and funded private militias to decimate the Naxalites. Many fear that Modi will be a Chidambaram on steroids vis-à-vis Naxalites. This fear is unreasonable. Modi will be tough but it is not in his best interests to take Chidambaram's route, because he is making a play for the adivasi votes.

What Next After Modi's Win?

The Indian stock market is already booming. Indians are anticipating better economic times. The animal spirits that John Maynard Keynes talks about have already been unleashed. Expect better growth in the coming years. Be prepared for a more assertive India..

India's Elections 2014: Mainstream Privilege and the Northeast

Pema Abraham

In India, deep divides between the powerful and the disenfranchised still persist.

As India gears up for an election increasingly difficult to predict — one in which the controversial Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) prime ministerial candidate, heads off against Rahul Gandhi, the 43-year-old scion of the country's most famous political dynasty — pundits' predictions of victory engage the insatiable public demand for electoral clues.

But what role do the most historically marginalized in the Indian state play in the 2014 Indian elections, almost 70 years after independence?

The dominant narrative of the «world's largest democracy» is that of a shiny, modern and new India. Visiting heads of state spend their time «wooing» the country's businesses and foreign investors, longing for facilitated access to India's investor-friendly states, while even the director of the London School of Economics (LSE) has proclaimed it as a country of promise, from where «the world looks different.»

Religious violence, poverty, impunity and widespread human disenfranchisement have seemingly vanished from the lexicons of a world eager to capitalize, and of a country bent on asserting its global relevance.

Electoral Economics

Structurally, the first past the post system that allows voters to choose between people rather than only parties means that central issues, including those of women's empowerment and human rights, have become victims of an electoral format ever more centered

around personality. However, it is the voice of the people that places gross domestic product (GDP) and a hope for change solidly at the center of intense campaigning.

Despite its impressive economic transformation over the past 25 years — per capita income has nearly quadrupled compared with 1991 — and amid a yawning gap between rich and poor, India's many constituencies, with their varied geopolitical agendas and priorities, seem to be coalescing over economic hopes of continued growth.

Modi's rags-to-riches story — his spectacular journey from selling tea at a railway station — resonates loudly with the aspirations of a largely rural population, and provides a crucial juxtaposition with the Congress party's «princeling» candidate.

As societal behaviors shift from traditional community ties, such as caste and religion, to more transparent ones of geo-location and economic status, the historically sharp Muslim-Hindu divide seems less relevant now as a younger India votes less on a sectarian impulse and more on economic and material security.

But the criteria for growth are still subject to a massively diverse set of geopolitical priorities. While other peripheral states, including Kerala and Orissa, have leveraged their political weight opportunistically by looking outward and aggressively courting investment in industry, the northeast has remained handicapped by its lack of connectivity and adverse security situation. The latter, in particular, has led the Indian government to overreact to the slightest perceived threat, be it legitimate

civil disobedience movements born of economic grievances or migration into the region.

In the northeast, communal identities remain strong and, until recently, their interests have often been at cross-purposes to the mainstream. For instance, Manipuri calls to repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) — which forbids the prosecution of soldiers without the rarely-given approval of the central government, so troops often enjoy effective immunity from prosecution — have been countered in Delhi, citing the security of its citizens.

But what we have seen now, in the run-up to the 2014 Indian elections, is the intersection of economic growth in India and the development of the northeast.

Managing the Northeast

If you scratch the surface of popular concepts about India, a hegemonic, ethnically exclusive, urban core will be revealed. Away from the sensitivities of those dwelling and thriving in the capital and other industrial hubs, three underreported internal armed conflicts — those on the borders in Manipur and in Kashmir, and the Naxal conflict in India's heartland — continue to simmer.

Issues of impunity and accountability are so pervasive and cyclical in nature, that one marvels at the ease with which candidates proclaim "progress." The assumed legitimacy of the state belies the sensitivities of minorities, who find their identities at odds with such a convenient homogeneity.

To be economically, and socially, sustainable, India's growth story needs to be inclusive. The northeast — which includes the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim, and covers 262,179 sq. km of the country — remains the least developed. This comes despite distinct advantages,

including resource-rich and fertile farmland, proximity to Bangladesh and Myanmar, and an entry point for the Southeast Asian markets.

However, the region has a mere ten airports (seven of which are in Assam) and, while the region stands below average in comparison with the rest of India in socioeconomic indicators, its literacy rates are above the national average. Moreover, the 2013 racially-motivated murder of Nido Taniam in New Delhi is demonstrative of deep societal cleavages that still exist, particularly between the northeastern states and the mainstream.

But the region is growing in electoral importance: increased connectivity, trade, tourism, migration and investments in infrastructure are boosting its growth and helping to transform it into an economic hub. Boasting an average of a 9.95% growth, compared to the 8% growth of India as a whole, is indicative of future opportunities.

Both Modi and Gandhi have invested more time in wooing these constituencies in their respective electoral campaigns than would have been deemed necessary in the past.

However, in a country of India's scale, federalism is often seen as the key to successful democracy, and what the federalist model has been successful in avoiding is an overt political domination to the direct detriment of minority and indigenous ethnic groups.

India's state boundaries have placated most national minorities by transforming them into majorities in their own states. This conscious perpetuation of majority-minority rule has led to disparate opportunities, human dignity, and development between those at the center and those on the periphery.

At the crux of it all is power. These divides are manifested in the relationships between the powerful and the disenfranchised, between the men

and women and, perhaps least visible, between those who have historically wielded power, and those who have historically had power wielded over them.

So is it really enough to merely recognize the economic potential of the region, while neglecting to tackle the more nuanced relationships between center and its borders?

Power and Privilege

It is not merely the incorporation of northeastern quotas in Indian institutions and politics that will pave the way for the next prime minister. Though the Indian political system has rendered MPs unimportant, it has balanced the positions with significant access to power to execute local contracts and, in short, get rich.

Despite surpassing development indicators that the Western world is still struggling to achieve — a female president, a Dalit leader — India's experience demonstrates that access to positions of power does not correlate with an end to discrimination against traditionally marginalized groups.

All these achievements have served to enhance is the shiny façade of the state as one of tolerance and egalitarianism, where instead a vacuum of real commitment lies concealed.

According to government estimates, 451 incidents of communal violence were recorded in the first eight months of 2013, compared to 410 incidents in all of 2012. Among these were clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities last August in the Kishtwar town in Jammu and Kashmir, and in Muzaffarnagar in the western Uttar Pradesh state in September. Violence linked to a persistent low-level armed conflict in central and eastern India by the Communist Party of India (Maoist), known as Naxalites, led to the death of 384 people, including 147 civilians, in 2013.

In the aftermath of the well-covered 2012 Delhi rape case, legislation has

improved but, despite these important reforms, key gaps remain. For example, Indian law still does not provide adequate legal remedies for “honor killings,” or victim and witness protection.

The veneer of a democratic meritocracy is not a new one in India, but it is increasingly one that only the most privileged and misguided can pretend to believe in. As business and political power intersect, we witness the rise of crony capitalism. The idea this meritocracy can continue without explicitly addressing socioeconomic inequality is weakening.

It was precisely the revelations of such inadequacy that provided the impetus of Anna Hazare's 2011 anti-graft movement and partially explains the success of the Aam Aadmi Party. So when we see what privilege looks like in India today, it becomes clear that tackling the crass indicators of power disparity, such as wealth or sanctioned discrimination, does not negate the deep discriminations of an unequal society.

India's public discourse tends to sweep the inconvenient truths under the carpet and apply temporary, band-aid measures when the ugly dust of reality reappears. The country's nearly 70 years of independence and democracy has infused its national psyche, the commendable belief that descent-based characteristics such as ethnicity, race and caste should not matter.

Rapid economic growth and revolutionary transformation that undoubtedly revealed a multitude of opportunities for rural and urban alike, means that only the most backward and conservative individuals still believe descent-based discrimination and racism toward, for example, those from the northeast, is condonable.

This façade of egalitarianism manifests as an invisible barrier to India's hopes of transforming into a truly democratic state. The conviction of the elite is not

a license to ignore voices telling them it still exists, peripheral as they may be.

The national policy framework, for example the Indian Constitution, that insists on referring to its indigenous peoples as “scheduled tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC)” creates a complicity that does anything but set standards to lead by example. Therefore, it is of little wonder that it is alleged that almost half the women sexually assaulted in India’s capital are from the country’s northeast.

What’s the Cost?

What this election season has shown us is that for all India’s democratic promise, the country’s predilection for money politics has led it to neglect its most promising and untapped region.

The government and the private sector need to collaborate on reforms related to investment in agriculture, hydroelectric power and infrastructure, as well as in creating new avenues for vertical growth through market-linked skills development and cross-border trade. It is imperative that these be implemented with the support of those local communities.

But in order to really include the northeast, it will cost the government more than a few tens of millions of rupees. It will require a more nuanced and widespread understanding of the subtle ways in which privilege functions in such a diverse society, along with a commitment to tackle fundamental human rights issues of the region in an even-handed and just manner.

The Politics of Literary Censorship in Afghanistan

Omar Sadr

Literary censorship in Afghanistan has always been part of a larger cultural project of nation-building.

Book burning was a common practice in the despotic empires and authoritarian regimes of the Middle Ages, as well as the nation-states of the 20th century. It happened under the rule of the Ghaznavid dynasty in ancient Khurasan, the Mongol Empire and the German Third Reich. Many liberal-democratic states are susceptible to censorship practices, so the question to ask is what explains the desire to burn books by both despotic and democratic regimes?

Book Burning as a Cultural Project

Censorship and book burning is not merely a curtailment of human rights and freedoms, but a cultural project in itself. It is linked to legitimization, delegitimization, purification, conservatism, representation and construction of society. This cultural project defines which ideas are permissible and which are not. This process is the politicization of culture.

The burning of books and literary censorship are institutional practices and are a consequence of an idea. It is not a singular individual practice. Rather, it often assumes the form of an institutional project, which represents a certain way of thinking. Book burning may be practiced by an individual person, a religious leader, a political party or the state, but in essence it is an institution.

These events also entail a process of “otherization” in terms of simple bina-

ries. An evil “other” is constructed and portrayed against the good “self.” The other is a threat and a danger to the self, the national identity or national culture. The process of “otherization” provides the condition for the self to eliminate the other. Therefore, books, which were banned or burned, were projected as a threat to national security or the culture of society.

A modern nation-state may attempt book burning for the purpose of nation- or state-building. Attempts to construct a nation-state are usually informed by the “one state — one nation — one language” policy. It aims to purify the history, culture and the nation from undesirable elements. A religious leader may attempt book burning to purify the religion. In a traditional society, conservative forces may perform the act of book burning in order to sustain the traditions of society.

Empires, while conquering other lands, often burned their libraries. The intention behind this destruction was to eliminate the history of people and reduce the risk of revolt and resistance. According to some sources, Alexander the Great burned some libraries while invading and conquering the Achaemenid Empire. The library of the Samanids was burned by the Turks’ invasion of Khurasan (predecessor of Afghanistan). Similarly, Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi (Mahmud of Ghazni) burned libraries while expanding the Ghaznavid Empire to the west of Khurasan. And Genghis Khan’s cavalry burned the House of Wisdom library in Baghdad and other libraries across Khurasan.

Arjun Appadurai argues that the formation of modern nations leads to

the emergence of predatory identities. According to his argument, the idea of predatory identity tries to fill the gap between:

“... the numerical majority and the fantasy of national purity and wholeness ... Predatory identities are product of situation that in which the idea of national peoplehood is successfully reduced to principle of the ethnic singularity so that existence of a small minority is seen as a deficit in the purity of nation.”

In this process, book burning is a practice undertaken to purify the nation.

Furthermore, as constructing history is central to the purification of a nation, banning or burning those history books, which are in contradiction to the mainstream narrative of the state and nation, are part of attempts for national purification. The state reinterprets, codifies and represents the past through a formal narrative of history. The formal project of history-making will purify the nation from the undesirable historical book.

Literary Censorship in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the effort for nation-building initiated during the rule of Shah Amanullah (1919-1929), and continued under Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim (1929-1946), Shah Mahmud (1946-1953) and Mohammad Daoud (1953-1963), developed a separate and distinct identity for the country and neglected the existing shared cultural identity between Afghanistan and the people across its borders. The foundation of nationalism in Afghanistan in this period was not inclusive, which could encompass all the people of the country. Certain language and cultural conducts were defined, and assumed the national and official language and culture. The project of nation-building in Afghanistan was based on majoritarianism. The dominant group had wanted to fill the gap

between the numerical majority and the fantasy of national purity. Censorship was used as a tool to operationalize this objective.

For instance, Amir Habibullah (1901-1919), the emir of Afghanistan, monitored Faiz Mohammad Katib Hazara, the author of *Siraj-ul Tawarikh* (Lamp of Histories), while writing his book, in order to remove elements that were not in favor of the ruler's family. *Siraj-ul Tawarikh* was censored by Habibullah, Mahmud Tarzi and his brother, Nasrullah. Later, Mohammad Nader Shah (1929-1933) banned the book.

The historian, Mohammad Sediq Farhang, argues that a large number of authors and intellectuals were imprisoned without due process of law, or a fair and just trial during the premiership of Mohammad Hashim as a penance for criticizing the absolute authority and fanatic policies of the government.

Among the authors and intellectuals who were imprisoned in this period, he lists Mir Ghulam Mohammad Ghubar, Abdul Hadi Dawi, M. Anwar Besmil, Abdulsabur Ghafur and others. Although ratification of the media code in 1950 under premiership of Shah Mahmud opened the space, the wave of imprisonment and curtailment of free expression continued in subsequent years. In 1967, Ghulam Mohammad Ghubar's book, *Afghanistan Dar Maser-e Tarikh* (Afghanistan in the Course of History), was banned without any legal reason. The government recollected all the issues of the book from the market.

In 2009, the Ministry of Culture and Information seized 25 tons of books from a publisher that imported them from Iran. Among these books, 11 titles were determined as unpermitted and were thrown into the Helmand River. Abdul Karim Khoram, the minister of culture and information under President Hamid Karzai, said: “There is no impediment in throwing the books into the river.”

The governor of Nimroz province had said these books were controversial and that they highlighted ethnic and religious differences in Afghanistan. However, according to the publisher, the books did not contain issues that jeopardize national unity. The policy of the Ministry of Information and Culture to prevent the selling and reading of books indicates their effort to purify the national culture — a form of literary censorship reminiscent of the project of book burning in Nazi Germany.

Book Burning as Inquisition

Banning or burning a book may also attempt to restore the questioned authority. In a traditional society, the social and religious figures assume transcendental authority. They do not tolerate any criticism. Generally, books that target religious or traditional authority in a conservative society are banned or burned.

Ghubar argues that when Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi (998-1030) conquered Ray, he sent the Mutazilates (rationalists in Islam) of that city in exile to Khurasan and burned their books related to philosophy, mathematics and astronomy. He established an inquisition institution in Ray as a surveillance organization to supervise the religious behavior of the people.

Inquisition was the nature of book banning and burning during the communist administration (1978-1992). The ideology became the determining factor in selecting and burning in this period. The communist administration supported authors and publishing of their books, but this policy had an ideological bias: anti-communist books were banned.

When the mujahedeen (1992-1996) arrived in Kabul, libraries were looted and public book burning events were conducted. In his book, *Aqhaz Yak Payan* (The Beginning of an End), Qahar Asi, a Dari-Persian poet, narrates

how the Authors' Association's library was looted and destroyed. He states that, as the mujahedeen entered Kabul, each group occupied governmental organizations or nongovernmental associations. The Authors' Association was occupied by a commander named Jilani, who belonged to Itiyad Islami Party. The party was under the leadership of Rashul Sayyaf during that time. Similarly, the Taliban adopted a conservative policy against books. They publicly burned and destroyed video tapes, televisions, music records and photographs. Both the mujahedeen and the Taliban adopted censorship, and banned or burned books based on religious conservatism and within the framework of religious inquisition.

The 2012 Dari-Persian novel *Gumnam* (Anonymity) by Taqi Bakhtyari was banned in Afghanistan and the author was accused of blasphemy. The novel narrates the life of a young man called Mir Jan, who is eager to learn Islamic jurisprudence. For this purpose, he travels to Iran. After receiving admission to a religious training center, he is raped by an ayatollah. Returning to Afghanistan under psychological effects of sexual abuse, Mir Jan rejects Islam and critiques the religious thoughts. The novel sparked a wave of anger against Bakhtyari. A Shi'a religious scholar called the author a "small Salman Rushdie." The book questioned traditional and religious superstitions, and provoked some to burn the novel and send the author a charred copy along with death threats.

In an attempt to purify society, the inquisition policy does not differentiate between a book and a man. Purification will capture every aspect of society. As Heinrich Heine, the German poet, has expressed: "Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings." Similarly, Appadurai claims the idea of national purity develops seeds of mass killing as "they want to have a singularity and completeness of national ethos." Sultan Mahmud,

the communists, the mujahedeen, the Taliban and those who threatened Bakhtyari not only banned or burned books, but they also attempted to kill people indiscriminately.

Book Burning as Emancipation

Book burning is used as a symbolic action in resistance movements as well. It is a sign of frustration. Book burning is reclaiming of agency through symbolic action. In this case, burning is not to destroy and eliminate. Rather, it is to give birth to a new subjectivity and change an object to a subject. B.R. Ambedkar, who is regarded as the father of the Indian Constitution, burned the Manusmriti during the Maha-Sangharsha of Mahad Satyagraha in 1927.

Ambedkar burned the book as a symbolic protest against caste inequality. He claimed the protest was not only to destroy the untouchability, but also to annihilate the entire caste system. He said that atrocities inflicted on Dalits — the untouchables — are rooted in the teachings of the book. Interestingly, there is no such incident in Afghanistan when book burning has been used as a tool of resistance and assertion of identity.

Self-Censorship

Freedom of speech and expression has been claimed as one of the many successful achievements of Afghanistan in the last 12 years. The 2004 constitution recognizes the rights of citizens to freedom of speech and expression. There has been a remarkable increase

in the number of media houses and there is less censorship on freedom of expression.

However, this right has been under threat in different ways, ranging from censorship to the adoption of restrictive regulations and harassment of authors and writers. Rahnavard Zaryab, a writer and scholar, claims there is a state of crisis in Afghanistan and there is a fear of return to the Taliban era. In the past decade, some degree of freedom of speech has been practiced, with an opportunity to express critical views. But conservatives have increasingly continued to limit free speech.

Similar concerns come from Sami Hamid, a writer and Dari-Persian poet, who claims there is freedom of speech, however, there is no real freedom for writers. Writers are frightened, as they could become a target at any point. That is why authors hide their identity behind allonyms. Although the Afghan Constitution recognizes freedom of expression, a lack of political stability has created a sense of fear, which has led to self-censorship. Authors and intellectuals filter their ideas and views before expressing them.

The aforementioned incidents describe literary censorship in Afghanistan as a cultural project. The fantasy for majoritarianism and national authenticity, overtaken by ethnic fanaticism, religious inquisition and self-censorship, has overshadowed the complex reality of the country's history and traditions.

Arguing the Unarguable: Indian Policy in Afghanistan

Prakhar Sharma

Dia does have a policy on Afghanistan, but its endorsement of peace talks with the Taliban is contentious.

One could be forgiven for entertaining skepticism about India's policy on Afghanistan. Information that is available in the public sphere tends to veer toward the "general," conveniently evades the "specific," and thus invites doubts. Despite Kabul's enormous strategic importance for India's national interest, policy pronouncements from New Delhi on Afghanistan flirt more with the "aspirational" rather than the "practical." The mere existence of India's policy on Afghanistan remains contested, while its character invites criticism.

Thus, there is considerable merit in exploring whether there is a coherent Afghanistan policy that undergirds the various proclamations from India, and the specific aspects of this policy that summon criticism. Three questions, offered largely as criticisms, deserve particular scrutiny. First, does India have an Afghanistan policy? Second, is India's Afghanistan policy framed from the prism of New Delhi's relations with Pakistan? Third, is India's policy on Afghanistan based on principle or pragmatism?

The Arguable: Does India Have an Afghanistan Policy?

Of course, it does. A resounding answer such as this obliges us to quickly move from the "yes" to the "here's how." New Delhi may not articulate its policy in a manner that several governments in the West do. It may not put the policy agenda down on paper and share details for public consumption,

as is the norm in several countries. As far as its policy pronouncements go, New Delhi may also be criticized for confusing "strategy" for "slogan" and "policy" for "rhetoric." But judging from its unceasing commitment toward Afghanistan's economic growth, institutional development and political stability, it is reasonable to assert that India does indeed have a policy for Afghanistan. Two arguments support this assertion.

The first relates to the hazards of operating in Afghanistan. For a country that has been a victim of several terrorist attacks in the country, it would be implausible for India to bear the political costs of sustained engagement without a policy in place. This is, after all, a country whose embassy in Kabul was bombed; consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat attacked; infrastructure projects repeatedly blocked; and its nationals, including doctors, engineers and musicians, ruthlessly killed. Yet India continues to brave the dangers with exemplary forbearance, and navigate the uncertainties of the Afghan context to deliver on its commitments. Thus, there is clearly an Afghan policy at work in New Delhi that frames the vision and goals of the engagement, as well as factors in the costs and risks.

The second argument for Indian policy on Afghanistan is economic. For a country that has — depending on which estimates one refers to — almost a third of its population below the poverty line, a third of its population illiterate, and two in every five children malnourished, to commit \$2 billion in assistance to another country's development cannot simply be arbitrary or coincidental.

Even when it comes to assessing the

coherence of India's policy, one would find remarkable consistency on most aspects of relations between the two countries. India has historically sought to strengthen ties with the Afghan government and people, while it has also supported Afghanistan's political evolution and enabled its economic development. One could be tempted to claim that India's Afghanistan policy took an about-turn in 2001: that it opportunistically shifted its support from the largely non-Pashtun Northern Alliance and instead toward the Pashtun Hamid Karzai in 2002.

But that shift was not indicative of a change in policy, per se; it was merely a change in personalities in Kabul. With the exception of the Taliban regime (1996-2001), New Delhi has enjoyed strong ties with every Afghan government since India's independence. When the Taliban came to power in 1996, India refused to recognize them as a legitimate government. After the Taliban's ouster in 2001, India merely resumed its relations with the regime that was catapulted to power. The underlying Afghanistan policy in India, therefore, has remained more or less consistent.

Is India's Afghan Policy Pakistan-Centric?

The second criticism insinuates that India looks at Afghanistan from the perspective of its relations with Pakistan. Afghanistan is claimed to be a zero-sum game that, if India wins, Pakistan loses — and vice versa. Such allegations are understandable, but they suffer from two problems.

First, it is an oversimplification to characterize India's Afghanistan policy as Pakistan-centric. India's engagement in Afghanistan is geared primarily at enabling the country to realize its political and economic potential. The objectives, content and scope of India's developmental and capacity-building programs in Afghanistan attest to this fact. Drawing from its own experience

of negotiating conflicting interests and seemingly irreconcilable stakeholders in a multi-ethnic democracy, India supports programs in Afghanistan that help to not only educate and train Afghans, but also strengthen institutions that would enable consolidation of democratic gains.

India's Afghanistan policy, therefore, aims at supporting democratic progress and pluralism, and creating conditions that empower Afghans to resist the Taliban. No dimension of this policy is focused exclusively on Pakistan. The policy seeks to complement US and NATO efforts in Afghanistan: to enable the Afghans to confront the totalitarian ideology and violent extremism of the Taliban. This entails making Afghan cities and villages safe from attacks; providing secular education in schools to replace blind emphasis on credulity and authority with an appreciation of healthy skepticism; assisting in capacity-building of Afghan bureaucracy; and promoting livelihoods.

Second, such allegations fail to appreciate the complexities of foreign policy formulation in a real world context. Foreign policy toward a country cannot be framed in isolation with the regional and sub-regional context of the nation. Policies affect, and are affected by, the larger context that punctuates them. Just as any other country, India would integrate its regional and country-specific policies to make sure that efforts toward one complement the other. India's policy in the region would, therefore, need to integrate the dynamics of its relations with its neighbors. However, it is an oversimplification to suggest that India's Afghan policy is Pakistan-centric, or vice versa.

So, argue, if you may, and vehemently so, for a disordered Indian policy that has inherited the West's misguided idealism about peace talks with the Taliban. Argue, also, that India punches below its weight, and that, given its enormous goodwill and the amount of resources it brings to the table, it could

accomplish more in Afghanistan. But neither of these criticisms indicate an absence of policy or an approach that is Pakistan-centric. Some criticisms of India's policy, instead, point to its character — a lack of resolve and political will in New Delhi. It is those matters of resolve and will that this article now turns to.

The Unarguable

The one policy area on Afghanistan where India has had to improvise upon is its perception of the Taliban. India's initial reluctance to accept the Taliban as part of Afghan politics has gradually evolved into a passive acceptance of their role in a future Afghanistan. After being sidelined by the West on this issue, most notably in the 2010 London conference, India has chosen to back Afghan efforts to explore prospects of ending the war through talks. While doing so, New Delhi has also let its concerns known to Kabul. These concerns are reasonable and are worth mentioning.

New Delhi remains wary that an integration of the Taliban into Afghan politics could be a unidirectional process, where concessions are made only to appease the Taliban. Once the Taliban are brought back, there is nothing that would prevent a wholesale "Talibanization" of Afghan politics. There are simply no institutional safeguards in place to avert this possibility. The social and political gains of the post-2001 Afghanistan risk being compromised.

There is also legitimate concern in New Delhi that integrating the Taliban in Afghan politics would weaken the democratic ethos of contemporary Afghanistan. The peace talks, therefore, are not just only about finding a political "solution" to the conflict. They are also about defining the character of the Afghan state. If the state, by Weberian definition, is a political entity that has exclusive monopoly over the legitimate use of force, then allowing a sinister, draconian and well-armed outfit that

prides itself on its anti-civilization to partake in politics is to undermine the foundation of the Afghan state.

Despite these concerns, India has publicly endorsed a peace process that would be "Afghan-led." This is where the contradictions begin to emerge in India's Afghanistan policy. An "Afghan-led" process may perhaps negotiate an insurgency that is Afghan-led; it cannot negotiate one that is Pakistan-led.

Neither Principle, Nor Pragmatism

The Taliban have relentlessly obstructed Afghanistan's political development and victimized all segments of Afghan society, with indiscriminate violence and brutality. The "present" is not all that they ruin: They also stamp their authority on the society's future. The Taliban forbid schools and secular education, impede delivery of basic public services in villages, and create a culture of fear and retribution. As a result, Afghan society is deprived of an educated and informed citizenry that can reason and decide what is best for its own progress. The Taliban also ensure that children grow up in a culture where communal trust is broken down, and the only source of legitimate authority is fear.

Afghans are entitled to ask why India would support talks with the Taliban — a group that remains antithetical to the very idea of progress. Is it not rather revolting to see India endorse talks with a group that undermines, obstructs and impedes the evolution of the "new Afghanistan"? Was it not the Haqqani network, a group closely affiliated with the Taliban, who bombed the Indian Embassy in 2008? And does the Taliban not represent the very worst that any context, anywhere, can offer? What, then, explains India's decision to lend its support to the peace process?

On matter of principle, it does not flatter India's credibility to support engagement with a group that seeks to

select itself for politics rather than be open to get elected by the people. The Taliban are anti-democracy, anti-pluralism, disdainful of progress, rejecting of reason, and willing to kill their own in pursuit of power. On matter of pragmatism, too, negotiating with a group that has no long-term capacity to enforce commitments is an exercise in extreme self-delusion.

But could the peace process offer more promise if it were led by the Pakistani military? Given Pakistan's longstanding track record in Afghanistan as a spoiler, it is unlikely that Islamabad would act as an honest broker in any talks, unless there is a shift in its strategic calculus. The internal divisions among the Taliban also douse the prospects of any peace deal being accepted and implemented uniformly at the local level. Ultimately, the Afghan government would find it hard to garner broad support for the peace process, until it institutional-

izes a decentralized and representative state structure that delivers services to all Afghans.

Questions for Policymakers

India does have a policy on Afghanistan, but its policy suffers from its compromised stance on the peace talks. Some reasonable questions for those vested with policymaking in Delhi are: What if the peace talks, which India wittingly or unwittingly supports, actually materialize? What if the Taliban return to power in Kabul? Who would India turn to, then?

These are useful questions to ponder over as India recalibrates its regional policy under the new administration led by Narendra Modi. More than questions, these represent inconvenient truths; truths that are pretty widely spelled by now.

4: Middle East and North Africa

War and Peace: The Youth Gaza

Nour Omar Shaban

Palestinians and Israelis cannot keep fighting for the rest of their lives; they must make peace.

I have lived and grown up in the Gaza Strip, one of the most dangerous places in the world. Despite only being 16 years old, I have seen death and destruction, and lived through tough experiences that are full of painful memories. I wanted to write this so I can show the world a different view of people in Gaza, especially the youth.

The struggle between Palestinians and Israelis has been going on for over 60 years. However, I believe that nothing is permanent — one day, there will be peace. Actually, I think it's possible to make peace at any point, if the will is there.

I have left Gaza only once in my life to visit Europe via Israel and Jordan. On route, I went to have lunch in an Israeli restaurant. When I paid the bill, the cashier, who was Israeli, couldn't believe I came from Gaza. The look on his face made me feel like I was an alien or something, but I shook his hand and we shared some laughs. It made me feel so relaxed because, at the end of the day, we are both human and have the same simple desires of life: We want to grow up, have a job and live a peaceful life full of joy. This encounter made me feel hopeful that one day peace will be achieved.

But the problem is the Israeli blockade of Gaza as it doesn't allow Palestinians to go outside the territory, especially the youth. What the entire world sees in Gaza in terms of resistance and

extremists is a consequence of the siege — and occupation — because the situation in the Strip is extremely difficult.

Gaza has a population of almost 2 million people who are crammed into a tiny stretch of land. In the coming years, Gaza will be the most densely populated area in the world. Some 43% of the population are 14 or below and 21% are between 15-24 years old. In addition, we have one of the highest unemployment rates worldwide. When these young people reach working age and the economy doesn't provide opportunities and emigration is blocked, the consequences will be dire: social tension, violence and extremism as possible outlets, due to a lack of meaningful prospects and brain drain. The youth will become radicals and they won't care about their future or anyone else's, because they have not seen any other place than Gaza.

This means that Palestinians and Israelis will continue to live in fear and insecurity. Israel must end the siege of Gaza and make everyday people interact with one another. Without a culture of peaceful coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis, peace is not possible.

The siege is causing Palestinians in Gaza to suffer as a result of political decisions. In my opinion, the resistance is just a temporary phenomenon to achieve particular goals: to end the blockade and allow Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity in a state of their own.

But we cannot keep fighting for the rest of our lives. As a Palestinian teenager,

I want to make peace. I want to live a normal life like millions of people around the world in places such as London, New York and Tokyo.

At the end of the day, Israel controls its future and ours. If Israel wants to make peace, then it should end the siege and

make Israelis and Palestinians interact with one another. I am not saying it is going to be easy because both sides are full of hatred, but we cannot let our past control our future. Forgiveness starts today.

Local Perceptions of Syrian Refugees

Hana Asfour

It is important to understand the impact of Syrian refugees on Jordan.

Jordan hosts the largest Palestinian refugee population in the world. It has also been a popular choice of destination for Iraqi refugees. The most recent influx are Syrians due to the civil war that started in 2011.

Little is known about the perception that Jordanian East Bankers and Palestinians, with varying citizenship statuses, have over the Syrian influence on employment opportunities in Jordan.

Using a case study conducted by the author on Palestinians in Jerash, Jordan, this two-part article looks at the different perceptions of Jordanians and Palestinians, focusing on access to employment in the private sector following the recent influx of Syrians. More specifically, partly based on this author's primary research, the focus is on the Syrian refugee population residing within host communities in Jordan.

The case study involves a total of 70 semi-structured qualitative interviews; of the 70 interviews, nine are with policymakers and 12 with service providers. Moreover, 49 interviews are carried out with Jordanian East Bankers and Palestinians residing in Jerash who are either employed, unemployed or own businesses.

Jerash is around 48 kilometers north of Amman and ranks as the sixth largest governorate in the country. With an estimated population of 192,000 by the end of 2012, it is home to the Palestinian refugee camps of Gaza and Souf.

The majority of Palestinians in the Gaza camp came to Jordan following

the war of 1967 and have two-year temporary Jordanian passports. In contrast, most of those from Souf camp are considered refugees from the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and have five-year Jordanian passports with national identity numbers. Those with five-year passports and national identity numbers are entitled to rights equal to Jordanian citizens, while those with only temporary passports and no national identity numbers are not entitled to full citizenship rights.

Background: Jordan and Refugees

Jordan has been a safe haven for many large influxes of forced migrants. In fact, it is ranked first worldwide when looking at refugee-total population ratio. Compared to other countries it hosts the largest number of Palestinians worldwide, as they constitute between 30-50% of the population depending on the source. Although most Palestinians in Jordan have Jordanian citizenship and are entitled to equal employment rights to those of other citizens, there have been reports of discrimination, particularly in the public sphere.

The most recent influx of forced migrants in Jordan took place following the start of the Syrian conflict in March 2011. According to latest figures from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan reached 578,717 in December 2013. By the end of 2014, this figure is expected to reach up to 800,000.

Jordan and Refugee Rights

Jordan has not granted Syrians "refugee status" as it is not a signatory of international refugee laws. Conse-

quently, their rights are not protected as refugees and only after registering with the UNHCR are Syrians entitled to benefits from humanitarian aid organizations and the state.

The registration process with the UNHCR is slow and many Syrians have found shelter with relatives or families without entering this laborious process. Others do not register with the UNHCR because they fear being labeled or caught as being opponents of the Syrian regime when returning to Syria. In fact, 80% of Syrians who fled to Jordan have been living within the host community.

Syrian refugees who entered Jordan through official border points receive entry permits without permission to work. Many Syrians residing outside the official refugee camps face a difficult situation. Due to their large numbers and the limited resources of the UNHCR, many refugees are not covered by the UN agency's assistance.

Although Jordan is not a signatory to any international refugee laws, it is expected by the international community to adhere to their fundamental principles, as the country is heavily reliant on international aid.

Moreover, several ratified international human rights instruments to which Jordan is accountable can offer protection to refugees. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

On a national level, Jordan does not have any laws that address the status of refugees in the country. However, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed with the UNHCR in 1997 and 2003, giving the agency the responsibility of issuing requests for asylum and identifying their status.

As is the case with Iraqis who fled to

Jordan following the Gulf War between 1990 and 1991, Syrians are regarded as "guests," a classification which has no legal ratification.

Access to Employment

The long-lasting presence of Syrians in Jordan is likely to put a strain on the country's limited assets and resources, as well as its hosting capacities, causing greater suffering for the "hosts" and their "guests."

It is very difficult for refugees to get work permits as they face many hurdles. Work permits are only provided to non-Jordanians with annually renewable residency permits. Refugees are also required to place security deposits in banks to obtain these work permits; the only bank in Jordan that allows Syrians to open accounts is the Jordan Kuwaiti Bank, further complicating their situation.

Moreover, work permits require identity documents, which some refugees may not have. Permits are also only issued after employers cover a specific required payment.

These complicated and costly requirements are difficult for refugees to achieve and not attractive for employers. Some professions, such as teaching, medical and government positions, are also closed to non-Jordanians, requiring employers to justify hiring a non-Jordanian.

Consequently, it is very difficult for Syrian refugees to find work legally, while informal employment barely covers their needs. Often, the most vulnerable have exhausted their limited resources even before reaching Jordan, making them entirely reliant on emergency assistance, which can only be obtained when registering with the UNHCR.

Because of the difficulty of finding a job and making ends meet, some families send their children to work, as they are less likely to be stopped by the po-

lice. Others marry off their daughters at an early age to reduce the burden on their families.

The largest foreign workforce in Jordan are Egyptians with up to 400,000 workers, of whom 220,000 do not have proper work permits. Although there are no official estimates of the number of working Syrians in Jordan, it is believed that around 160,000 of them work illegally in the country.

According to the Jordanian Ministry of Labor (MoL), the number of Syrians working illegally in Jordan has reached dangerously high levels, to the extent that they are obstructing the ministry's strategy in addressing unemployment among young Jordanians.

Article 12 of Jordanian Labor Law states that employers shall be punished by a fine of not less than 100 Jordanian dinars (\$140) and not exceeding 150 Jordanian dinars (\$210) for each month or part of a month of employing a non-Jordanian worker in violation of the provisions of this law.

The article also states that any illegal foreign worker will be expelled from Jordan at the expense of the employer, and will be prohibited from entering the country for three years.

In November 2013, Jordan made the decision to deport 5,723 illegal workers in an effort to regulate the labor market and give priority to unemployed Jordanians. This, however, goes against the principle of non-refoulement, which is enshrined in Article 28 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

Nevertheless, statistics show that Jordan's overall unemployment rate actually fell from 12.9% in 2012 to 12.2% in 2013.

Informal Sector Employment

Living without regular income, it is more difficult for refugees to cover their basic needs and they are at greater

risk of exploitation. They are likely to depend on unstable sources of income such as remittances and cash assistance from humanitarian agencies.

High unemployment rates, state laws, and a large unemployed youth population in Jordan have restricted refugee penetration into the country's labor market. As a result, many are forced to work in the informal sector, where they are underpaid, overworked and often compromised by poor working environments.

The informal sector is also a popular area of employment for Gazans and Egyptians in Jordan. These two groups are forbidden to work in the public sector as well as in specializations and industries in the private sector that are only open to Jordanian citizens. In Jerash, a lot of Gazan families rely on seasonal farming to earn a living. Since the war in Syria began, Syrians have been competing with Gazans and Egyptians in the informal sector to further challenge access to employment.

Living conditions at the Gaza camp in Jerash are poor and employment opportunities are restricted mainly to private and informal sectors. According to a public sector official in the Gaza camp: "The Syrian situation is better than [ours, Gazans]... first [they have] a nationality and second they have the UNCHR [United Nations High Commission for Refugees]."

Business owners prefer employing Syrians because "they don't cost them as much, [they] tolerate more and complain less... they [also] normally work three or four shifts with no raise or overtime."

Moreover, hiring Syrians is more attractive because employers do not need to issue contracts for them, which means they are not entitled to any benefits. The general preference for employers to hire Syrians over Jordanians has caused growing resentment toward them by the host population.

Many women from Gaza camp work in the agriculture sector in Jerash. With increasing demand by farm owners to hire Syrians, more women are competing for work opportunities causing further tensions with the host population. One unemployed Gazan woman complained: “They [farm owners] employ Syrian women because they are beautiful and have beautiful eyes.”

The minimum wage in Jordan was set to 190 Jordanian dinars (\$270) in 2013, whereas for migrant workers it is 110 Jordanian dinars (\$155). Although inspection campaigns are carried out to enforce labor law regulation on business owners, they are inadequate. More effective mechanisms are needed to prevent illegal employment of Syrians in Jordan and hold employers accountable for any violations.

Increased competition in the agricultural sector has led to a depreciation in wages as workers are getting paid as low as 150 Jordanian dinars — approximately \$210 — for 30-days of work. Because of the urgent need to earn a living, Syrians have been forced to accept cheaper pay than the usual amount paid to locals and even Egyptians.

As one gender specialist mentioned during an interview: “1 Jordanian dinar (\$1.41) amounts to 1,500 Syrian pounds (\$10.43), which is more than enough for them.” However, the impact of the civil war has seen a rise in the purchasing value of commodities. The exchange rate of the Syrian pound against the US dollar has depreciated from 44.57 in October 2010 to 143.40 in February 2014.

This depreciation in the Syrian pound is causing inflation; prices of basic goods are increasing and life in Syria is becoming more expensive. The overall cost of food in Jordan also increased by 5% between 2011 and 2012.

In addition, there is the perception that many Syrian families live together in

homes comprising of several breadwinners, which is why they accept lower wages. As one Palestinian Jordanian said:

“I am a shop owner and they came to me asking for a job. They have no problem working for 90 Jordanian dinars [\$127]. It’s fine with them when four or five Syrians live together in the same house, if each of them gets 100 Jordanian dinars [\$140] this makes 500 [\$707].”

If Jordanian women are at great risk of being exploited, Syrian and Gazan women are at an even greater disadvantage because they do not enjoy citizenship rights. A Jordanian woman highlighted that:

“Most women don’t know their rights to employment. Some women accept working for 90 Jordanian dinars [\$127, a month], and kindergarten teachers accept 70 Jordanian dinars [\$99]. There are no opportunities, so the women will accept it.”

The Iraqi and Syrian Refugee Population

Some claim the increase in prices of commodities is a result of the Syrian influx, while others blame it on the scarcity of job opportunities in Jordan. The situation was similar following the Gulf War, when an estimated 100,000-200,000 Iraqis fled to the country.

There is a common belief that most Iraqis who entered Jordan following the Gulf War had more wealth than the Syrian refugee population and were able to invest in the country. Iraqis brought with them skilled expertise, whereas the majority of Syrians who have come to the country are poorly educated.

A recent survey conducted on Syrians who fled to Jordan following the Syrian Civil War highlights that 83.5% are male; 80.9% are below the age of 40; and 83.8% have neither gone to school,

nor have they reached primary levels of education. Moreover, 68.6% are married and 81.9% have migrated with members of their families. Although many Syrians in Jordan are actually skilled workers in crafts trade and the services sector, the survey shows that 80% of them are unemployed.

Other accounts report that Syrian investment in Jordan has increased by 17% since the beginning of March 2011. In fact, 20% of the total investment in Jordan in 2013 was from Syrian investors. Moreover, 101 Syrian investors were included in the records of Jordan's Companies Control Department during the months of January and February 2013, compared with 34 Syrian investors during the same period in 2012.

Despite the increase in numbers and size, Syrian investment in Jordan remains much smaller than that of Iraqis, which is still ranked first in number and size in the list of non-Jordanian investments, whether Arab or foreign.

Humanitarian Assistance

The majority of Syrians living outside the camps are in the northern governorates of Jordan, where poverty levels were among the highest in the country even before the Syrian refugee crisis. There is a general resentment amongst the host population due to the overwhelming assistance given to Syrians through the international community while disregarding urgent needs of Jordanians.

In response to the growing tension between refugees and the host population, government authorities have required that only 10% of a Syrian investor's workforce comprise of Syrians. Moreover, all relief organizations are required by law to allocate at least 30% of their assistance to vulnerable Jordanian citizens. As one Jordanian East Banker mentioned: "I swear, some people in Jordan are living on the brink of death; take it from me, now all the

support goes to Syrians."

Some perceive Syrian participation in the labor force as unnecessary due to the humanitarian assistance they already receive. One Gazan young man claimed: "Now you work for 10-15 Jordanian dinars [\$14.15-21.22], you have to pay for everything; the rent, the medicine and... as for him, he has everything provided, the refugee."

Another female Palestinian Jordanian complained: "They do not work because they need to survive. They work to pass time and so they can improve their living status... Their houses' rents are paid... so why not improve their living?"

Other criticisms highlight the overdependence of Syrians on aid. As one Gazan woman said when comparing "her people" with Syrians: "When we came to Jordan, we planted our food and didn't beg for money or food." Another unemployed Jordanian described the country as a "Middle East resort" for refugees.

Indeed, aid to Jordan has increased dramatically following the Syrian Civil War. The Financial Tracking Service, an initiative by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), indicates an increase in humanitarian assistance from \$50 million in 2011 to \$668.8 million in 2013.

Nevertheless, according to figures from 2013, humanitarian agencies were only able to offer monetary assistance to 22,000 Syrian families due to insufficient funding. In Syria, it is estimated that up to 75% of the country's population will require humanitarian aid in 2014.

The lack of organizational skills of stakeholders involved in the humanitarian assistance process is cited by many as a source of injustice. A recent real-time evaluation of the UNHCR's response to the Syrian refugee emer-

gency also recommends an improvement in coordination among stakeholders involved in humanitarian assistance in Jordan.

Implications

A political solution in Syria is improbable in the short- to mid-term. In fact, the deterioration of the situation is pushing more and more Syrian families to leave Syria and seek refuge in neighboring countries such as Jordan. The Syrian refugee crisis places increasing strains on the country's economy and social structure.

There is a vital need to address the problem of growing tension in Jordan between Syrian refugees and the host population. Finding successful solutions to displacement is crucial for the development of Jordan's social, economic and political agendas.

More importantly, coordination at all levels is needed. Evidence-based studies to evaluate the progress in reaching and maintaining such standards need to be incorporated into the cycle of accountability and performance appraisal on the short, medium and long-term.

Kurdistan: Where Poets Are More Than Poets

Alana Marie Levinson LaBrosse

Poets are setting people free, liberating thought through language.

The auditorium fills. A janitor weaves through the crowd to unlock the upper balcony, and soon that fills, too. Men sit on each other's knees, three to a seat, careful not to touch the women around them. Men fill the center aisle, flowing around the five video cameras that will broadcast the event to several television channels. Groups of women sit on the floor, leaning against the bolted-down chairs. Photographers clog the stairs to the stage. When the poet enters the room, those not already on their feet spring out of their seats, applauding.

The poet, in a collared shirt beneath a sweater vest and elbow-patched blazer, takes his seat. The more audacious fans push to shake his hand; he rises to accept, to graze cheeks in the formal kiss. Each time he stands, the audience follows, breaking into fresh, ferocious applause. He takes the stage flanked by three bodyguards who clear a path through the grabbing attendees.

During his short speech on political parties and their failings, the Kurdish language and its splintering, the audience keeps bursting into applause, like peals of thunder. I start a tally as he reads his poems. Audience members mouth the words along with him. After one poem, the clapping synchronizes and the audience takes up a chant, "Doo-bah-rah! Doo-bah-rah!" — "Again! Again!" and the poet relaunches, delivering the poem a second time. He leans over the lectern to deliver the lines. The tally: 48.

Backbeat

I remember the first time I'd seen such a response to live poetry — at an elocution contest sponsored by the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS). Some 20 contestants took the stage and at least 100 students crammed into the cafeteria just to watch try-outs. At the time, the school only had 400 students. When the student-translator took the stage to read the poem in its original language first, the audience interrupted him, cheering at the end of each line. All this while the university had trouble galvanizing students to come to soccer games. The audience heard the same poem 20 times and never seemed to tire of it, developing a steady beat to their clapping which, during the longer transitions between contestants, they used as the backbeat for spontaneous line dancing in between the seats.

It was a delight to watch, and yet I wondered why these students responded so fervently to poetry.

Back in the auditorium, the joy had an odor, intensified by the struggling air conditioning: cologne, dust and sweat. All these people pulled together so tightly in anticipation of rhyme, meter and reflection. Why such devotion to these poets? To their poems? I asked a few Kurdish poets to reflect on this question.

The Two Worlds' Effect

In his poem, "Two Worlds," Hemin Latif asks: "Don't you see how I'm divided? / Don't you see how I am two parts? / Don't you know these two worlds?" His readers might imagine that these two parts, these two worlds are the corporeal and ethereal or perhaps the western and eastern. As an emerging poet and the former chair of

the IT Department at AUIS, however, Latif means to indicate the worlds of poetry and information technology. Though he is an extreme example, with his two worlds as unrelated as they are, he is not unique in the pantheon of contemporary Kurdish poets.

While American poetry has become professionalized through the academy, Kurdish poetry remains, in Latif's words, "a hobby, secondary." So, Kurdish poets remain intimately connected to worlds other than poetry. Sherko Bekas, after he retired as a peshmerga — a Kurdish freedom fighter — ran Sardam, a publishing house in Sulaimani. Jamal Ghambar, renowned for his beautiful readings, practices law and just this fall ran for political office. Sherzad Hassan, a poet and translator, works as a media specialist for the Directory of Education in Sulaimani. Latif now serves as the acting provost at AUIS and will eventually transition into his role as the vice president for University Advancement.

In our conversation, Abdulla Pashew, one of the most famous living Kurdish poets, remarked: "I think you know, or have heard, about the Russian poet, Yevtushenko. He said, 'In Russia the poet is more than a poet!' Sometimes it seems to me that he said these words about Kurdish poets." Referencing a particularly political poem he wrote, "12 Lessons for Children," he says: "Could I write such a poem if I had been born or grew up in Paris or Stockholm? There, the papers, broadcast television and radio, the PMs, they say such things: not poets. Yes," he adds for emphasis, "in Kurdistan poets are more than poets!"

Dana Gioia starts his essay, "Can Poetry Matter," arguing: "American poetry now belongs to a subculture. No longer part of the mainstream of artistic and intellectual life, it has become the specialized occupation of a relatively small and isolated group. Little of the frenetic activity it generates ever reaches outside that closed group." This is the academ-

ic poetic environment in which I grew up. Even my favorite poets, writers I considered famous, receive not even name recognition in broader circles. Is it possible that in Iraqi Kurdistan I have witnessed what poetry can mean before it confines itself to the academy? Is banishment behind academic walls the inevitable fate of poetry, or does Kurdistan show us another path?

Perhaps contemporary Kurdish poetry demonstrates the inverse of Gioia's theory. These Kurdish poets are part of the larger world around them, so the world responds to them. Or these poets engage in professions other than poetry, so they write on topics and in styles that achieve greater relevance to their audiences.

"He Says What We Cannot Say"

At one point, as I translated the controversial poet, Sheikh Raza Talabani, with a young Kurdish woman, she sat back and paused. "I see why he's so important now," she said. "He says what we cannot say." In a society where certain things simply aren't said, or can even be dangerous to say, poets become voices for all that individuals keep silent.

Pashew is known for being critical of Kurdish society, ungoverned by the political parties. In 1972, he read "12 Lessons for Children" in Kirkuk. A poem against the forced Arabization of Kurdish regions, it was "a forbidden poem," only published in Kurdistan in 1991. He had been warned not to read it. Pashew remembers the event well: "During and after the reading, it was unbelievable! [The poem] was a demonstration under that bloody regime. I don't know whether it was a good poem or not, but I know that I said what was forbidden to whisper, even to friends."

When I asked if the connection between politics and poetry was a more recent trend, Homer Dizyee, a famous lyricist, singer and political advisor to former President Jalal Talabani, re-

sponded: “The 400-year-old epic Mem u Zin is not only a love story. There is patriotic motive behind it. Consider the nationalistic poems of Haji Qadiri Koye; a few verses of Mustafa Pasha Yamulki; Ahmed Mukhtar Jaff,” and so many more.

In a more recent poem, “Viagra,” Pashew remains concerned with the silence surrounding corruption and betrayal in politics, but uses a lighter tone. He writes:

“There’s no need to advertise it
The whole world knows the blue eyes
of Viagra,
The service it does for the right and the
left,
But it strikes me
That our parliamentarians, when they
eat it,
Get weak
Go silent.
Even swallowing 1000 pills
Won’t help.
Only their hands and their pockets can
get erect!”

He speaks what others consider un-
speakable. Even Sherko Bekas, author
of the poem that would become the an-
them for the Patriotic Union of Kurdis-
tan (PUK), evolved into a man who im-
plicitly turned away from politics. One
of his final books bore the title, *Now a
Girl is My Homeland*. Bekas moved his
attention from “Garman’s Hurricane”
to a “cloudy girl”:

“Instead of the river
I sit beside the rim of her body
Instead of on moss and beside the
waterfall
I sit under her lovelocks.”

To a Western audience, this love-lan-
guage is innocuous. Yet most readers of
this poetry may not have, as Latif said,
“free, open relationships and interac-
tions with the opposite sex.” He adds:
“Love poems are always welcome.
People find they meet their thirst for
thinking, interacting, and relating to the
opposite sex.” It is as controversial to
speak of love, especially anatomically
explicit love, as to be politically critical.

A young woman, translating Kajal
Ahmad, a female poet known for her
fierce, sensual, poems, worried that
simply bringing Ahmad into English
might damage her reputation. With
poems like “Nietzsche,” her fear doesn’t
surprise me. Nietzsche said:

“Women are cats
And if they breed they become cows!”
If fate had put me
Before that mad man
I would have told him, [...]
Give me one night
But let there be a conscious sun
Not a drowsing, dull moon,
Until I give you truth like a kiss and
Turn from the philosopher to philoso-
phy.”

Dizeyee, famous for his more explicit
romantic lyrics, is adamant: “I am a
politician, artist, and lyricist. Critics see
sensual inclination in my lyrics; I am
fond of beauty, beauty in all its senses;
I roam in a realm of aesthetics when I
write.” But this realm of aesthetics, in
the daily life of the young people I have
known, is circumscribed. It is poets who
set people free; through language, they
liberate thought.

Present and Past Entertainments

From Latif’s perspective, until recent
developments, including the Iraq War

and a rise of investors in the KRG, there have not been public entertainments aside from concerts and poetry readings. Readings retain popularity because there have historically not been many other options. "In Western countries, such as the United States," Latif said, "people have a plethora of options when they need a break. Options in this country are limited. Anything that promises difference is worth it." Sulaimani, for example, a city of a million people and several major universities, didn't have a movie theater until 2009.

The history of the Kurdish people, Dizyee counters, has as much bearing on poetry's popularity as the present: "Oral literature flourishes" in "nomadic societies"; "in rural areas, this became a deeply rooted culture, which has gone on and on until our day." Additionally, Kurds have undergone significant political persecution that would force literature to remain oral and performance-oriented. Saddam Hussein used the Kurdish population as the national scapegoat, perpetrating acts of genocide.

Only in 2003 did Kurdish become the state language for the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq. Until then, Iraqi Kurds were forced to fluency in Arabic. The Turkish government banned the use of the Kurdish language for a hundred years. Though this ban was recently lifted, the legacy of an outlawed language remains in the oral transmission of literature.

The Kurds are divided across five politically sovereign nations. They have survived many military conflicts in the past century alone. It wouldn't

be surprising that Kurds would cherish recitation as a reliable method of cultural transmission.

National Identity

One way to conceive of the Kurdish identity revolves around negatives: past atrocities and persecutions, recent civil wars, current political fissures. Often the reference points for Kurdish identity in Iraq are Halabja and Kirkuk. But how can the Kurdish identity be something to celebrate that is neither tragic nor inherently politicized?

Even a poem about Halabja, the city that Saddam chemically bombed in 1988, is an act of creation. However small that creation, it stands in the face of that destruction. The poem is not contested territory. Even if it discusses controversial ideas or contradicts itself, it belongs to each reader equally. Each poem that articulates ideas through beautifully crafted Kurdish is an intimate celebration of that identity. "The nation" is not a political entity for Kurds at this moment. Poetry might offer Kurds an affirmative way to participate in their nationhood.

In our interview, Pashew mused: "Poetry is, first of all, the sound of nature and instinct. Material prospect and technological progress lead to rationality, which blunts instinct. Grown-up nations need poetry less than others." It's possible that in a "grown-up nation" like America, the reason a writer or a reader turns to poetry has changed. Perhaps the writer and the reader aren't looking to tap into a larger ethnic identity, but to reach singularity.

The Banality of Colonization: The Metropolitanization of Israeli Settlements

Marco Allegra

Contrary to stereotypes, settlements in the West Bank are mainly suburban localities inhabited by “quality of life” settlers.

The presence of Israeli settlements in the West Bank represents one of the main issues concerning Israeli-Palestinian relations. Still, perhaps because of their exposure, academic and media discourse on settlements is rather one-dimensional in its focus on their role as “obstacles to peace.”

Indeed, Israeli settlements repeatedly prove to be an intractable problem for international diplomacy. However, a more nuanced understanding of Israel’s settlement policy is needed to acknowledge the “banality of colonization” as a fundamental driver in the dynamics of settlement expansion and in the transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Settlers As We Know Them

Settlers who populate newspaper headlines are a bunch of bearded, armed, national-religious radicals who moved to the West Bank to make a political and messianic statement over the ownership of the Land of Israel. Unsurprisingly, their communities represent the points of friction par excellence with the Palestinian population. Not only are these settlers heavily armed and prone to violence against Palestinians, they also consciously act as Jewish pioneers in the West Bank, either by creating small outposts surrounded by Arabs or by infiltrating the heart of predominantly Palestinian urban areas.

In the same vein, Israel’s settlement policy is described in terms of a “plan-

ning war” for the conquest of the land. The relationship between the Israeli state and settlers is understood as a symbiotic connection; although the exact nature of this link is often debated and described in terms of either (mutual) manipulation or outright complicity. In this respect, Israel’s settlement policy is perceived as nothing else than the continuation of a century-long colonial enterprise that started at the end of 19th century with the first Zionist immigrants.

Of course, settlements are “obstacles to peace” — part and parcel — along with other so-called “final status issues”: borders, Jerusalem and refugees, among others in a huge file marked the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” which has been sitting on the desk of diplomats and foreign ministries for at least 60 years.

In this respect, the existence of Jewish communities in the West Bank is widely seen as a major obstacle for confidence-building between the two sides, as well as for the implementation of the “two state solution.”

Israeli Settlements: The Banality of Colonization

As it is often the case with stereotypes, there is a lot of truth in this description of Jewish settlements: Many settlers have strong and even extreme nationalistic views, often paired with religious and messianic connotations. Such views inevitably belittle or negate altogether Palestinian rights to the land, while some settlers regularly engage in “price-tag” campaigns by physically assaulting Palestinians and vandalizing or destroying their properties. In many situations, they provoke Palestinians by establishing their communities in

sensitive and symbolic locations — this is the case, for example, in Hebron, the Old City of Jerusalem and the surrounding neighborhoods of Silwan and Sheik Jarrah.

There is no doubt whatsoever that planning in the West Bank is a partisan enterprise. The Israeli-controlled planning system favors the Jewish population over the Palestinians, to the point of tolerating or encouraging illegal actions by settler groups. Finally, the history of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations certainly proves that settlements are a wicked problem, one in which countless diplomatic initiatives have floundered over the years.

Still, as is also often the case with stereotypes, this description of Israel's settlement policy is especially significant not in what it shows, but rather in what it hides. The point here is the state's policy contributes to obscure one of the main drivers in the proliferation of settlements and the transformation of the spatial and political landscape in the conflict — namely, the “banality of colonization” inherent to the metropolitan character of Israel's settlement policy.

A Nice Place to Live: Settling the Suburbia

The stereotyped image of settlers first becomes problematic when we place it against some data. In 2007, the Israeli nongovernmental organization Peace Now released a survey investigating settler motivations for choosing the West Bank as their place of residence: 77% of respondents cited quality of life factors as the primary reason. But why would any Israeli looking for a better life move to a caravan placed on a barren hill surrounded by hostile Palestinian communities?

It turns out this is not the case. The overwhelming majority of settlers live in the area of metropolitan Jerusalem — between two-thirds and 80%, depending on the definition of the

area. This, however, does not include a few other communities gravitating to Tel Aviv in the north of the West Bank.

If we consider the localities with a population of over 5,000 inhabitants, we find among them nine “new neighborhoods” of Jerusalem (settlements established in East Jerusalem, within the Israeli-defined municipal boundaries of the city). There are also five autonomous municipalities, including Ma'ale Adummim, Giva'at Ze'ev, Efrata, Betar Illit, Modi'in Illit, located just outside the city limits, between five and ten kilometers from the Green Line. In 2012, the population of these 14 settlements alone reached approximately 350,000 people out of a total population of about 550,000.

In other words, and contrary to the stereotype that usually makes the headlines, we could say the typical settlement is a relatively large community, with fully functioning municipal services and good infrastructures connecting it to the main employment centers of the region. Its resident population is made up of “settler-consumers,” who moved to a Jewish settlement for financial and logistic reasons, namely to find good housing opportunities at reasonable prices and escape the overcrowding of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

These settlements often constitute segregated and even gated communities. It is difficult to say, however, to what extent the creation of these “safe spaces” relates to the pressure of the conflict with Palestinians, and to what extent it represents for the residents a more general antidote to various forms of “unpleasant otherness” — in the form of intra-Jewish tensions, as well as of poverty, crime and abusive behavior.

The Metropolitanization of Israeli Settlements Policy

The metropolitan character that Israel's settlement policy has assumed over the years is also significant due to what it reveals about the underlying policy

process. Suburban settlements could not have been created without active support from the Israeli state. If the establishment of small, pioneering communities points to the symbiosis between the state and settler movement, new towns such as Ma'ale Adummim or Pisgat Ze'ev constitute straightforward examples of large-scale and direct state intervention in the metropolitan area of Jerusalem. At the same time, the process of metropolitanization of Israeli settlements policy demonstrates that politics and ideology alone would not have been sufficient to ensure the proliferation of settlements.

Since 1967, Israeli politicians, strategists and ideologues put forward a number of different ambitious blueprints for the colonization of territories. Many of them outlined settlement patterns that were radically different from the model of suburban colonization. The Israeli Labor Party believed settlement policy should have focused on the creation of agricultural communities in the Jordan Valley region. National-religious organizations and right-wing politicians, including Ariel Sharon, favored the establishment of more "ideological" settlements. The goal here was to break the continuity of a Palestinian West Bank, creating irreversible facts on the ground that would tie the hands of any future Israeli government.

After almost 50 years, we can conclude that both models of colonization have produced relatively scarce territorial-demographic results, if compared with the thriving bedroom communities that surround Jerusalem. In other words — and despite the huge resources mobilized to this end — the prevailing settlement pattern proves that Israeli governments and Zionist agencies have been largely unable to push settlers outside the metropolitan belts of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This has been to such an extent that, as Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman put it, "architecture replaces human presence" in many settlements of the West Bank.

On the other side, the metropolitan area of Jerusalem functioned as a political-territorial common denominator for the convergence of preferences for many Israeli actors, including politicians of different orientations and backgrounds, bureaucrats and planners, real estate agents and developers, and a wide audience of potential "settler-consumers."

Thus, while the presence of a few hundred Jewish settlers in Hebron remains problematic for a large part of the Israeli public, the construction of a new town with a potential of 10,000 housing units in Ma'ale Adummim was widely perceived as an uncontroversial move, due of its embeddedness in the metropolitan fabric. Politicians saw it as a territorial and demographic fact on the ground in a crucial area of the country. Strategists could approvingly consider its role as an "eastern shield" of the capital, overlooking the road to the Jordanian border. Moreover, bureaucrats in the Israeli Ministry of Housing were satisfied with the opportunity it offered for an efficient delivery of infrastructure and services. Planners saw it as the rational answer to the needs of the expanding population in the city. Middle-class Jerusalemites found good housing opportunities there at an affordable price, while developers and real estate agents were ready to take advantage of the huge business opportunities it came to represent.

In other words, the success of suburban settlements is ultimately due to the existence of different demands and preferences that found a common political-territorial platform in the metropolitan area of Jerusalem. This provided a relatively non-controversial model of colonization and facilitated the steady growth of the settler population.

The Demise of the Two-State Solution

The political consequences of the metropolitanization of Israel's settlement policy, beyond its mere quantitative

dimension, are huge and can hardly be discussed here. Still, it is evident that the “banality of colonization,” as embodied in the experience of settler-consumers has been a major force in transforming the geography of Israeli-Palestinian relations. This has meant an overall redefinition in the very idea of what “Jerusalem” is and the progressive disappearance of the pre-1967 border.

It seems that politics still struggles to come to terms with the reality on the ground. Considering settlements as “obstacles” on the road leading to a two-state solution means assuming that “Israel” and the “West Bank” still exist as entities that can be separated through a partition agreement.

It is not by chance, for example, that the issue of the so-called “settlement freeze” has been largely relegated over the last few years to the role of (tem-

porary) confidence-building measures. Or rather that the conventional wisdom over Jerusalem focuses on the status of the Old City and its immediate surroundings, instead of the more intricate bundle of territorial and demographic issues at a metropolitan level.

A recurring mantra of peacemaking in Israel and Palestine is that the expansion of settlements could reach a “point of no return,” beyond which implementing a two-state solution would be impossible. Indeed, looking at the present reality in light of the decades-long process of settlements expansion seems to suggest that such a threshold was passed a long time ago. Switching to a post-border approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might be urgently needed.

Bush and Obama: Ignorance and Errors Compound Middle East Problems

Gary Grappo

Bush and Obama failed to comprehend the nature and depth of sectarianism in Iraq.

The Iraq crisis has catapulted American right- and left-wing critics into a high dudgeon over which president may be responsible for that nation's tragic state. In fact, both George W. Bush and Barack Obama may have been at fault in the actions taken, or not, in Iraq's increasingly heated sectarian conflict.

They both erred in failing to read the historical nature and profound depth of Iraq, and the region's sectarianism and the ease with which idealists, ideologues or extremists can whip up sectarian fervor to advance a cause. Neither president can be accused of causing the problem. However, both bear responsibility for Iraq's current state of affairs and the devastating impact on the region.

In the case of Bush, he and his administration were caught off guard, despite warnings by State Department and CIA officials, when the US intervention triggered a cataclysmic eruption of sectarianism, which Saddam Hussein had ruthlessly managed to control and manipulate. Middle East leaders, including King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and King Abdullah of Jordan, also warned Bush that the Americans should expect violence between feuding factions.

The Iraq War

They were right. Beginning in 2005 and running up to 2009, rival Shia and Sunni factions, as well as Arabs and Kurds, jockeyed for power and control. Through 2011, the Iraq

War resulted in the deaths of some 157,000 Iraqis, according to the Iraq Body Count project. Brown University's Cost of War Project calculated upward of 187,000 deaths directly attributable to war violence. Other estimates range from 80,000 to over 400,000.

However, a recent study by Canadian, American and Iraqi researchers, published in PLOS Medicine in October 2013, suggests that militias were more responsible for violent deaths after 2006 rather than US-led coalition forces. According to figures by Iraq Body Count, coalition forces were directly responsible for approximately 14% of the near 95,000 deaths through 2006, with over half of those coming in the first year of the conflict. Only after the implementation of Bush's "surge" and concomitant launch of the "sahwah," or Awakening Movement, among Iraq's Sunni tribes, were American and Iraqi forces finally able to contain the sectarian warfare.

The US invasion ignited existing sectarian tensions, which Washington grossly underestimated in March 2003. The US role was much more a catalyst than cause of Iraq's sectarian conflict. The British occupation of Iraq in the 1920s, expertly recounted in Christopher Catherwood's *Winston's Folly: Imperialism and the Creation of Modern Iraq*, produced a similar result. In that occupation, Britain inserted itself into the country's sectarian conflict and, using the Hashemites, ultimately placed Sunnis atop Iraq's leadership structure. Some 80 years later, the Americans would replace Iraq's largely Sunni leadership with Shia.

But then, with the dissolution of the Iraqi army, the Bush administration

launched a different sort of campaign, compounding the challenge of pacifying the country. It was de-Baathification and it doubtlessly drove many former soldiers, military officers and government officials into the ranks of the Sunni opposition, including a number of extremist groups such as the Naqshabandi Army. The resulting perception of Iraqi Sunnis was that this was an effort to disenfranchise and marginalize them from governance. It gave Shia Iraqis the boon they needed to carry out de-Baathification — a revenge-motivated purge, in effect — to the extremes like they ultimately did. It is a major reason why Iraqi Sunnis distrusted the US, before the *sahwah* campaign, and the Maliki government.

America's involvement in Iraq, like Britain's in the early 20th century, was less an invasion and occupation — which it unquestionably was — than another ill-considered venture of a Western power into the region's long-running sectarian conflict. Predictably, neither the British, nor the Americans settled the Sunni-Shia or Arab-Kurdish feuds.

Bush and Obama: Errors of Commission and Omission

If Bush's blunder was one of commission, Obama's was of omission. By 2012, informed commentators of the Middle East, and no doubt American intelligence reports, warned that the Syrian Civil War, if left to the sole and uncontrollable devices of combatants and others (read Iran), would escalate into a full-blown sectarian conflict extending beyond Syria's borders. In 2013, this author wrote that failure to contain the Syrian crisis risked a region-wide sectarian war, especially in vulnerable Iraq.

Yet Obama failed to respond to that risk and, perhaps reacting to America's exhaustion with wars in the Middle East, provided only humanitarian aid and small arms transfers to the moderate Syrian opposition. By late 2013,

in the absence of necessary support to and, therefore, resistance from the moderate opposition, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) had established strongholds in Raqqa, Syria, and elsewhere along the Euphrates east of Aleppo and had penetrated Iraq's Anbar province, seizing Fallujah and Ramadi. Today, ISIS and other Sunni extremist groups control nearly all of Anbar and Ninewah provinces, and threaten major population centers in Salah al-Din and Diyala provinces.

Calls to arms by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Moqtada al-Sadr have sparked a revival and reemergence of a number of Shia militias, including the Mehdi Army. The overwhelming response to these calls has been Shia, playing perfectly into the stratagem of ISIS and other Sunni groups of igniting a sectarian war, and setting the stage for de facto partitioning of Iraq along Sunni, Shia and Kurdish lines. For ISIS and other al-Qaeda-like Sunni extremists, their "caliphate," as they now have formally declared, would extend from Aleppo in Syria to Mosul in Iraq.

The folly and ignorance of two American presidents — one blithely intervening in the Middle East and reigniting dormant sectarian violence, and the other failing to understand the infectious nature of the sectarianism contagion and abjuring meaningful action to contain it — may have set in motion the upending of the 98-year-old Sykes-Picot Agreement. The British-French accord redrew the borders of the modern Middle East, creating the states of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine as the Ottoman Empire imploded.

The lesson from Bush and Obama's historic errors is not that America should or should not intervene in the Middle East. The US, like many other nations, has significant interests in the region and is an ally of most Middle Eastern countries and, therefore, has an important role to play. Rather, it is that

the US must first take careful stock of the region's centuries-old Sunni-Shia tensions, and the propensity for some Middle Eastern leaders, extremists and would-be caliphs to tap into and manipulate those tensions for patently political self-interest. This should, of course, be well familiar to Western observers — Adolf Hitler's virulent use of anti-Semitism in his rise to power and World War II.

Moreover, while military intervention may sometimes be necessary, perhaps the more proper application of America's political and economic might in the Middle East may be in persuading the region's key powers to confront the

problem in their own midst at the regional, national and local levels. As the Iraq War so painfully demonstrated, sectarianism in the Middle East is not a problem the US or any outside country or organization can resolve. It is for the governments and the peoples of the region to find solutions. Perhaps with strong US leadership and support from the European Union, United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League and religious organizations, Muslim nations can finally come to grips with this problem and jointly seek solutions.

5: Europe

Barking at Russia is Easy, Biting is Not

Nishtha Chugh

Bungling with Russia over Crimea will send the West knocked out with a bloody nose.

One way or another, it was a crisis a long time coming. Europe has arguably sleepwalked into a reluctant confrontation with Russia. The continent's next-door behemoth of a neighbor, saddled by a man it secretly detests the most, is also its largest energy supplier, irascible trading partner and purveyor of most maladies diplomatic.

How do you brawl with the bear who also lights your bulb? Push the beast into the corner over its actions in Ukraine and he severs your pipelines, among other things, with lip-smacking savagery. Do nothing and you hand him a license for future rampage, not to mention also massively slashing your global political capital in a single swipe.

While making sanctimonious noises and barge-poling at Moscow over Iran and Syria from the relative safety of UN corridors has been easy for London, Berlin and Paris, the crisis in Ukraine has left Europe's string pullers almost hanging by a thread.

The past week in Ukraine has sped with the swiftness characteristic of a Bond film plot. Even before the Ukrainian opposition could dust off its clothes after dispensing with President Viktor Yanukovich in a swift yet bloody revolution, unmarked "pro-Moscow" gunmen had swooped in to Crimea to promptly seize key buildings, the Russian parliament overnight approved the use of military force in Ukraine and, adding a treacherous twist to the climax, the country's new Naval chief ditched his comrades in Kiev

within hours of his appointment.

A rudely awakened Obama administration has expeditiously declared Russia is on the wrong side of history. But Russian President Vladimir Putin hardly thinks so. Crimea, the territory jutting out into Black Sea, is an old wound, opened and re-stitched several times between Moscow and Kiev.

The peninsula was gifted to Kiev by former Russian President and half-Ukrainian Nikita Khrushchev, a decade after its entire 300,000 population of Muslim Tartars had already been deported in 1944 for supporting the Nazis by his predecessor, Joseph Stalin. The territory's majority Russian-speaking population, most of whom have Russian passports, alone makes it a "valid" reason for Putin to act proactively.

In what appears to be a never-ending climax, the Crimean MPs have now declared their intentions to join Russia, subject to a hastily proposed referendum on March 16. Regardless of whether the southern Ukrainian region eventually joins Russia or not, the standoff has evolved into a dangerous precedence.

Putin's critics, who have long accused him of harboring expansionist desires, are quick to point out the current situation is eerily reminiscent of Russia's military adventure in Georgia in 2008 over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. While the 5-day war had ended with Tbilisi losing both face and territory, leaving behind a trail of death and destruction, Moscow had appeared to walk away like a briefly bothered beast who only had to growl and punch.

For the West, however, the Crimea

crisis has blown into a quagmire that no one, including Washington, is sure how to scurry out of. As the situation currently stands, Russia is growling, Ukraine is yelping, and the West is looking like a deer caught in bright headlights. Before anyone could blink, NATO was given a massive headache.

What's at Stake?

Looking flaccid is bad for diplomacy. But for now, Europe has a much bigger problem than that at hand. Even as whispers of a return to the Cold War get louder, the benchmark price for oil has risen up by 2% almost overnight. At \$112, Brent crude oil has just touched its peak for 2014. Economically, there cannot be a worst time to show knuckles to a country that meets one-third of your energy needs, 80% of which flows through Ukraine, ironically.

Russia is ruthless when it comes to business and everyone in Europe knows about it. In 2006 and 2009, when Moscow turned off its tap to Kiev amid intractable price disputes, the disruption had resulted in a stinging rise in gas prices and shortages across Italy, Hungary, Austria, Poland, France, Germany and Bulgaria among others, while Slovakia was forced to declare a state of emergency.

Currently, Russia is the second largest producer of oil in the world and its gas giant, Gazprom, controls over 20% of global gas supplies. Even though Europe has sufficient gas reserves for now, the fear over a potential military showdown in Crimea is already unnerving the oil and gas market. Ukraine's reliance on Russia for more than 50% of its energy needs makes its new regime even more vulnerable than it already is.

Sadly for European powers, the problem does not end at energy. Russian businesses and oligarchs have grown deep roots into Europe's financial, media, sports, construction and real estate sectors.

Apart from meeting nearly 40% of its oil and gas demands, Russia is also Germany's biggest trading partner. For Britain, the former communist nation is the fastest growing major export market. Since 2001, bilateral trade volume between the two has grown by 21%.

Singularly dominated by Russian investors and businesses, London's prime multi-million real estate market is already feeling the jitters of the crisis thousands of miles away. British energy giant BP, which has a 20% controlling stake in Russia's Rosneft, has lost \$849 million on its investment overnight.

France is feeling the heat too. The crisis in Crimea has overshadowed its \$1.6 billion defense deal with Russia to supply an advanced warship.

Russia, in its post-Soviet avatar, has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies and attracted billions of dollars worth of foreign investment in the last two decades. An early capitalist society booted by its oil wealth, Russia's prodigious appetite for consumer and luxury products, services and expansion of retail sectors has seen multinationals from Germany, America, France and Spain pump in massive investments into the country.

If anything, Russia's economy is far more robust than all of its Western trading partners together despite the global financial slump. With one of the largest foreign reserves, slim budget deficit and a big slice of the global oil and gas market, the country under Putin is in the best economic shape in decades.

The Problem with Rhetoric

The West has sternly demanded that Putin keeps out of Ukraine. But the governments in London, Paris and Berlin are hardly able to summon the appetite to match tough words with tough actions. Moreover, there appears to be no consensus on what these tough actions should be anyway.

Imposing economic sanctions on the Kremlin is a potential boomerang. Any disruption in business as a result of punitive measures against Moscow will bleed Europe more profusely than Russia.

The British government's advisors seem to favor "smart or limited sanctions" like freezing of assets and visa bans on key figures in the Kremlin over full-blown measures, such as those against the Syrian and Iranian leadership.

But that poses even a bigger headache: Should they slap bans on the most key figure, the Russian president himself, and make the problem even messier? Most importantly, will Putin really care? Such a move will inevitably follow a tit for tat reaction from Moscow. Worse, antagonizing Putin might do just what the West is fearing the most — escalate the tensions into a full-blown military showdown.

The French are looking conspicuously reluctant too. According to the latest reports, the French have promptly dispatched the warship they built for Russia despite Paris' criticism of Moscow's action in Crimea.

The most worrying, however, has been the babble of noise from Washington about "isolating Moscow." Condemnations have flown thick in the face of US President Barack Obama, who has sharply come under attack at home for his "weak response" despite leaping to the phone to Moscow as soon as Russian troops fanned out in Crimea. After hurriedly dispatching Secretary of State John Kerry to Kiev came the suspension of all military ties with Russia. Leading the offensive, Obama also swiftly pulled out of the upcoming G8 meeting in Sochi. France and Britain promptly followed suit.

Despite all the frantic diplomatic flurry, Obama has never looked as much limp as Putin has appeared strong. To speak

in the boxing equivalent of power projection contest, the Russian president has so far packed-a-punch in all the rounds.

More worryingly, the crisis has lain bare — to Putin's immense satisfaction — a growing rift between the US and its European partners over how far each side must push in order to punish Russian belligerence.

Backed by Sweden and other eastern European countries, the Obama administration is pressing hard for brutal sanctions. Germany, Italy, Spain and France on the other hand think the US is asking too much of them. With hardly any strategic economic interests at stake, it's easier for Washington to bluster about trade embargoes, they claim.

No Easy Answers

The West's murky and treacherous history with Russia means there will be no easy answers to how the international community should confront Putin, if at all.

But the inescapable truth of the situation is that no solution, either economic or political, for both Kiev and Crimea can succeed without also taking into account Moscow's interests. Russia lies right beside Ukraine and no amount of wishful thinking will wipe away its next-door neighbor. Diplomacy dictates that if you can't play against the enemy, play with it.

No matter how the crisis over Crimea boils down, the latest standoff by no means, and contrary to all warmongering, will herald the revival of the Cold War.

Nevertheless, the Western powers now have to play their best ever game. If Crimea goes crimson, the faces all over the world will go red.

France's Gung-Ho Policy in Syria

Clotilde de Swarte

Hollande's approach to Syria has done more harm than good to France and the Syrian people.

While there has been much debate within the international community over what should be done in Syria, France has adopted a more assertive, if not aggressive, position. From the very beginning of the Syrian conflict, the French government was the first to recognize the Syrian National Coalition in November 2012. It was also the first government to promise arms to the rebels.

Later, French President François Hollande pushed for a military strike on Syria to “punish” the Assad regime, while most of his European counterparts remained very skeptical of such an intervention. Nonetheless, the French government finally decided not to deliver arms to the insurgents. Following the US-Russian deal on Syria's chemical weapons in September 2013, the idea of a military intervention was abandoned.

Meanwhile, in Africa, France launched a military intervention in Mali in January 2013 and has been involved in the Central African Republic since December 2013.

To many, French foreign policy seems to be quite messy and inconsistent. However, there are very rational explanations behind it that can justify these mixed foreign policy decisions. France's strategy in Syria — and elsewhere — has been shaped by long-standing and well-identified interests.

Nonetheless, by promoting France's interests, President Hollande has prob-

ably done more harm than good to his own country as well as to Europe and, above all, the Syrian people.

Drivers of French Foreign Policy

France's strategy in Syria has been defined according to a set of three key drivers. The first is related to French interests in the Middle East. Following its colonial legacy and historical tradition, France has always conducted, especially since Charles de Gaulle's time in office, a pro-active policy toward Arab states. The French “Arab policy” has taken the form of economic, military and diplomatic relations with Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and, more recently, Qatar.

Thus, what has sometimes been called France's “aggressive” policy on Syria is nothing but a reflection of its well-established interests in the region. France has certain economic interests in Syria; before the war, it also expected to use the country as a “hub” for oil and gas transit.

In addition to that, France has deep geostrategic interests in neighboring Lebanon. Since the end of the mandate period in the 1930s, Paris has constantly sought to maintain and develop strong diplomatic and cultural ties with Lebanon in order to establish its influence in the region.

Lastly, Syria takes on a prominent geostrategic dimension, especially in respect to its role within the Russian-Iranian axis. Indeed, the three countries share a common interest in counterbalancing Western powers on the world stage. They have been developing a strong relationship for the last decade. France's influence and interests in the

Middle East are threatened by this new geopolitical axis.

This explains why the French government was initially willing to deliver arms to rebels in Syria. It eventually backed down for three reasons. First, French experts feared the delivery of arms would trigger a flare-up in the entire region. The Libyan experience had already proven that it was really hard to control arms flows after their delivery. Second, following the stagnation of the conflict, it became unclear whether arms would benefit the “right” opposition groups or the jihadists, against which France has been fighting for the last decade. Third, France was forced to abandon its project due to the reticence of the international community.

A second driver of France’s foreign policy is its desire to be recognized as a global power. While such a claim was relevant under de Gaulle and even before his time, the role of France on the international stage has become unclear since then.

A subsequent priority for French leaders was and still is to guarantee France’s independence in decision-making. This explains why France had been so assertive in promoting a military strike against the Syrian government. It wanted to show that it could take the initiative on matters as important as the Syrian crisis. Paris had to step back eventually.

Once again, domestic tensions arose as the possibility of another military intervention was mentioned. Further, the compromise found by Russia and the US regarding a deal on Syria’s chemical weapons made a military intervention obsolete.

External factors are not the only elements that have shaped Hollande’s strategy in Syria. Logically, the foreign policy of any given country, and France makes no exception, is intrinsically connected to, if not determined by, the situation at the domestic level.

Ever since Hollande became president in 2012, he has faced growing challenges at home, especially regarding the economic situation. Despite the measures he took, unemployment remains high and economic growth has barely recovered. He has not been able to satisfy neither the left-wing, which sees him as having reneged on his electoral promises, nor the right-wing, which blames him for not going far enough. Overall, Hollande is often depicted as ineffective, not to say feeble.

This explains France’s current policy in Syria in three ways. First, by focusing on serious issues abroad, Hollande attempts to distract from the problems at home. Second, the idea that France has a significant role to play in international affairs enjoys a great national consensus. Third, for Hollande, being a hawk on the international stage clears himself of being too soft on the domestic scene and gives him a bit more legitimacy and credibility.

Thus, France’s policy toward Syria is not irrational. It is the result of political and geopolitical calculations coupled with domestic considerations. Yet whether this strategy has been successful is much more debatable. In fact, the main issue is that President Hollande has been far too gung-ho to deal with the Syrian crisis. This has not been without consequences.

Hollande’s Gung-Ho Strategy

France’s strategy in Syria has had several boomerang effects. To begin with, recent events have shown that France does not have the political means, nor the material capacity to play by its own rules. While Hollande was ready to launch a military strike in August 2013, US President Barack Obama stepped back and waited for the approval of Congress.

Hollande found himself in a very embarrassing situation. This event exemplified France’s dependency on the US. In other words, it seems that without

the support of Washington, or at least of some of its allies, France is unable to influence the course of international affairs.

Moreover, the question was finally solved by the US-Russian deal on Syria's chemical weapons. For most of the international community, the deal represented a good compromise between a potentially damaging military intervention and the human costs of a "doing-nothing" policy.

However, for the French government, the situation was particularly humiliating since it did not take part in the negotiations. Thus, this event not only revealed France's lack of influence on the international stage, but also showed that the international community could merely do without it.

Overall, the way the French government dealt with the entire crisis contributed to its de-legitimization. The fact that the French president was ready to launch a military strike without seeking parliamentary consent was seen as highly undemocratic. Besides, President Hollande did not appear to give much credit to international law when he declared that it "must evolve with the times" rather than being a constraint to a military intervention.

By bypassing both principles of democracy and legality, France deeply damaged its credibility. In sum, the way the French government has managed the Syrian crisis has only succeeded in deepening its marginalization on the international scene.

France's strategy toward Syria has also negatively impacted Europe. Hollande's assertive policy has exemplified the existing dissensions between European partners. On the question of arming the rebels, Germany, Sweden and Austria had always been very cautious and disapproved of French — and British — rushed statements about the need to help the insurgency fight back against the Assad regime. Likewise, the Germans and Italians were very critical of France's military activism. The Italians feared the French warmongers would threaten the security of European troops in Lebanon.

While France has justified its policy regarding the need to protect the Syrian population, one must not forget that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Ultimately, the Syrian people have been the very first victim of France's ineffective strategy in their country.

The Ukrainian Revolution's Neo-Fascist Problem

Gordon Hahn

The participation of neo-Nazi groups in the Ukrainian government's antiterrorist operation discredits the peace effort.

On May 2, Europe saw its first major terrorist attack in years. The incident occurred in the bucolic southern Ukrainian resort city of Odessa, famous for its Greek and Jewish heritage, as well as a strong artistic tradition. The usual suspects were not involved; neither al-Qaeda, nor the Taliban, the Islamic State or even some offspring of the Red Brigades carried it out.

The perpetrators were from a neo-fascist group with special privileges under Kiev's new Ukrainian government, born of the Western-backed February Maidan revolution. The leader of the ultra-nationalist Right Sector, Dmitro Yarosh, had been offered — but turned down — the deputy chairmanship of the country's powerful Security and Defense Council after the overthrow of President Viktor Yanukovich. Right Sector's website was effusive about the Odessa atrocity: "May 2, 2014, is another bright page in our national history."

In the same announcement, it also claimed responsibility for what was essentially a terrorist attack: "[A]bout a hundred members of 'Right Sector' and patriotic-minded Odessa residents countered the rebels," and "Dmitro Yarosh ignored the 'expedience' of the election campaign to coordinate the action against the Russian aggression." The campaign to which the Right Sector refers was for the presidential election to be held 23 days after the pogrom/terrorist attack. In between his "coordination" activities, Yarosh openly

campaigning and ran for the presidency — winning 1% of the vote. However, Yarosh and Right Sector's game is politics by distinctly other means.

Right Sector's Odessa pogrom is far from being an isolated incident. It is just one of many crimes committed by forces closely tied to the new regime in Kiev, and Right Sector is but one of the many extremist forces being forged in the crucible of revolution and civil war spawned on the Maidan. As October approaches, violence continues in the east and the ominous specter of socioeconomic breakdown persists. The strain is creating fissures within the Maidan coalition between centrist-democrats — radical nationalist elements are growing. The conflict between the government in Kiev and the remnants of the revolutionary forces on Maidan is being driven by both ideological and strategic-tactical differences. The latter rage over how to defeat the Donbass rebel resistance.

There are several Ukrainian ultra-nationalist forces, in addition to Yarosh and Right Sector, that are poised to take advantage of the divisions and chaos, and bid for power — including Oleg Tyahnybok's so-called Freedom Party, and Oleg Lyashko's Radical Party. In order to understand fully the nationalist element in the new regime in Kiev, we need to go back to Maidan and the heady days of the "pro-democracy" revolution and overthrow of Yanukovich.

Maidan and the Ultra-Nationalists

In autumn 2013, as Western governments and media enthused over the rise of yet another democratic revolution

in Kiev, the demonstrators gathering on the famous Maidan — or central square — were from an ideologically, politically or socially diverse group. A key element consisted of nationalist, ultra-nationalist and neo-fascist groups. By late November, the Maidan was forming self-defense forces: the “holy hundreds” or sotniki. Unsurprisingly, the bulk of volunteers for the sotniki came from nationalist and neo-fascist groups. One Andriy Parubiy, who had a history of ultra-nationalist activity, was put in charge of Maidan’s self-defense forces. In 1991, Parubiy co-founded, along with Tyahnybok, the radical nationalist Social-National Party of Ukraine, which included Nazi insignia and anti-Semitic pronouncements and evolved into Tyahnybok’s Freedom Party.

The formation of Right Sector was part of this quasi-militarization of the Maidan. On November 26-27, four ultra-right groups joined forces to found Right Sector: Stepan Bandera’s Trident, named after the head of the Ukrainian nationalist leader who allied and carried out massacres of Poles and Jews in league with the Nazis during World War II; the Ukrainian National Assembly; White Hammer; and the ultra-fascist Social National Assembly (SNA). The SNA’s program gives a glimpse of its ideology: “nationocracy.” It proposes banning all political parties, organizations, associations and ideological groups. The elite of the Ukrainian ethnic group or nation will hold full power: “Political power is wholly owned by the Ukrainian nation through its most talented, idealistic and altruistic national representatives who are able to ensure proper development of the nation and its competitiveness.”

“Supreme power (executive, legislative and judicial) of the Ukrainian state will be in the hands of the head of state, who is personally responsible to the nation’s own blood and property.” Capitalism is to be “dismantled” and democracy is to be “eliminated.” All

actions that fail “to comply with obligations to the nation and the state will entail the restriction of civil rights or deprivation of citizenship ... The ultimate goal of Ukrainian foreign policy is world domination.” Having gotten word of this radicalization and quasi-militarization, Yanukovich’s Berkut special police forces paid informal titushki thugs to beat up demonstrators on the night of November 30. The result was the radicalization and militarization of Maidan, and a vindication for the creation of the sotniki and Right Sector.

Revolutionary Seizure of Power

Through the cold winter months, the sotniki and Right Sector acted as the revolution’s shock troops that not only defended Maidan, but by January were increasingly on the offensive: attacking police with metal bars, baseball bats and Molotov cocktails, as well as occupying most government buildings in central Kiev. As the crisis deepened, the German and French foreign ministers as well as the Russian envoy, Vladimir Lukin, began brokering an agreement to put an end to the crisis and negotiate Yanukovich’s extrication from power. At the same time, a series of mysterious sniper attacks unfolded during the negotiations on February 18-20, killing some 40 people. The attacks, which were initially blamed on Yanukovich’s Berkut, served to aggravate tempers on the Maidan, tipping the scales in favor of the ultimate revolutionary outcome.

However, that version of events quickly fell apart, as many eyewitnesses confirmed that snipers targeted both police and revolutionaries, and doctors reported that casualties occurred on both sides. On March 5, an audiotape, likely recorded by Russian or perhaps Ukrainian intelligence, emerged on the Internet with Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton discussing the sniper attacks. Both verified the veracity of the call and its con-

tents. On the tape, Paet says that the people on the Maidan and elsewhere were increasingly convinced that snipers were provocateurs and likely came from within the revolutionary camp. He also reported that the pro-Maidan physician Olga Bogomolets had examined the corpses of demonstrators and police: Both had been shot by the same bullets.

Since then, the results of several journalistic investigations cast a grave shadow of doubt on Kiev's version claiming that pro-Yanukovich forces were behind the sniper attacks and point a finger at the Maidan. The new Ukrainian government's own investigation announced preliminary findings on May 13, which conclude that the snipers' bullets were not the kind used by Berkut. German and other foreign journalists analyzed video that shows snipers fired from atop the Hotel Ukraine, which was under the control of Maidan's sotniki. If pro-revolutionary forces were behind the sniper attacks, then it will most likely turn out to have been the word of the "ultras." Democrats do not usually deploy snipers to make revolutions.

On February 21, Yanukovich came to an agreement with the opposition that would lead to his stepping down from power by the end of the year. The agreement also stipulated that Yanukovich issue a decree within 48 hours, returning the country to the 2004 constitution and weakening his executive powers; the holding of a presidential election, which virtually guaranteed his removal from office; and pull all police and Berkut forces from the city center. In return, the opposition was to abandon all squares and buildings in central Kiev.

But the Maidan's sotniki violated the February 21 agreement within hours. Rather than withdrawing from buildings and squares in Kiev, they occupied more buildings and threatened to take the presidential administration and kill Yanukovich. When Yanukovich fled Kiev for Kharkiv, the radicals

stormed the parliament and oversaw the president's illegal impeachment in violation of the constitutional procedure for such. They helped prevent the required quorum and kept down the pro-Yanukovich vote in the impeachment by detaining and sometimes beating deputies from his Party of the Regions. In other words, the ultra-nationalists and neo-fascists spearheaded the revolutionary seizure of power using significant force.

Under the Maidan Regime

The ultra-nationalists' leading role in fighting the police on the Maidan and forcing Yanukovich from power translated into key appointments in the post-revolutionary government. Tyahnybok's Freedom Party members were appointed to head five ministries in the provisional government: Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Sych; Ecology and Natural Resources Minister Andrey Mokhnyk; Agriculture Minister Ihor Shvayka; Prosecutor General Oleh Makhitskiy; and Defense Minister Ihor Tenyukh.

In addition, the de facto purge by intimidation of many Party of Regions deputies from the Rada gave the Freedom Party greater weight in parliament than its 10% of the seats would otherwise provide. Freedom Party members proudly posted a video of themselves beating the director of Ukrainian state television for broadcasting the Kremlin ceremony officially annexing Crimea by Russia. More importantly, for his organizational efforts on the Maidan, radical nationalist Parubiy was given the key post of chairman of Ukraine's Security and National Defense Council. He would focus much of his activity on recruiting his "hundreds" and Right Sector-like groups into the Ukrainian army and National Guard prior and during the "antiterrorist" operation in the east.

Here the ultra-nationalists are again playing the lead role in Kiev's anti-terrorist operation to crush eastern

Ukraine's separatist rebels. This could allow the nationalists to increase their political weight once the rebels are crushed, and the leaders and the volunteer battalions they control return home. Tyahnybok and the Freedom Party have been suspiciously quiet, continuing to lead the nationalist cause in parliament and government ministries. The declining authority of the Maidan-installed government is allowing competitors within the ultra-nationalist movement to overtake them.

The rising dark horse within the movement is the youthful Lyashko and his Radical Party. Lyashko, a deputy in Ukraine's parliament, or Rada, champions "the sacred cause — creation of a Great Kievan Empire." His party is polling strongly, with parliamentary elections and intensifying social dislocation set for autumn. In a June-July survey conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), the Radical Party registered as Ukraine's most popular party among likely voters, supported by 12.5% of respondents.

The moderately national chauvinist and de facto ruling party, Batkivshchyna, took 9.3%; centrist Vitaliy Klitchko's Udar Party received 7.2%; Tyahnybok's Freedom Party had 3.7%; and Yarosh's Right Sector with 1%. Undecided voters comprised 46%. Therefore, according to KIIS, if the elections were held and all undecided voters stayed at home, as of July the Radical Party would win nearly a quarter (23.1%) of the Rada's seats, the Freedom Party with 5.7%, and Right Sector with 1.9%. This would give the neo-fascist movement 30.7%, with some deputies from other factions also sympathetic to their cause. And this is the case before the expectedly hot autumn has ensued.

Lyashko and his Radical Party and Yarosh and his Right Sector have committed several of what can be characterized as terrorist attacks in recent months. In addition, their recruits into the Ukrainian army and National

Guard are likely behind some of the raping, pillaging and shelling of residential areas in the war. As this author noted months ago, Lyashko claimed responsibility for organizing the storming of a government building in Torez by his "soldiers from the Lyashko Battalion 'Ukraine'" on May 23. Lyashko's soldiers killed an unarmed pro-Russian supporter of the breakaway Donetsk People's Republic and maimed a second.

Immediately after the murder, Lyashkov boasted on his Facebook page: "Soldiers from Battalion 'Lyashko Ukraine' just liquidated and released from the Colorado the executive committee of Torez, Donetsk Oblast. Two terrorists killed, nobody among our soldiers suffered there. Glory to Ukraine!" The post received 5,000 likes in just a few hours before Lyashko deleted it. But the Kyiv Post retrieved a cached mobile version.

Despite this record, Lyashko attended a high profile July 1 meeting with Petro Poroshenko, in which he announced his plan for the second phase of the antiterrorist operation in Donbass. After hearing from the president "what he had wanted to hear from him," Lyashko returned to his nationalist vigilantism.

Soon, Lyashko's activities earned him a rebuke from Amnesty International, which calls them "a terrible violation of international law and standards." Amnesty has asked Ukraine's prosecutor general to investigate Lyashko for organizing abductions, noting:

"Though he doesn't have the right to detain people, he abducts them and abuses them verbally and physically while the camera is rolling. His and other similar websites feature numerous video clips showing what appear to be cases of abduction and violations of the rights to fair trial, liberty and security of the person, and the right not to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment."

Lyashko boasts of his work:

“If the government and law enforcers are inactive, the patriots must act. Especially now, when Ukraine is fighting for its independence.” His Radical Party members are also prominent in the Shakhtyorsk Battalion ostensibly subordinated to the Internal Affairs Ministry headed by the nationalist Arseniy Avakov. Lyashko is demanding that Radical Party members fighting in the anti-terrorist battalions “have to immediately after the war become prosecutors, judges etc.”

Much of the criminal activity being carried out under the cover of the antiterrorist operation is rooted in the recruitment of volunteers from and through Lyashko’s and Yarosh’s organizations. Lyashko was removed allegedly as a supplier of his fighters after Avakov discovered that 12 of the first 15 Lyashko recruits had criminal issues.

Other battalions with neo-fascist elements, like the oligarch and Dnepropetrovsk Governor Ihor Kolomoiskii’s signature Dnepr Battalion, are also making illegal arrests that include beatings and likely torture — adding to the general disintegration in law and order and reflecting Ukraine’s state breakdown, democratic backsliding and violations of human rights. These acts are often videotaped and posted on the Internet.

As noted above, Yarosh and Right Sector led and promptly claimed responsibility for the horrendous May 2 terrorist attack in Odessa. Moreover in April and May, while Kiev refused to negotiate with the rebels, regular Ukrainian army troops along with Right Sector and Right Sector-penetrated National Guard troops attacked southeastern resistance forces, who had undertaken no operations, and unarmed activists. For example, in late April, they killed some 30 of the Donetsk resistance in and around Slavyansk and, in Mariupol, they killed another 20 for refusing to crack down on demonstrators. Some of

the Mariupol casualties were unarmed civilians. One was a Russian journalist.

Yet months after the Odessa atrocities, Yarosh remained free and was allowed to travel from his field headquarters in Dnepropetrovsk to Kiev and participate in a presidential debate. Yarosh ran in the May 25 presidential election, unhindered by Kiev’s law enforcement organs controlled by leaders with ties to Tyahnybok. Ukrainian state and independent media have given Yarosh and the Right Sector a free pass. Even Poroshenko has refused to speak out against Yarosh, least of all called for the arrest of him and his storm troopers. Poroshenko most likely has no sympathy for the neo-fascists’ ideology. His lack of action against them seems to be motivated by a fear that it could split the Maidan coalition and spark a neo-fascist backlash, even a coup. At present, Yarosh and many of his Right Sector members are fighting openly under the banners of oligarch Igor Kolomoiskii’s numerous battalions nominally subordinated to the Defense or Internal Affairs Ministry and National Guard — such as the Donbass, Dnepr and Azov Battalions in Poroshenko’s Western-backed antiterrorist operation.

The aforementioned ultra-fascist SNA predominates in the several hundred-strong Azov Battalion. The SNA’s leader, Andriy Beletskiy, is Azov’s commander and has written: “The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment is to lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival ... A crusade against the Semite-led Untermenschen.” According to the one journalist who has examined this subject in any detail, the Azov Battalion’s ideology is Nazi-oriented — as are many of its members — who include not just ethnic Ukrainians and Russians from Ukraine, but also volunteers and mercenaries from Greece, Ireland, Italy and Scandinavia. Azov’s fighters are emblazoned with Nazi insignia, espouse Nazi ideas, and fly a neo-Nazi flag.

The Donbass, Dnepr and Azov battalions along with regular army artillery units are responsible for many of the attacks on civilians and residential areas in eastern Ukraine under Avakov's antiterrorist operation. The tactics appear to be that regular army artillery units soften the target, "followed by chaotic, violent assaults" by the battalions. The Ukrainian army and some of the more well-armed neo-fascist battalions' paramilitary groups have been using heavy weapons, including unguided Grad rockets, in civilian-populated areas for months. Human Rights Watch released a belated report condemning Kiev's practice.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) chief, Avakov, Parubiy, and other officials defend their use of neo-Nazis in their antiterrorist operation. According to Avakov's advisor, Anton Gerashchenko: "The most important thing is their spirit and their desire to make Ukraine free and independent. A person who takes a weapon in his hands and goes to defend his motherland is a hero. And his political views are his own affair."

The Ultra Coup Threat

The political views of Ukraine's ultranationalist battalions could have far broader resonance in the present period of political violence, economic collapse and social chaos. There is a real risk that neo-fascist warlords like Beletskiy and Yarosh will attempt to seize power in a coup during or after the antiterrorist operations, in the event that key decisions do not go their way and/or Ukraine's domestic circumstances continue to deteriorate.

Indeed, the powerful Donbass Battalion and its commander, Semyon Semenchenko, recently demonstrated this potential. On the eve of President Poroshenko's pivotal June 30 meeting with Parubiy, Avakov and the powerful Defense and Security Council, Semenchenko and members of his battalion led a several thousand-strong

demonstration backed by two other "volunteer" — Dnepr and Aidar — battalions. The demonstrators demanded that Poroshenko end the truce, declare martial law and destroy the eastern rebels, or they would remove the president from power "like Yanukovich."

At the demonstration, a journalist was beaten up and stun grenades were thrown, seriously injuring several demonstrators. One demonstrator claimed he saw MVD officers hand the stun grenades to members of Avakov's Kiev-based paramilitary group 17+ Sotny, who threw the grenades. Although Avakov condemned the violence the next day, no one was arrested.

Before the June 30 council meeting, Poroshenko had said he intended to extend the truce after its June 30 deadline, in accordance with the wishes of Brussels and Moscow. However, after the four-hour long meeting, he emerged to announce an end to the truce and ordered a new offensive to wipe out rebels. The Donbass Battalion and its ilk had prevailed over the great powers of Europe and Russia.

The June-July scenario played out once more on August 6, when the authorities in Kiev sought to clean Maidan of remaining demonstrators. Right Sector, which constantly criticizes the government and calls for a purge of the Ukrainian elite, attacked the Kiev's efforts and called for the resignation of Avakov. Right Sector has organized small demonstrations and pickets in the nationalists' stronghold in western Ukraine. In August, Right Sector activists stormed a concert of an allegedly pro-Russian singer, Anna Lorak, an action that had to be put down by police. In response, the Right Sector again called for demonstrations and Avakov's resignation.

On August 7, Parubiy resigned as chief of the Security Council, reportedly so that he could focus on his work supporting the volunteer militias. The

reason for his resignation may be that Parubiy understands the Maidan government — in its present configuration — will collapse, and he is preparing for a return to power on the back of his battalions' volunteer fighters returning home from war — either emboldened by victory or disgruntled by stalemate or defeat. Such a situation could be ripe for a coup or electoral path to power on an ultra-nationalist agenda.

Negotiate With the Rebels

None of the above should be construed as a claim that all the forces in the post-Maidan government are neo-fascist, as some Russian statements state or imply. Rather, it should serve as a warning to the West that the threat of a fascist hijacking of the Maidan regime is growing, and Western claims that the ultra-nationalist element is non-existent or at least irrelevant are dangerously off the mark. Ignoring reality, the West's unqualified support for Kiev's politics, its antiterrorist operation and its refusal to negotiate with Vladimir Putin over the crisis will come home to roost.

The West, especially the US, is operat-

ing under and proselytizing the illusion that Maidan was purely a democratic revolution, aimed at overthrowing a corrupt regime installed by devilish Putin's Russia. We have been shown this scenario before — with the West's misplaced support in Georgia for the beacon of democracy, former President Mikheil Saakashvili, who started the August 2008 war with South Ossetiya and has been indicted in absentia for illegally nationalizing the media, cracking down on demonstrators and torturing prisoners during his rule.

The West must take off its black and white blinders. Putin and the Russians are not the only kleptocratic autocrats and opportunistic nationalists in the post-Soviet space, which includes almost nothing but such elements. The good news is that real fascists of Lyashko's, Beletskiy's and Yarosh's ilk are not in power yet. The West can avoid this by demanding that Kiev clean up its act and limit the chaos of war by forcing Poroshenko to negotiate with the rebels.

Independent Scotland: A Wish for the Chance to Make Our Own Mistakes

Tom Webster

Scottish independence is the first stage in a process to work toward a better society.

The way the debate on the pros and cons of the potential independence of Scotland has developed has been fascinating in a number of ways. The first is the considerable gap between the selectivity and the treatment in the mainstream press and media and the discussions, priorities and publications on the ground level. For people with access only to the press and the television news, it appears to be a debate between Alistair Darling, the figurehead of the Better Together campaign and Alex Salmond, the figurehead of the Yes campaign. With those icons, the language used is revealing: Yes supporters are commonly referred to as “nationalists,” No supporters as “unionists.” When the exchanges in the press, on social media and face-to-face have become more vituperative, Yes supporters have been lambasted as “cybernats,” as “the Hitler youth” and No supporters as “imperialists” or “Tories.” While, of course, all political campaigns have a minority of “characters” neither set of abuses is representative or accurate. It is the intention of this piece to broaden the perception, partly in order to give a more accurate account of the motivations of those working for independence and partly in order to provide a clearer appreciation of the case for independence.

It is necessary to open with a few notable absences. The first is the issue of “nationalist.” It is far from a synonym for “Yes voter,” which will be expanded upon below. But it is important to appreciate that the mainstream, predominantly Scottish National Party (SNP),

Yes campaign should not be mistaken for any “ethnic” nationalism, raising comparisons with the Hungarian far right Jobbik party or Greece’s Golden Dawn. Where nationalism has been present it has been a more civic nationalism, inclusive and based upon a celebration of diversity and a responsibility to serve the interests of the “mongrel nation” that constitutes the citizenry of Scotland. This is facing much more into the future than the past, no fantasies of Braveheart or old grudges from the injustices of previous centuries. Alongside this goes the absence of Anglophobia, completely absent from the literature and rhetoric of the Yes campaign, a minimal murmur in online debates usually quickly denounced by most contributors.

The second absence is both revealing about the respective constitutions of the Yes and No camps and has proven to be important in the relative success of the former. That absence is an appetite to address much more than “merely” constitutional issues of sovereignty. It would be inaccurate to suggest that no No campaigners have any interest in social justice or in improving society; it would be accurate to suggest that that has never been a mainstay of their campaigning. In sharp contrast, as soon as the debates relating to the referendum started, many established activists in areas such as opposing austerity, nuclear weapons, against racism, for a less belligerent foreign policy, for LGBTQ rights, for gender equality, against the assault on the welfare state and Disability Living Allowance and often several of the above, were becoming involved in broadening the debate well beyond the choice between Westminster and Holyrood.

What We Mean by “Independence”

This broadening of the debate has proven critical in the growth of the Yes campaign. The first part is to question what we mean by “independence.” The referendum can move power from Westminster to Holyrood. But independence also needs to be addressed in terms of relations to NATO, as to whether Scotland should be a parking lot for nuclear weapons; in terms of independence from corporate influence either by lobbying or sly tax avoidance; in terms of relations with the EU; in terms of independence being measured by prioritizing the conditions of the poor and vulnerable over the interests of the wealthy and influential; in terms of the equity of land, both rural and urban, being owned and controlled by a tiny percentage of the population; and in terms of the best interests of the residents of Scotland being served by the protection of the environment rather than undue influence being given to the wishes of the energy industry.

This shifted the demands and the intentions being fought for: The referendum was neither the sole issue nor the ultimate goal. It was now part of a process of independence to be continued in the changed circumstances of independence from Westminster. Parts of this agenda fitted alongside the mainstream Yes campaign but also took it in a more radical direction.

This radicalization has three elements of significance. The first is the variety of forums through which it grew. A list including the Radical Independence Campaign, the Common Weal linked with the Jimmy Reid Foundation, the National Collective linked to Yestival, the Aye Talks, Academics for Ayes, Yes LGBT, Women For Independence barely scratches the surface of the overlapping groups emerging. There has been a strong Green contribution, a CND presence and a broad left of center voice, but no party political allegiance involved.

The second is how this has contributed to a sustained activism and engagement of a breadth almost unprecedented. People well beyond the usual suspects bracket have seen an opportunity to have their voice heard running contrary to the broad disenchantment with politics and politicians that has grown in the past twenty years. People approach stalls to talk, to take leaflets, badges and stickers; people formerly uninterested in politics attend discussions and lectures on issues relating to economics, foreign policy, healthcare and immigration policies.

Some events match political opinion with music and poetry, fostering engaged and informed and predominantly civil discussions. On Sunday afternoon people of a variety of backgrounds took to Middle Meadow Walk in Edinburgh primarily to enjoy the energy and entertainment of the various Yes stalls, but there were some dogged No campaigners trying to win people over, and there was the pleasure of seeing a woman explaining the consequences of selling off council houses to a libertarian Conservative No campaigner, all done in a remarkably restrained and far from castigatory manner.

The third element is how this interest has been picked up more and more in recent weeks by the mainstream Yes campaign. When this campaign started there was a certain Green concern that it was too much of an SNP show and a tendency towards the lowest common denominator for a Yes. This stands in contrast to the cards being played now and much of the credit for this shift belongs to the individuals and groups knocking on doors, talking to people in the street, helping people who formerly would not have registered to vote to do so.

That is not to dismiss the work and the press events of the politicians on either side, merely to say that the plays of appeal have a different driving force that remains largely invisible to the main-

stream media.

This politicization of the formerly resigned and an interest in a fairer and better society has run along with a better informed and comprehending public than is represented in the media. Many people appreciate that this is more than an opportunity to reject the Tories (although many find that attractive too). More importantly it is understood as a systemic change that is beneficial in three ways. The first, and most important, is that a Scottish Parliament with full budgetary control is a better bet for serving the interests of the people of Scotland.

This is enhanced by an awareness that the electoral system, a combination of constituency MSPs and “list” MSPs provide a broader political spectrum at Holyrood, more closely representative of the electorate than the first-past-the-post constituency MPs (with the addition of an unelected House of Lords) that constitutes Westminster. It reflects a desire for a system of governance where politicians are more accessible and more accountable – closer to home. This is far from seeing the referendum as a panacea or the MSPs as a band of angels. It is to see Scottish independence as the first stage in a process to work towards a better society.

Thirdly, a dimension that has been important for many on the left concerned about abandoning the poor and vulnerable in the rest of the UK to the limited political register of the Tories, and the poor opposition provided by Labour. There is a notion that a vote for independence will give a useful kick up the system for Westminster, as it were, possibly leading to Labour politicians within the Westminster bubble to realize that there is an appetite for greater opposition within England, Wales and Northern Ireland, best shown through Left Unity and perhaps to force a reminder of old Labour values.

Not Nationalism, Currency or Oil

What has been the sharpest difference between the debate as conducted on the television and in the mainstream press has been the issues of concern. On the stalls, in the streets and in the local discussions, it has not been nationalism, currency or oil. It has been on social justice, the provision of social services, on Trident, on the NHS and on housing. There has been little sense of a Yes vote in the referendum solving everything, more a sense that this vote would be a means to make these goals more attainable and those on the left and within Labour share a commitment to working for the same goals post-referendum.

What has also been absent has been much impact of the efforts at fear and insecurity used by the Better Together campaign, ranging from the ridiculous threat from Ruth Davidson that we would not be able to watch BBC's Dr. Who, through threats of exclusion from the EU – ironic intimidation given the promises of a referendum on that issue from Westminster, to the more draconian threats of depression from Deutsche Bank.

This is certainly not to suppose a Yes vote is assured, not least as many people have little faith in opinion polls. A successful campaign would be won against the force of most of the newspapers from The Times and Telegraph to the Express, the Mail and The Guardian, with The Scotsman and the Record on board too. A media scholar from the University of the West of Scotland examined the coverage on the BBC and found it considerable distance from objectivity. Many voters have come to trust the social media of Facebook and Twitter more than these orthodox sources, but that does not include the long committed No voters or, crucially, the undecided voters in the equation. The greatest certainty that can be attached to predictions is that, whichever direction they prefer, they are accompanied by a wing and a prayer.

Independence is seen as an opportunity and a responsibility, not as a panacea. The status quo ante as a promise of stability has proven poor as a persuasion, given the circumstances of a growth in absolute and relative poverty, the assault on the welfare state, the need for food banks, and 60% of austerity cuts still to come.

On the National Collective stalls, passers-by are given the opportunity to write their own motivation for voting Yes and the cards are then hung up for people to read. One written this afternoon captured the spirit of many. It read, "I wish for the chance to make our own mistakes."

Finland's Economy is in the Middle of a "Lost Decade"

Kourosh Ziabari and Jutta Urpilainen

An exclusive Fair Observer interview with former Finnish Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Jutta Urpilainen.

Located in the Fennoscandian region of northern Europe, Finland shines as one of the most successful democracies in the world, coming first in the 2014 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders.

The Nordic country has very good economic indicators and was classified by The Heritage Foundation as the world's 16th country in terms of economic freedom. Despite being affected by the global economic crisis, Finland has a flourishing economy with a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of \$267 billion.

Finland is a country in which you rarely experience such phenomena as inflation or overpricing. Transparency and government accountability are the major characteristics of the nation's economy. The purchasing power parity in Finland, according to the International Monetary Fund's 2013 figures, is higher than such economic powerhouses as Japan, France, Britain and Italy. Jutta Urpilainen, Finland's former finance minister, believes the country is in the midst of a severe structural change, and that many sectors of its economy have suffered a setback in recent years.

In order to discuss the current state of Finland's economy, the impact of the European Union's (EU) sanctions against Russia and other issues surrounding the Finnish financial and industrial sectors, Fair Observer spoke to Urpilainen.

Urpilainen was Finland's finance minister between 2011-14. In this capacity, she served as deputy prime minister under Jyrki Katainen. From 2008-14, she was the chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, and was the first female head of the party when she was elected to the post.

Kourosh Ziabari: It has been reported that Finland's economy has suffered due to the EU sanctions against Russia. Prime Minister Alexander Stubb has said that Finland's economy is in the middle of a "lost decade" as a result of the EU's deteriorating trade ties with Moscow, and what he has described as a decline in the Finnish industry. How do you analyze the impact of EU sanctions against Russia on Finland's economy, given that Trade Minister Lenita Toivakka has also warned against the possibility of counter-sanctions by the Kremlin?

Jutta Urpilainen: Indeed, current growth predictions seem to confirm that we are in the middle of a lost decade. The predictions show that the 2008 GDP levels will be reached in 2018 at the earliest. The problem of stagnation concerns Finland, Russia and Europe as a whole. Conflicts and trade sanctions do not help the situation.

Russia is one of Finland's biggest trading partners, alongside with Sweden and Germany. Naturally, our economy has certain ties to Russia. No one in Finland was hoping for sanctions, but as the situation in Ukraine escalated, sanctions had to be put in place. Trade interests are secondary in

this view, as sanctions are a means to contain the situation.

Counter-sanctions issued by Russia are concentrated on specific food products that represent only a small proportion of our total exports to the country. Of course, the effects can be quite significant and detrimental on the scale of individual companies, but on the scale of national accounts, the effects of sanctions remain modest.

Economically, the bigger problem is the longer-term slow-down that the global economy faces. This affects Finland, the eurozone and Russia. In addition, the Finnish economy is in the middle of a severe structural change, as employment is decreasing in the traditional wood-processing, paper and heavy industry sectors. Surprisingly, employment is also decreasing in certain service sector areas, such as banking. The situation has further deteriorated because of the ageing population of Finland. This poses a triple challenge to our economy and growth prospects. Russia and sanctions are not our main economic concern.

When it comes to Finnish-Russian bilateral relations, I find it important that we have kept the conversation alive with Russia. This is confirmed by visits to Russia by President Sauli Niinistö and Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja. I believe this is also helpful in making the EU standpoint better understood in Moscow.

Ziabari: Finland is currently cooperating with Russia's federal agency for nuclear power, Rosatom, for constructing a 1,200-megawatt nuclear reactor. Why has Finland turned to nuclear power for meeting its energy demands? Is the cooperation between Finland's Fennovoima company and Rosatom going to violate the terms of EU sanctions against Russia?

Urpilainen: Currently, there are

four operational nuclear power plants in Finland. The fifth plant is under construction by Finnish TVO, in cooperation with a French company called Areva. The Fennovoima project would be the sixth nuclear plant in Finland. Nuclear power has to be authorized by parliament in Finland. The parliament approved the Fennovoima project in 2010. Now the project has undergone some changes, the biggest of which is the introduction of Rosatom as a new partner.

In the Fennovoima plan, it is not a question of EU sanctions against Russia, as there are no sanctions concerning the energy sector. The European Parliament has issued a statement concerning energy trade with Russia, but it is not a legal ruling. The Finnish parliament will decide in the coming months whether it reauthorizes the Fennovoima project, with Rosatom as a partner. Nuclear power is a controversial issue in Finland, as in other countries. It is not yet certain what the ruling of parliament will be. It will be a close call — the votes are close to even.

I have consistently argued that renewable energy will prevail as the most sustainable form of energy. I have seen nuclear [energy] as a transitional solution to the demand for base-load power in our heavy industry, and thus supported one more power plant in Finland. Having witnessed the overpriced and delayed nuclear projects, as well as technology development in renewables, I question when the transitional period will be over.

Ziabari: Finland and Iran have not had significant economic relations with each other in recent years, especially following the enforcement of the EU's comprehensive oil embargo against Iran, which took effect in July 2012. This was a collective decision made by the EU, and the Finnish prime minister voiced his support for sanctions. I have two questions. First, what

do you think about the impact of sanctions on Iran's economy, and the effects it has had on the daily lives of ordinary Iranian citizens who have nothing to do with the country's nuclear program, but bear the brunt of crippling economic sanctions? And second, do you believe the EU has the readiness to lift sanctions altogether, if a comprehensive nuclear deal is sealed with Iran?

Urpilainen: Sanctions in international politics are an exceptional method to work with. Sanctions are primarily focused on a political leadership that violates international agreements. Unfortunately, ordinary citizens may also be affected.

During the past year, there has been growing hope to find possibilities to lift the sanctions that concern Iran. This is dependent on the progress of policies that the Iranian government has — to guarantee there are no further steps with the alleged nuclear arms program in the country, and the transparency in proving the positive progress in that field.

Ziabari: As finance minister, you said in 2012 that Finland was not ready to stick to the eurozone at any cost, and would not agree to an integration model in which countries are collectively responsible for member states' debts and risks. What challenges has Finland's membership in the eurozone posed to the economy? Have you been forced to help the indebted EU member states such as Greece and Spain through bailout plans without proper collaterals, causing trouble to Finland's domestic economy?

Urpilainen: During the 14 years of a common currency, Finland has consistently defended the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, including

the no-bailout rule. I remember when Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, a staunch supporter of the euro, in 2002, demanded the EU to stick to the pact. During the euro crises, these rules were tested — many were in favor of debt restructuring, but the EU line was taken before 2011.

As the SDP [Social Democratic Party] stepped into government and I became the minister of finance in 2011, Finland demanded collateral to secure the bailout funds that had been approved since then. It is important to help member states of the currency union, but that has to be done carefully, with proper plans of the structural adjustments that help the crisis countries back on their feet. So far, all the crisis countries have stuck to their programs. The biggest problem the eurozone faces at the moment is the lack of growth and huge unemployment — especially youth unemployment, which still soars above 50% in Spain and Greece.

Ziabari: Finland came sixth in the global sovereign credit ranking and is one of few EU member states to have a triple-A rating, thus being one of the safest places in the world for foreign investment. How has the country achieved such a remarkable and outstanding stature as a safe place for attracting foreign investment? How can developing countries in Asia and Latin America take Finland as a role model for improving their economic indicators, and creating secure opportunities for foreign investors?

Urpilainen: Finland has a history and reputation of repaying its debts. Historically, we have had solid public finances and a relatively low debt-to-GDP ratio. The ratio has deteriorated, but we are still among the best in Europe. Also, we have had periods of strong growth. The future now appears to be very different. Forecasts are alarming and our triple-A credit rating

cannot be taken for granted.

If we do not manage to return to growth, Finland stands the chance of receiving a lower credit rating. The main lesson to learn is that during good times, you have to prepare for bad times — and during bad times, you must make reforms that will help you grow and change for the better. In the 1990s, when Finland underwent a banking crisis, the seeds for later growth were sown by investment in education, and other structural adjustments that created the conditions for the industry to bounce back. Generally investing in education will pay itself back later on.

The key is careful long-term planning of policies, as well as bold structural reforms for increased employment and effective services. It is sometimes difficult. For example, Germany benefited from the structural reforms of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, although he lost the elections after bold reforms.

Ziabari: How is the current state of the electronic and IT industry in Finland? It is believed that Nokia Oyj and the software producer Tieto Oyj have cut many jobs, and also experienced serious setbacks in terms of global sales of their products. Is that true?

Urpilainen: Nokia is not the global market leader in smartphones as it used to be. There are many reasons behind this, but the result is that the IT sector in Finland has had to cut jobs. The Finnish economy, in general, is undergoing major structural changes in the forest and mechanical industry, as well as the IT sector. These industries have to reinvent themselves, and they are doing so. This is visible from the new investments planned in those sectors, and new companies come and diversify to new areas such as mobile gaming and green technology.

Ziabari: Despite the promising figures that show Fin-

land has had a relatively high value of GDP and is currently ranked 41st in the International Monetary Fund's list of world countries by nominal GDP, it was recently claimed by Nordea Bank that only a miracle can save the country's economy, and that Finland is "only one shock away from a fourth year of contraction." The financial group has estimated that this year's economic growth will retract by half a percent and GDP will increase by only 0.3% next year. What do you think about Nordea Bank's forecast, and the fact that it considers Finland's economic status as critical?

Urpilainen: The economic difficulties Finland is experiencing are no secret. The economic slowdown has lasted for five years now; our GDP is still below the 2008 level. There are many predictions from different sources. For example, the Bank of Finland and the Ministry of Finance both predict no growth for 2014, and 1.4% and 1.2% growth for 2015 and 2016, respectively. Predictions vary, but the underlying story is the same: The state of the economy is not good. We need to boost it with government investment and by stimulating domestic demand. We are also encouraging new investment with lower corporate tax rate.

At the same time, we have to maintain the long-term sustainability through structural adjustments, such as recently released pension reform, and social welfare and health care reform, which is underway. I don't believe there are any miracles that save us. Instead, it is hard-work and wise long-term solutions that will save Finland.

Finland has to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to reach a level structural sustainability, and create a good environment for business to thrive. The government has worked hard to do this. To reach structural sustainability, many measures

have been implemented, such as freezing the income tax rates and increasing the tax on capital returns. Also, cuts on many parts of the budget. To improve the business environment, corporate tax rate has been reduced.

At the same time, the government has stimulated the economy by specific infrastructure investments. Also, a Youth Guarantee has been created, which provides all youth with a work or study placement within three months of becoming unemployed. So far, this experience has been good and it will be developed further.

All these decisions have been made with the notion of social justice in mind, with the target of greater social cohesion, equality and reduction in income inequality. Therefore, despite difficult times, most social welfare benefits have been improved. In fact, income inequality has decreased since 2011.

Ziabari: Finland is one of the world's leading countries in pulp and paper manufacturing, and Stora Enso is the third company among the international paper production firms in terms of revenue and global sales. Is the paper and wood-products industry still thriving in Finland? Has the eurozone crisis had any impact on the growth of the industry?

Urpilainen: As mentioned earlier, the paper and wood processing industries are undergoing major changes. In Finland, we have to work to attract investments, and to ensure that our existing industries are internationally competitive. As the eurozone and EU are the main export destinations of Finnish forest industry products, undoubtedly, economic slow-down in those countries reduces overall demand in the economy, including Finnish forest industry products.

The forest sector is recovering and renewing itself. Last April, Metsä Group,

a forest conglomerate, announced the plans to build a new generation biotechnology plant in Äänekoski, Finland. Metsä Group has an existing pulp mill there, and now they will diversify it to different wood-based biotechnology products. If and when these plans materialize, the €1.1 billion investment would be the biggest to date in the history of forest sector in Finland.

In general, Finland has abundant renewable natural resources, a strong industrial base and a highly skilled workforce. This creates the environment for bio-technology and bio-economy to thrive. The government has drafted a bio-economy strategy, published in June 2014, which aims to push our bio-economy output up to €100 billion and to create 100,000 new jobs by 2025.

Ziabari: As a former chairperson of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, what is your view on the integrity of the country's political leadership with major EU policies? How much does the government try to comply with the EU's policies on such issues as Turkey's bid for accession to the union, the crisis in Ukraine, the rise of the Islamic State, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and relations with Iran? Has the Finnish government adopted an independent attitude on these issues, or does it prefer to stride on the path that the EU Council, EU Commission and European Parliament outline?

Urpilainen: In both the six-party government and in the EU28, there are many independent attitudes to be reconciled into a common policy. In a democracy, we need to allow discussion on different options, as well as to be clear on a common policy. Finland is an active EU member trying to influence on a common policy. At the same time, we are acting according to all the decisions taken in the union.

It is evident that all EU member

countries do have their own history and traditions and relations in their foreign and security policies, which has an impact on their bilateral relations. In the case of Finnish foreign policy, I see value-based traditions like international law, human rights and gender equality, as well as realism, when it comes to our security and economic interests.

Ziabari: The Finnish foreign minister, Erkki Tuomioja, recently visited Iran, marking the first trip by a high-ranking Finnish politician to the country in over a decade. As an Iranian journalist, it is interesting for me to know whether Finland is willing to cooperate with Iran in joint economic, financial or political endeavors. Does Finland have any interest in investing

in Iran's profitable oil and gas market, petrochemical sector or its blossoming automobile industry?

Urpilainen: According to the Finland-Iran Trade Association, there are good economic opportunities for Finnish companies in Iran. Mr. Tuomioja's visit was a very positive signal in framing the future possibilities of the deepening of relations between our two nations. As we already discussed, the future is dependent on the comprehensive nuclear deal. We need irreversible change of Iran's policies, in order to start with sanction relief measures. We need results by November 24, when the current EU decision on suspension of restrictive measures expires.

6: Africa

South Sudan Turns Three: Gaza, Obama, and South Africa

Aguil Blunt

With carnage in Gaza, party politics in the US and injustice in South Africa, where does South Sudan stand today?

I was asked if I could write an opinion piece about South Sudan's independence day, as I have in previous years. But when asked, I realized I had nothing to say (yes, outspoken me).

For two years, and the decades-long struggle, I have been optimistic, albeit cautiously at times. Over the past five months, I've stopped writing about what I think of South Sudan. I'm disillusioned because the very people at the negotiating table who had all the power they needed before — but somehow could not place the public first — are the same people who can stop the madness, suffering, starvation and conflict. However, rather than bringing peace, they are busy carving out roles for themselves to lead the country into the future. No doubt any "new deal" will see a return to the status quo of anti-reintegration, power sharing and amnesty. Meanwhile, they have already proven they are unfit to play the leader, while there is little or no interest in justice or accountability for those who died.

And it's not just South Sudan. I switch on the news to see that Palestine and Israel are in yet another dangerous cycle of retaliation. More of the eye for an eye violence that we've grown up watching — always in shock of the horror and how quickly it escalates. The people of Gaza are now being collectively punished for decisions made by "their leaders," while mothers once again bury their children after picking them up from the rubble. And yet some

fail to see the humanity in the Palestinians' suffering, while others fail to see the humanity of Israeli mothers, who also bury their children because they must bear the consequences for the privilege of living under the protection of their leaders and occupation. The suffering of the latter may make the headlines, but both sides suffer. Yet somehow by rationalizing that one side is "less human" makes it acceptable to unleash suffering.

Then I move on to my inbox, full of the same fear and scare tactics — admittedly in a different form — trying to make sure I too get caught up in the vitriol that has become two-party politics in the United States. I have become more than just a little disillusioned with the process: both parties finger pointing, blaming the other, rewriting and reclaiming history, while dangling our hard-won civil rights, reproductive rights and civil liberties in front of us to use as bargaining chips to settle political scores. We are the generation that has supposedly inherited a "post-racial" United States of America. Yet people who would otherwise have valid and legitimate grievances of how Barack Obama is running the country, instead choose to criticize him based on his skin color.

I live in post-apartheid South Africa, yet the police, mining companies and union bosses worked together to ensure miners' dignities were denied. And when the miners were gunned down, somehow they were responsible for their own deaths because no one was held accountable.

This is the same South Africa that saw its incumbent leaders flee to other African countries to seek refuge and

support in fighting injustice at home. Yet these very African countries must now comply with “new pass laws” with South African authorities. Failing to produce the required papers, or even questioning the legality of the process, will have you harassed, bullied or thrown in jail.

We now live in a world where it is more dangerous for women in conflict zones than a soldier fighting a war. And where daughters are still fighting for justice against violence and for equal rights that their great-grandmothers had fought for.

Stand Up

Our generation didn't start these fires, but are we ever going to try fight them? We live in a world where we have access to more information than any other generation before us, thanks to the Internet. Yet some of us still choose to remain ignorant and use information to prove our points rather than to try and see the flaws in our own logic. And for the very few who dare to see past their own privilege and try to help the plight of others, we are quick

to ridicule them or are cynical about their armchair sympathy, verbal support and hashtag activism. Instead, we should laud the good intentions and the humanity of caring, or even provide an honest critique on how someone can redirect this energy to be more helpful.

Many of us quote passages on love, tolerance, freedom and rights written by those who came from a generation before us. Yet we never wonder why there's a lack of enlightening, innovative or new contributions from our own generation.

So I find myself with nothing to write about South Sudan's independence or the problems there, because sadly that country is not alone when it comes to suffering. I have nothing to write because I am trying to figure out how not to be so overwhelmed by it all. And I am trying to fathom how I can get my head out of the sand for long enough to discover how to balance the opportunities and wasted chances, the positives and negatives and, yes, how to help make it right.

Jack in the Box: The Failure of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Maria Khwaja Bazi

Schools in sub-Saharan Africa have suffered from the same ills for many years and require a radical shift in approach.

Visiting classrooms in Tanzania sometimes feels like an exercise in redundancy. Almost every room looks exactly the same: lines of wooden desks facing forward; students piled on top of one another scribbling in notebooks; bells; tea; teachers writing on chalkboards; and students responding in chorus.

While politicians and nonprofit organizations throw around “education” as a key phrase, and entire conferences are held on the need for expanding access and quality, the truth of education comes down to individual classrooms. In Tanzania, as in almost all sub-Saharan countries, every classroom symbolizes a flawed system: a one-size-fits-all, school-in-a-box, results-based system. Clearly, this system cannot and will not produce the literate, creative, problem-solving employees and entrepreneurs so necessary for success in the global economy.

A Global Conversation

It would be unfair to limit the issue to sub-Saharan Africa, in general, or Tanzania, in particular. The global conversation on education currently revolves around test preparation, standardization and use of corporate models in schools.

Despite Finland’s surprising upset in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) — and the clear evidence showing Finnish success as a factor of highly-trained teachers, small schools and economic

equity — the accepted test preparation orthodoxy still guides much education reform globally. Pasi Sahlberg, in his writing on Finland’s system, calls this school of thought the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM).

Ironically, in Britain and the United States, where school systems still fail marginalized youth or those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, this method of reform has been critiqued because it suppresses creativity and, even more dramatically, creates a “death valley of education.” Certainly, the skills a successful entrepreneur or intrapreneur possesses require flexibility, creativity and critical thinking skills, and cannot be fostered in a system that only focuses on obedience and one avenue to success.

The Sub-Saharan Story

Sub-Saharan African education swung with the pendulum of global education, and continues to do so with its attempt to adopt the outcome-based GERM principles. In the mid-1990s onward, countries such as Namibia and South Africa adopted seemingly egalitarian learner-centered methodologies and competency-based curricula.

Loosely based on Jean Piaget’s idea of scaffolding for learners and Lev Vgotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, learner-centered curricula focuses on the constructivist idea that knowledge is created and employs many different teaching techniques to reach students at their starting level and build knowledge. Competency-based curricula, as an extension, mark students based on how well they master tasks rather than how much they can memorize. Ideally, sub-Saharan African

countries would implement learner-based education that would result in outcome-based results; logically, better education would lead to better results.

Unfortunately, despite the democratic feel of learner-based curricula and its embrasure by sub-Saharan Africa, the programs largely failed. In Namibia, where the Danish-guided life sciences curriculum implemented in 1991 served as an initial model of learner-centered pedagogy, the failure resulted from a lack of understanding and difficulties bridging the gap between classroom realities and lofty educational ideas. In South Africa, similar issues with understanding and implementation resulted in the failure of new educational policies.

The issues with learner-centered education stemmed almost entirely from the lack of attention to local contexts and cultures, as well as the educational reform needed. What policymakers and nonprofits forgot was the crucial need to educate the people conducting the change because they, too, were products of a system that still promoted rote learning and colonial mimicry.

In 1960, Cuba's well-documented adult literacy drive pushed against existing mindsets, and presented a very real shift in paradigms rather than simply paying lip service to the same. Incidentally, Cuba now boasts 100% literacy rate and 100% school enrolment. A truly democratic and radical departure from traditional schooling has yet to occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

Current global education policy, and that in sub-Saharan Africa, largely reflects trends toward testing and accountability. For example, Tanzania's "Big Results Now" project attempts to solve the issue of low school quality, overcrowding and lack of teacher initiative by "strengthening accountability, introducing the right incentives, and conducting meaningful assessments within the primary and secondary education systems." This reads almost as

a verbatim reproduction of — largely unsuccessful — policies in Britain and the US, just as the learner-based methodologies of the 1990s reflected progressive educational reforms in those in the 1980s.

One cannot help but think of policymakers, nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and politicians circled around a Jack in the Box, winding it up and jumping in surprise when the same clown pops out every time. One might also smirk at the oddity of recycling unsuccessful reforms from one country to another and expecting new outcomes. Perhaps a bit of the humor disappears, however, when one realizes that actual children and families fighting to better their circumstances rely on these schools and ideologies.

Solutions for Healthier Economies

Recently, China's investments and the youth bulge in sub-Saharan Africa have drawn attention to the continent again. In order to create successful educational systems that foster entrepreneurial and soft skills, sub-Saharan African schools will need to engage in a complex and complete departure from traditional models.

Certainly, everyone — including teachers, business owners, government officials and nonprofit/NGO policymakers — is responsible for improving school quality. Unfortunately, much time seems to be spent hiring consultants, bringing in nonprofit or NGO workers, engaging in data collecting and evaluation, and writing detailed, analytical plans for improvement. Perhaps, as a first step toward changing and improving classrooms, more time could be spent watching teachers in classrooms and working on teacher education programs.

Encouraging — or forcing, as the case may be — local education officials to engage with their schools and communities would be a solid start. If account-

ability is established for teachers, then certainly it should also be established for the individuals responsible for teacher support. Rooting out endemic corruption and individuals in comfortable government jobs with very little productivity are clear first steps.

The evidence from successful countries such as Finland and Cuba — and even the systems in the US — show that, indisputably, teacher education is the foundation of a successful system. Well-paid, well-educated teachers with job security and sympathetic, democratic leadership perform better across the board in any country and with any population of students. Yet in sub-Saharan Africa, teachers are often underpaid and work with massive student populations with very little training. The logical step would be to provide as firm a foundation as possible for teachers with continual opportunities for further learning.

Furthermore, pendulum-swinging educational theories tossed down from the wastebasket of developed countries need to be critically addressed. At its most nefarious, the current method of developing educational structures seems to smack of neocolonialism. At its best, it is simply inadequate and paternalistic. Despite the desire of development organizations and donors for quick fixes, the obvious need is for gradual, grassroots reform led by local people.

While a combination of different educational theories would probably work best for any country, this requires — once again — well-educated, competent teachers and administration teams who can implement while accommodating for local cultures. Asking countries to reform schools without understanding local contexts, and without providing pre-education to explain the methodologies thoroughly, is akin to expecting an English-speaker to learn Swahili instantaneously.

In addition, the rigid mindset promulgated in much of sub-Saharan Africa

during colonialism still lingers in classrooms, and prevents the development of free spaces for students to think creatively, innovate and problem-solve. Teachers in Tanzania, for example, often mention to this author they are concerned that, if students talk too much, the teacher will lose their authority. Canes are still used as a disciplinary strategy, intimidating students to the point where even if the teacher allows questions, students refuse to speak. Another solid step toward reform would be introducing, within the developed teacher education systems, simple classroom strategies and inquiry methods to allow increased student autonomy and better disciplinary structures.

A good teacher knows that control is shared in a flexible, discursive classroom; indeed, these practices are reflected in some of the loftiest international curricula, including the International Baccalaureate, AP programs and the A-Level system in England. It would behoove policymakers and international development organizations to also allow shared decision-making with their schools, teachers and administrators to set an example countermanding the patriarchal and post-colonial systems.

Finally, in addition to governments and nonprofits/NGOs creating solid opportunities for teacher and administration education, work needs to be done in collaboration with businesses. While education is often perceived as an ideal — a symbol of a cultured individual — in reality, it provides a passport to economic advancement for most people. Expecting each child to perform on the same test ignores the diversity of talents, and the fact that some children are simply not good at tests.

While few want to dirty their hands with talk of vocational and technical education, it is a necessary conversation. Governments would do well to examine Germany's successful vocational system. Even without vocational education, it is logical to encourage dia-

logue between businesses and schools in a flexible, skilled labor market. When schools understand what kinds of employees businesses want, the system can be better reformed to provide internships, a more relevant curriculum and training for future jobs.

This would also remove the complete focus on testing; thus allowing “failing” students who have other skills to flourish in their chosen vocation and contribute to the economy.

The Same Silly Clown

A confusing array of recycled methodologies and reforms have hindered sub-Saharan Africa’s education from success. A need for concentrated, grassroots reforms that educate teachers, administrators and local educational

officials is evident. Education is often used as a panacea for all ills a country faces but, truthfully, a good school system can actually improve life for everyone.

Unfortunately, facilitating the creation of this kind of system necessitates not only a departure from norms, but also solutions beyond simple importation and test-oriented goals. Deeper thinking and investment by local stakeholders are absolutely required, along with suggestions — rather than dictation — by donors and development organizations. Without this, schools in sub-Saharan Africa will continue to sing the same silly song and pop out the same silly clown every time.

Local Justice in Africa: Out of the Spotlight

Brian Waswani Odhiambo

Local tribunals require media attention if they are to be alternatives to the ICC.

Kenya's president, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, and his deputy, William Samoei Ruto, face charges for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC). They stand accused of orchestrating the violence that followed the 2007 general elections in Kenya. As a result of the violence, at least 1,200 people were killed with hundreds of thousands injured and displaced from their homes.

To date, many of the victims' families still yearn for justice and repatriation. Despite initial promises to cooperate with the ICC in proving their innocence, the Kenyan leaders are now intent on evading the dock for as long as they can.

Leading figures from other African countries have backed Kenya's petition to postpone the cases against Kenyatta and Ruto, claiming that the proceedings were interfering with their role as heads of state. Kenyatta and Ruto argue that they were democratically elected in 2012 and a move by the ICC to bar them from executing their duty to the electorate infringes upon Kenya's sovereignty. Notwithstanding is the claim that the ICC targets African leaders who are at a weaker bargaining position, given their states' dependence on the West for economic support.

Local Justice as an Alternative

As a result of these grievances, the indictments against the Kenyan leaders have become an African Union (AU) affair. The AU requested for the cases against Kenyatta and Ruto to

be deferred. The union also called for amendments to the Rome Statute, including the establishment of a court in Africa whose mandate would be to try alleged perpetrators of crimes deemed to be internationally significant.

However, given the history of local tribunals in Africa, a move to establish an "African court" will only further shield the continent's leaders from international accountability. Such a move will only facilitate impunity and iron fist leadership that have characterized post-colonial African countries.

The international community, beginning with South Africa, developed the concept of local tribunals to try individuals who were not summoned by the ICC. Despite their foreign origin, local tribunals perpetuate the idea of homegrown justice, which is crucial to restoring faith with host countries' judicial processes.

Setting up these criminal tribunals and introducing national trials or truth and reconciliation commissions have become a common feature of the international community's response to war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, a lack of oversight on these tribunals has resulted in slow, stalled, and flawed processes.

An Independent Watchdog in Rwanda and Sierra Leone

However favorable the idea of localized justice seems, press coverage of these events leave a lot to be desired. The United Nation's International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which is based in Arusha, Tanzania, presents an ideal case. The tribunal's mismanagement, geographical isolation, and

general slowness has only heightened its problems.

Given Western media's knack for sensational African news, this apparently uninteresting tribunal has seen little or no press coverage. As a result, a new initiative was launched: To fill the information gap, international NGOs have assumed the role of independent media companies. Three of them — whose headquarters are located in the US (Internews), Switzerland (Fondation Hironnelle), and France (Intermedia) — have provided coverage of the ICTR since the trials began in 1997.

Since 2003, however, Fondation Hironnelle has been the only international NGO that still operates on a daily basis in Arusha, while Internews has moved to Kigali. This eventual disengagement of the “watchdogs” is a common trend among the international community with their judicial oversight in Africa.

Sierra Leone provides a slightly different case. Unlike the ICTR, which has seen coverage by international NGOs, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, whose trials began in 2004, is only covered on a permanent basis by local media. No information-focused NGO like the one in Arusha has started a project in Freetown relating to the court's activities.

The local press in Sierra Leone suffers from grave economic and ethical problems, while also having a lack of journalists trained in court reporting. As a result, the Special Court for Sierra Leone — which is primarily funded by the US, the Netherlands, Britain, and Canada — lacks any independent international watchdog. The only international NGO currently involved in monitoring the Special Court is the International Center for Transitional Justice. Unfortunately, the center does not aim at providing a public and independent journalistic coverage of the trials. Therefore, it cannot replace the press as a watchdog.

Lessons for the Kenyan Case and the Future

Such situations — ones in which NGOs are responsible for reporting on trials with a highly political agenda — raises questions over NGO independence and the role they play as a watchdog. NGO reporting lacks investigative, analytical, and critical approaches. Their editorial policy is often driven by a “project” mentality — common to NGOs — rather than a journalistic one.

In Sierra Leone, a lack of independent and professional media organizations has resulted in a loss of democratic control over the judicial process.

Based on Rwanda and Sierra Leone, it is clear that the judicial process can be authoritarian, corrupt, and dysfunctional once there is a lack of accountability. One can only conclude that this lack of transparency in local tribunals has informed the decision by Kenyatta and Ruto to advocate for an “independent” local tribunal, as opposed to going to The Hague for their role in the 2007-2008 post-election violence.

Although requests to defer the Kenyan cases were denied, the petition for the establishment of an African court is still on the table for discussion by the Assembly of State Parties (ASP). While Kenyatta and Ruto will not benefit from the decision by the ASP on the various proposed amendments, the future of Africa's accountability to international law is at stake.

Opinion polls show an increasing consensus among Kenyans that their leaders should face the ICC and prove their innocence — perhaps a signal of distrust in alternative judicial systems.

The potential effectiveness of African judicial institutions should not be questioned, as long as local tribunals are actually used for their intended manner.

In the absence of a counterbalancing legislative body — with state donors

focused mainly on budgetary issues and with human rights organizations reluctant to criticize institutions they helped create — there is an obvious need for independent press scrutiny to hold these tribunals accountable. A fusion

of independent international press and training of local journalists is bound to help in achieving judicial transparency and accountability.

A History of Violence: African Asylum Seekers in Israel

Natasha Roth

The mistreatment of African asylum seekers in Israel is a serious human rights violation.

The narrative of hostility, suspicion and aggression towards immigrants and asylum seekers is not new, nor is it unique. Reports of governmental and societal mistreatment of asylum seekers ebb in and out of the news continuously, to the extent that many stories of this nature disappear into the slipstream. So it has been with Israel's African asylum seekers, until the recent wave of strikes and protests that caused the global media to snap to attention.

By now, the practical dynamics of the situation have been well-recounted: the numbers of asylum seekers in Israel, their countries of origin, the facts of their arrival and the Israeli government's increasingly draconian measures to first stem, and then reverse the influx of those seeking refuge. Yet it is a less reported element of the experience of Africans in Israel that sets it apart from other apparently similar situations; namely, the violence that has been done to them by their host country in both word and deed.

The Journey to Israel

With the possible exception of the Roma, it is difficult to think of a parallel case in the Western world — and given that Israel chooses to identify itself as part of the West, that is the area with which the contrast must be made. However, this is an asymmetric comparison, as in spite of their almost uniformly-reprehensible treatment at the hands of governments across Europe, Roma communities have not fled dictatorial regimes and mass crimes

against humanity, as have Israel's African migrants.

Eritreans, the largest group of asylum seekers in Israel, have escaped an autocratic government which routinely kidnaps, tortures and executes its citizens; in prison, detainees have reported sexual abuse, beatings with metal bars, and the use of shipping containers for housing prisoners. Sudanese migrants, the second-largest asylum seeker group in Israel, have left behind a government that is widely considered to have committed genocide through both its own soldiers and the Janjaweed, a government-sponsored militia. War crimes in the country include infanticide, gang rape, and mutilation.

Furthermore, while crossing the Sinai on the way to Israel, many asylum seekers — particularly Eritreans — are kidnapped, tortured, and their families extorted for ransom money by Rashaida Bedouin.

What also makes Israel a case apart is its population's own recent history. As reductive as arguments based on exceptionalism can be — and indeed, morally-speaking, this is an unacceptable approach — racially-driven violence in Israeli society cannot be examined in isolation from the dominant events of the 20th century.

So what do we find when we start to probe the contours of the cruelty visited on asylum seekers in Israel? A bloated and seething public discourse, fed by politicians, the media, and other members of society alike. We encounter quotations from public officials, which in most Western democracies would lead to dismissal and potentially a police investigation for incitement to

racial violence. We learn of the brutal attacks that stem from such provocation. And we discern, gradually, a consistent strain of amnesia working its way through Israeli society.

Sent to Gas Chambers?

The media in Israel is fond of using the term “red line” to denote commonly-perceived boundaries of decency and morality. For African asylum seekers in Israel, this “red line” was undoubtedly crossed on the night of May 23, 2012, when a rally in south Tel Aviv calling for the removal of African asylum seekers from Israel mutated into a riot.

Following Member of the Knesset (MK) Miri Regev’s address to the crowd, during which she called Sudanese people “a cancer in our body,” the rally’s attendees proceeded to loot shops, smash car windows and physically assault passing Africans. A bus was stopped and searched, fires were started with cries of “the people want the Africans to be burned” and — in addition to the many racist slogans that were voiced that night — one protestor chose to ensure her message would not be lost in the ether by turning up in a vest on which she had written, “Death to Sudanese.” Journalists covering the events were also attacked and aid organizations were threatened. On the morning of the riot, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants received threats, one of which called for Sudanese to be sent to gas chambers.

These events, although marking a severe intensification of attacks on asylum seekers, were not unprecedented. A rally had also taken place the previous night, during which MKs engaged in hate speech against Africans, and attendees called for Israeli women expressing sympathy for asylum seekers to be raped.

The months preceding that had seen a political conference on migration, at which plainly racist views were aired by Israeli politicians, along with a night

of coordinated firebomb and arson attacks against the African community in south Tel Aviv. Throughout this period, the public dialogue surrounding asylum seekers in Israel was characterized by dehumanization, incitement and outward prejudice that has not yet relented. Sporadic rallies have also continued, featuring the now-customary racist demagoguery, calls for the rape of leftist Israeli women, and — when Africans pass by — monkey noises from protestors.

Although the far-right Otzma LeYisrael (Strong Israel) party has led the line on anti-African agitation — one of their primary platforms was the expulsion of all asylum seekers — racism has emerged from center-right and even “moderate” political parties, including those currently in power.

None of this is empty rhetoric. State persecution has culminated in recent legislation mandating the indefinite detention of asylum seekers in the new “Holot” desert prison camp. In practice, this policy has been implemented via violent arrests, unannounced round-ups, and cynical entrapment by Israel’s Ministry of Interior (MOI).

Indeed, state persecution of African asylum seekers has matched aggression in the street, and Israel’s treatment of them — including torture victims — has been publicly condemned. (These condemnations have been rejected by the government.)

In a final insult, the MOI — in an apparent historical blackout — recently summoned over 150 asylum seekers to trial by presenting the court with a list of identity numbers.

Meanwhile, calls for the extermination of Africans in Israel continue on social media, with gassing among the suggested methods. Of the many miracles that Israel claims to have worked in its young life, the transformation of amnesia into a weapon against the dispossessed must surely rank among the most

audacious.

Human Rights Violations

As with any appalling abuses that defy description and deny logic, we are left with a question which is both the most compelling and the hardest to answer — for in attempting to answer it, we risk lapsing into justification, a transgression that must be rigorously guarded against. Yet it must be asked: How does violence so gratuitous and indecent come about?

“Violence... is man recreating himself,” wrote Jean-Paul Sartre in his introduction to Frantz Fanon’s classic postcolonial work, *The Wretched of the Earth*. While Sartre was referring specifically to the intensity of action needed in order to break from the stranglehold of colonialism into the throes of revolution, his words have a wider application.

In remaking himself, in forging a new identity, man is embracing the possibility that he can decouple himself from his past. So it is that the State of Israel — which was conceived in response to violence, born amidst violence, grew up submerged by and continues to live in the same — can be unmistakably perceived as a nation recreating itself. Israeli society is possessed of a dread memory, while being simultaneously militarized and terrified even if the terror is not visible, for braggadocio in the face of existential anxiety is part of the national character.

Consequently, Israel is uniquely prone to excesses of force, for it has a recent past that foments panic as well as the

resources with which to swing at it wildly. In short, Israeli society is brutalized, and is therefore liable to brutalize in return. Furthermore, it belongs to a culture that prizes insularity, and thus insulates itself by design. As a nation-state, Israel remains in development, trying to define itself while in the grip of a volatile combination of fear and isolationism, and in a perpetual state of being at war or on the brink thereof.

Small wonder, then, that unknown quantities — no matter how little threat they pose — are susceptible to such disproportionate aggression when they debut into Israeli society; in this case, African migrants.

In praxis, Israel’s government is inflicting indefensible human rights violations on a vulnerable group within its borders, as well as directly and indirectly encouraging the atrocious abuse of that group by significant numbers of Israelis. Moral abasement aside, these circumstances also provoke wider questions about Israel’s sociopolitical stability.

As Hannah Arendt posited in her book, *On Violence*: “[P]ower and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power’s disappearance.”

If we are to avoid cruelty’s eternal recurrence, we must recover our memory and abandon violence, blind or otherwise. It is the only permanent way out of this situation, for all concerned.

Central African Republic: Who will Heal the Wounds?

Natalia Bowdoin

Who will heal the wounds of vengeance and retribution in the Central African Republic?

On April 10, after months of discussion, negotiation and compromise, the United Nations Security Council authorized a 12,000-member peacekeeping operation for the Central African Republic (CAR). This is a country that had languished for decades in the shadows, until a coup d'état in March 2013 brought about such unprecedented levels of violence that the international community could no longer look the other way.

The peacekeeping operation, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), scheduled to be deployed in September, will replace French and European Union troops and the current African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission, known by its French acronym, MISCA. The latter mission was itself authorized by the UN on December 5, 2013, and has since been struggling to control the violence.

MINUSCA will be tasked with restoring security, disarming and demobilizing anti-Balaka militias and former Séléka rebels, and rebuilding the state in a nation that has effectively been without one for over a year. But the bigger, and more vital, task facing MINUSCA and Central African political and civil society leaders will be laying the necessary groundwork to bring justice, reconciliation and healing to a nation torn apart by enflamed ethno-religious divisions, and the unprecedented mass exodus of Muslims from the country.

Causes of the Conflict: The Roots

Are Not Religious

Every day for the past ten years, I have received an email listing the reports relevant to the CAR. Since December 2012, when the Muslim-dominated armed opposition group, known as Séléka, began their march to power, I had grown accustomed to daily reports of violence and chaos, interspersed with humanitarian and political updates on the situation. In early September 2013, the town of Bouca, located in the northern Ouham province with a population of around 15,000 people, was attacked, first by anti-Balaka (Christian-dominated militia groups) and then by members of Séléka.

The numbers of those killed and injured during the attacks will never be completely verifiable, as estimated death tolls range from 40-100. Amnesty International was able to use analysis of satellite imagery to show that approximately 485 homes had been destroyed, although estimates are as high as 700. Further attacks and violence in Bouca in November 2013 caused more civilian deaths, population displacement and destruction of homes.

The attack on Bouca in September 2013 was not particularly unusual and, in many ways, was much smaller in scale and vehemence than other incidents around the CAR in the following months. The Séléka and anti-Balaka attacks in Bangui in December 2013 saw 800-1,200 individuals killed over a period of two days. So, why did the Bouca attack have such a personal impact for me?

I lived in the town of Bouca for two and a half years in the early 1990s as a Peace Corps volunteer, working with

primary school teachers on health education lessons, building a local community library and working on literacy efforts with adult women. These were “happier times” in the CAR. The country was racked by extreme poverty, political corruption and administrative mismanagement, but there was relative safety, apart from occasional attacks by road bandits and the daily hardships of living in poverty.

Today, much of the international news reporting on the crisis in the CAR has focused on the interreligious nature of the violence. And yet my time in Bouca, and my close relationships there with both Muslims and Christians alike, showed me first-hand that the roots of this conflict do not lie in religion, nor will they be easily solved by interreligious dialogue; although it must now play a crucial role in reconciliation.

For decades, Muslim and Christian communities lived together with tolerance and mutual respect in the CAR. You may not have found great numbers of mixed Muslim-Christian households, but there was an easily observable accommodation between Muslims and Christians living side-by-side in towns, like Bouca, throughout the country.

The ethno-religious tensions, which have captured the headlines and made for horrific images in the press, are a recent development — enflamed first by the Séléka coalition who took power in March 2013 and then further by former anti-Balaka members, political leaders and other individuals manipulating them from behind the scenes. It is not a particularly surprising situation, given the ingredients for conflict that have been present in the country for several decades, but it is indeed a tragic one.

Extreme Poverty, Demographics and Resources

The first of these factors that have shaped the conflict is extreme poverty and a lack of economic opportunity for

the vast majority of Central Africans. Even before the current crisis, the CAR ranked 180 out of 187 in the Human Development Index, which combines indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income. With 40% of the population under the age of 15 and a school-life expectancy of seven years, virtually no economic opportunities exist for a major part of the population. While subsistence farming tasks can be time-consuming during the rainy season, dry months can be extremely long and tedious, particularly for disenfranchised youth.

Another important component in this crisis is the longstanding north-south tensions. Historically, the south-central part of the country has been privileged by French colonialists and the successive governments that have had varying degrees of ties to their former colonial master. Meanwhile, the northern part of the CAR has been chronically neglected since independence in 1960. With its more numerous Muslim populations relative to the rest of the country, the region continues to suffer from a lack of infrastructure, educational resources and basic security.

The Muslim population — roughly 15% of the country before the current crisis and mass exodus — had little to no presence in government throughout the post-colonial era. Despite their lack of representation, Muslims have traditionally occupied the merchant and herding communities, holding little political power but generally more economic resources than their non-Muslim, subsistence farming neighbors. Séléka’s attacks on Christian communities, during their brief but successfully destructive reign of power, helped enflame these discrepancies between political power and economic wealth.

While the CAR’s population is highly impoverished, the country is rich in many natural resources, including diamonds, uranium, gold, timber, oil and hydropower. The wealth of these resources has yet to positively impact

the average citizen in the CAR, due to longstanding mismanagement and corruption. The oil in the north has yet to be exploited but it is clear, as recently documented in a report by the Enough Project, that one of the major reasons for Chad's persistent involvement and "king making" in the CAR stems from the Chadian government's desire to benefit from those oil reserves.

A series of violent incidents involving Chadian soldiers led Chad to announce in early April that it was withdrawing its 850 peacekeepers from the AU peacekeeping force currently stationed in the CAR. The history of Chadian involvement in the CAR and recent controversial incidents with Chadian soldiers and peacekeepers, combined with the fact that it is a predominantly Muslim country, have only helped to fuel the Muslim-Christian divide.

Another ingredient in the Central African Republic (CAR) crisis has been the porous borders between the country and some of its unstable neighbors, and the impact that has had on two important areas: transnational livestock migrations and the massive flow of weapons.

In the first case, as documented recently by Crisis Group, tensions and violent clashes between Fulani (Peul) herdsmen from Chad and local farming populations in the CAR occurred even before the current crisis was underway — a result of competition for essential resources like water and pastureland. Since Fulani herdsmen are Muslim, they became a very easy and swift target for the Christian anti-Balaka as soon as the tide turned with Séléka's quick downfall, which created a power vacuum in towns across the CAR. More so than other Muslim groups in the CAR, Fulani are easily identifiable due to physical features, language and other characteristics. As reported by Amnesty International, in towns across CAR they, along with other members of the Muslim population,

were slaughtered or driven away by the anti-Balaka.

The flow of weapons into the CAR had been a concern before the current crisis began in December 2012. Although there is a lack of comprehensive examination of this topic, a 2008 study produced by Eric Berman and Louisa Lombard for the Small Arms Survey brought to light the issue of small arms in the CAR. It called the situation "a regional tinderbox," and drew attention to the fact that non-state actors have been receiving arms internationally since 1982.

Arms have flowed into the CAR through Libya, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. Although UN Resolution 2127 instituted an arms embargo requiring member states to immediately take "the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the CAR, from or through their territories or by their nationals," there is no doubt that arms are getting around this embargo due to porous and inadequately secured borders. Even though security will be increased when the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA) is deployed in September, arms will likely continue to flow into the country and end up in the hands of militias, until the borders are adequately secured.

Economic and Agricultural Impact

The combination of all the above ingredients created a cocktail for disaster when Séléka began their march to power in December 2012. The numbers today are staggering: 4.6 million people, the country's entire population, have been affected by the crisis and more than half of those are in dire need of assistance and humanitarian aid. In April, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that one-third of the population is in urgent need of food.

A quarter of the population has been displaced, either internally or as refugees in neighboring countries. More than 6,000 children have been recruited into armed groups and less than 20% of the country's medical facilities are operational. Aid workers have been affected, as seen in the tragic loss of three national staff members from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), who were killed during an armed robbery on MSF hospital grounds in the northern town of Boguila on April 26. It is also estimated that 85% of Muslims in the CAR have fled the country or have been killed.

The impact of the crisis on the agricultural sector is devastating. The FAO and WFP report sounded the alarm that 1.6 million people are in dire need of food due to reduced supplies, trade disruption and loss of purchasing power created by the conflict. Livelihoods have been destroyed, while food, cash crops, livestock and other crucial productive assets have all been casualties, resulting in a severe loss of dietary diversity and raising concerns about nutrition and health, particularly among children.

The impact of the crisis and the resulting Muslim exodus have extended beyond the agricultural sector and into all areas of economic life. The FAO and WFP report documented that the CAR's 2013 gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by 28.3% in comparison to 2012, while the agricultural sector contracted by 36.9%. The absence of the Muslim population, who made up the vast majority of traders and merchants in the country, has meant that simple commodities, including soap, salt, cooking oil and sugar, are either difficult to acquire or are so overpriced that they are out of the realm of possibilities for many average Central Africans.

The Future for Refugees

Hundreds of thousands continue to struggle in internally displaced people (IDP) camps throughout the country

and in refugee camps in Chad, Cameroon and the DRC. The removal (with MISCA's help) of the last remaining Muslims in the capital, Bangui, has effectively compounded a de-facto partition of the CAR, with the Muslim population confined to the north or located outside the country. Civilians in refugee camps in southern Chad are not faring much better, if at all, when compared to their counterparts still in the CAR.

An Amnesty International mission to some of these camps in March documented that thousands of people have been neglected by authorities and humanitarian agencies. Many are suffering from severe malnutrition, with no shelter other than the shade of trees. Among them are a large number of children — many were separated from their families in the chaos and are in urgent need of assistance. Refugees now find themselves in a foreign land without their possessions or livelihoods, facing an increasingly unknown and hazy future. Chadian President Idriss Déby Itno announced on May 11 that Chad was closing the southern border with the CAR, further endangering the lives of the displaced.

The Road Ahead: Recovery and Reconciliation

Many in the CAR, and in the international human rights and humanitarian community, pushed for the UN to approve the peacekeeping force, MINUSCA, and celebrated its authorization on April 10 as a ray of hope for the reversal of the deepening crisis in the CAR. However, September is months away, and the violence between Séléka and anti-Balaka continues daily in the capital and the countryside. Will MINUSCA be a case of “too little too late”? History will tell.

What is urgently clear, however, is that the timetable for elections must be readjusted to take into account the massive cleansing of the Muslim population and the de-facto partitioning of

the country. The original timetable for elections as determined by Article 102 of the Transitional Charter, which took effect on August 18, 2013, and called for by the N'Djamena Declaration, would see voting take place in February 2015.

But the situation in August 2013, when this timetable was adopted, was grossly different from the one on the ground today. This decision was made before the mass killings in Bangui in early December 2013 and before Séléka relinquished power, leaving a vacuum violently filled by anti-Balaka. This timetable was made before one-fourth of the population was displaced and the deep wounds of violence against civilians created a thirst for vengeance and retribution. To hold elections in just a few months time would be a recipe for further disenfranchisement of the CAR Muslim community, and would only pave the way for future instability between communities.

First, the killing must stop. Then, plans for a national reconciliation and human rights conference must begin immediately. Such a conference must be held as soon as possible after MINUSCA is deployed. The process must bring together community members from all corners of the country, as well as those from the refugee populations. The role of civil society and religious leaders in the reconciliation process will be crucial.

Without such reconciliation, CAR towns, including Bouca, will never fully recover and their families and futures will be lost forever. The wounds in the CAR run extremely deep. But while they wear the cloak of interreligious violence, they are not Christian wounds or Muslim wounds. They are the wounds of a population that has experienced decades of neglect and harm, from both their own political leaders and the international community.

7: North America

Power, Race and Police: Deconstructing Ferguson

Sarah Colomè

The US must urgently address the historical and ongoing problem of police violence against communities of color.

On August 9, Michael Brown, an 18-year-old African American male, was shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. To many, this may sound like a tragic accident. Others may assume it was simply the manifestation of crime and punishment. In reality, the death of young men of color at the hands of United States law enforcement is a continuous, systematic destruction of personhood that reaches back far beyond the birth of Brown. As Carimah Townes explains: “The civil unrest in Ferguson is not a random, isolated event, but the product of ‘racial segregation, economic inequality and overbearing law enforcement’ in the town. And it is a continuation of a legacy of civil unrest in communities of color throughout America.”

Details vary, and investigations are ongoing, yet reports from eye witnesses suggest the young man was neither armed, nor threatening when he was shot. In fact, eyewitness reports state that Wilson attempted to detain Brown by grabbing him by the neck and pulling him into the squad car; when Brown resisted, the first shot was fired. After Brown was shot the first time, he broke free, running from the vehicle. Witnesses, including Tiffany Mitchell and Dorian Johnson, note that he was then shot several more times despite turning, getting on his knees and raising his hands in the air to surrender.

Conflicting accounts, including that of Wilson, claim Brown turned and

advanced upon him, causing the police officer to discharge several shots until the teenager could no longer walk. In either case, Brown bled out into the Ferguson concrete, uncovered and without an ambulance called. A recently released autopsy found that Brown was shot at least once in the top of the head. Crowds immediately gathered, screaming for the body of the dead teenager to be covered, and demanding answers as to why an ambulance was not immediately called to the scene.

Police violence has come in waves throughout Ferguson, slowed somewhat, largely as a result of responsibility being shifted from local police units to the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Days after Brown’s death, and once Wilson fled the city and before any investigative details were released, reports were made that the teenager may have been affiliated with a local robbery. Community members, and those across the country watching the details unfold, inquired over why more efforts had been made to link Brown to robbery rather than to investigate his death. Some have accused the Ferguson Police Department of attempting to taint the victim’s image as a justification for what can only be called an execution; essentially, a game of respectability politics. More are asking the question: Even if he did commit the robbery, how does that justify shooting an unarmed, surrendering teen?

Responding to the incident, local police militarized, arming themselves with M-16s and tanks. Rather than work collectively with the public and recognize that Brown’s death could serve as a catalyst to years of racial tension between police and civilians in Ferguson, county and local law enforcement

armed themselves for a situation that cannot be described as anything other than warfare. This fear of retaliation was rooted in an assumed criminality and aggression of communities of color. Yes, race is a factor in Ferguson. Coupled with an already troubling history of brutality and questionable accountability processes, the tragic death of Brown cannot be viewed in a vacuum; the US must urgently address the historical and ongoing problem of police violence against communities of color.

This Is Not a New Problem

Police-sanctioned violence is not a new phenomenon in the US. The country's history is wrought with the stains of blood left from batons, fists and hoses wielded against protesters. Communities of color have long suffered as targets of violence, based on years of socialization, categorizing them as aggressive criminals more apt to commit crimes than others, despite statistics that prove otherwise. Coupled with New York's controversial "stop and frisk" policy, and similar narratives from cities across the US, racial profiling and assumptions of guilt are a widespread problem.

Though young men of color have been victims of police violence for centuries, we have seen increased reports come forth, largely due to the use of cellphone recordings and a push for police forces to acknowledge the racial disparities in stops and arrests. In July, Eric Garner was stopped by NYPD officers, placed in an unauthorized chokehold and suffocated to death. Iris Baez challenges the New York Police Commissioner's dismissal of race in her CNN opinion piece: "Dismissing that race was a factor in Garner's death is a slap in the face to those of us who've lost our children, and it is part of the problem that allows such unjust killings to continue."

The strategy of criminalizing people of color is a historically successful narra-

tive that is used to justify profiling, force and inequitable protections. While property destruction, police altercations and raucous crowds in places like Ferguson are coined as riots, the same actions in Chicago's Wrigleyville neighborhood after the Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup in 2013 are simply viewed as a "spontaneous celebrations." A notable difference: most of the "celebrators" were white, and none were calling for accountability on the part of the police.

The list of names ignored by some and memorialized by others, depicting years of death at the hands of police officers, is both heartbreaking and unending. These are not isolated incidents; these stories are the product of fear, systematized racism and unchecked power. Consider:

- 1) Birmingham Civil Rights protests in 1963
- 2) Stonewall Inn in 1969
- 3) Seattle's WTO protests in 1999
- 4) Oscar Grant, shot in the back and killed in 2009
- 5) The treatment of university "occupy" protesters in 2011
- 6) Brooke Fantelli's unwarranted taser-ing in 2011
- 7) NYPD's suffocation (read: murder) of Eric Garner in 2014

This non-comprehensive list only grows. As Evette Dionne so painfully states: "It's clear that open season on Black folks is just beginning."

Militarization as Protocol

Overt militarization as a response to warranted civil unrest is not a new problem either. In the case of Ferguson, police were immediately militarized based on the assumption that the community would become violent, dismantling opportunities for community

healing and dialogue, and intimidating grieving civilians. By donning military gear and carrying war grade weapons, police conveyed an unspoken message that Ferguson was, at that time, an “us vs. them” space — or rather, a war zone.

Nick Wing from The Huffington Post breaks down former US Marine Paul Szoldra’s description of the equipment law enforcement used in Ferguson, including “short-barreled 5.56-mm rifles with high-powered scopes, six extra magazines, loaded with 30 rounds each, heavy body armor, military camouflage, and all of this riding around in armored trucks resembling mine-resistant vehicles used on the battlefield.” Wing goes on to explain that several combat veterans have reacted to the overt militarization of Ferguson, stating: “The SWAT officers are more heavily armed and outfitted than they themselves were while patrolling the streets of Iraq or Afghanistan.”

Colleen Curry from ABC News analyzes this trend of extreme force in her article, “Ferguson Police Are a Small Army, and So Are Thousands of Other Police Departments,” where she quotes a US Department of Defense (DoD) official stating that last October, Ferguson police received “non-tactical” equipment under the so-called “1033 program.” The program, initiated in the 1990s, allows the DoD to distribute surplus military weapons and gear to local police districts on a first-come, first-serve basis, at no cost. The DoD official explained to ABC News that the armored vehicles used by local law enforcement in Ferguson were not military ones, and that the camouflage uniforms were likely commercially purchased.

Senator Claire McCaskill [D-MO] critiqued the decision of approaching these situations while outfitted in military gear: “We need to de-militarize this situation. This kind of response by the police has become the problem instead of the solution ... my con-

stituents are allowed to have peaceful protests, and the police need to respect that right and protect that right.” As unchecked power can often lead to unnecessary force, Ferguson community members found themselves tear gassed in their own yards, and reporters were both assaulted and arrested for utilizing their First Amendment rights. Paul Szoldra poses the question in *Business Insider*: “When did ‘protect and serve’ turn into ‘us versus them’?” Restricting media coverage and implementing a no-fly zone over the area, which many assume was to limit air coverage of the scene below, only furthered tensions on the ground.

When Personhood Disappears

Deconstructing the humanity of one’s community only creates avenues for violence to be justified. If law enforcement can rationalize people as nothing but an oppositional force, rather than individuals composed of contextualized stories and influenced by histories, then those people become easier to violate without having to recognize their humanity.

One must wonder why local law enforcement felt compelled to convey the image of combat readiness, unless they had already made assumptions about how they would move forward when interacting with community members. The combination of military grade weaponry and an allowance for police to have unchecked authority could also have contributed to officers’ mentality that they were in a warfare scenario, rather than serving as peacekeepers to a community that just lost a child to unwarranted gunfire.

Author and Washington Post reporter Radley Balko explained this psychological shift to ABC News, stating: “When you arm police like soldiers and outfit them with military weapons and train them on military tactics and tell them they’re fighting a war, whether it’s a war on crime or drugs or looters and rioters, they’re going to start seeing

themselves as soldiers, and seeing the people they serve less as citizens with rights and more as potential threats, and that's what we're seeing." As a former marine, Szoldra explains: "If there's one thing I learned in Afghanistan, it's this: You can't win a person's heart and mind when you are pointing a rifle at his or her chest."

A Moment Into a Movement

Now that police forces have stepped back and allowed the seemingly much more supportive Highway Patrol to take the lead, it is still important to analyze why this militarization was allowed and keeps occurring despite public protest. Advanced weaponry is created for instances of war, so one must ask: Why are we treating civilians like war combatants? Particularly when these measures often prohibit the exercise of First Amendments rights to gather, protest and speak? These are the same rights that police officers have sworn to uphold.

The assault first, question (much) later denial of individual rights and protections methodology we saw enacted in Ferguson is much more reticent of Guantanamo Bay, than what one would expect in 2014. Yet the unfortunate reality is these war tactics have been used against communities of color for years, imposing power to incite fear and quell uprisings. Again, this is not a new strategy. If a community can be painted as inherently violent, structures of power are then able to justify unequal treatment, punishment and imprisonment, despite the fallacy of their initial premise.

While assumptions of criminality, and visions of weapons that can never be

found, are often attributed to members of the black community, violence is not exclusively saved for them. All people of color, the queer and trans communities, and many others are disproportionately at risk of police violence. The reach of power abuses know no bounds, as is depicted by the tragic death of Kelly Thompson from Fullerton, California. A community problem requires a community response.

From the Black Panther Party to recent shifts in university sexual assault policies, youth are often a core component in movement building. Responsible for thought-provoking campaigns and innovative new tools, youth are creative, pro-active resistance to the ever-present threat of assault on their bodies. Yet for a moment to become a movement, communities must collectively stand against unwarranted violence, whether those communities view themselves as directly affected or not. As Martin Luther King Jr. once proclaimed: "None of us is free, until all of us are free."

The decrease in police militarization of Ferguson is not the end of this story. Arresting, trying and convicting Officer Wilson will not be the end of this story, just as it has not been for the victims and families that came before Brown — many of whom did not receive justice for their loss. For the US to begin addressing systematic abuses of law enforcement, we must be willing to take a critical look at how power, violence, masculinity, identity and poverty intersect. We must unlearn the dangerous and inaccurate assumptions we have about ourselves and our neighbors, if we want to keep ourselves and our children safe.

A Commentary on Torture

Landon Shroder

The Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques only highlights what everyone in the Middle East and South Asia already knows.

What does it say about us as a country, when we have to actively debate the merits of torture? The mere fact that this is even a point of discussion, emphasizes just how far we have drifted from whatever national values we used to subscribe to. The recently released CIA "Torture Report" will soon make us confront some stark realities about our conduct since the days of 9/11.

Nonetheless, the usual partisan politics have already been set in motion, and phrases like "endangering the lives of Americans overseas" and "expose our allies" have already been sounded throughout the rhetorical echo chamber. Unfortunately, this is nothing more than political subterfuge to shield those who engineered and supported such a disastrous set of policies, which have now been universally condemned.

Reality is much more simple: There will never be a better time to have an honest discussion about what the War on Terror really cost us as a nation, not just in real terms, but also in moral capital. Especially as the US continues to be the pivotal player in a world that is experiencing a prolonged period of instability.

Capitalizing on Fear

Looking back, some things become painfully obvious after the 9/11 attacks. One of these is that the nation, collectively, experienced something along the

lines of a neurotic breakdown. The old rules no longer applied, international frameworks and agreements could be twisted and dismembered to satiate a shared desire for revenge, regardless of the consequences.

Politicians capitalized on this fear and turned it into a political weapon; wars were started, civil liberties infringed upon, and prisoners were detained without due process. Sensible policy makers became swept up in the patriotic fervor of post-9/11 madness. But worst of all, torture happened, and the ability to justify its use through legal manipulations, will, without a doubt, be of the great national disgraces for many years to come.

Clearly this viewpoint is not shared by all. Comments made by House Intelligence Committee Chairmen, Mike Rogers, that the release of this report will cause "violence and death" are as ludicrous as they are naive. As are other assertions by Senator Marco Rubio that this report will be "used as a recruitment tool for our enemies."

Failed Policies

The current upheaval in the Middle East is a direct result of failed US policies, such as those highlighted in this report. By continuing to deny our involvement with torture, we would only be perpetuating some of the critical failures, which have become endemic to both foreign and security policy. What Rogers and Rubio fail to grasp is that without this kind of transparency, there is no real moral position that can be used to defeat the terrorist groups we are currently fighting.

Furthermore, the campaign of drone

strikes, support for corrupt Arab governments, as well as a general inconsistency in foreign policy, provides enough propaganda for groups trying to generate anti-American sentiment. This report only highlights what everyone in the Middle East and South Asia already knows, or worse, has already experienced first-hand.

This report should ultimately be about the right of the American people to comprehend what actions their government took, in defense of their own security. Everything else is political self-gratification for policy wonks in Washington.

On December 5, a former CIA agent, Jose Rodriguez, wrote a compelling editorial for *The Washington Post*, amongst other things, he stated: “The interrogation program was authorized by the highest levels of the US government, judged legal by the Justice Department and proved effective by any reasonable standard.” It is not hard to imagine how much pressure the intelligence community was under in the critical days and months following 9/11.

It is also not hard to imagine how quickly those pressures turned into overwhelming frustration. What was once unthinkable, and illegal, became a pragmatic solution, as every politician in Washington demanded unrealistic results in the newly inaugurated War on Terror.

Rodriguez was also correct in pointing out that both the Senate and House Intelligence Committees remained briefed on such clandestine programs. Whatever discrepancies might have existed in the reporting chain, there is a reasonable expectation that Congress was aware of what the enhanced interrogation program entailed.

This is where the true soul-searching should come from. How elected leaders

failed to ensure proper compliance with established traditions like the Geneva Convention, and given the right set of circumstances, became woefully complicit, in torture, under the guise of national security. Other questionable programs, whether domestic surveillance, extra-judicial killing of Americans abroad, or executive authority to wage war without Congressional approval are rooted in the very same national security rationale.

Wrong and Amoral

So what do we do now?

We must stop having the torture debate. There does not need to be any more judicious discourse on the positive or negative aspects of enhanced interrogation. Only one answer is correct – it is wrong and amoral. By giving equal time to individuals supporting enhanced interrogation, we are only continuing to legitimize a point of view that has permanently damaged US credibility abroad. The US is not safer or in a better position because of these programs.

Finally, the blame cannot be solely outsourced to any one specific individual or organization, albeit the CIA, the Congress or the White House. We are all to blame. The fear and panic, which came in the months following 9/11 and expedited the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, belonged to everyone. As a country, we allowed our elected officials, policy makers, and political appointees, to take us to depths previously unthinkable only a few years earlier.

By admitting this to ourselves, hopefully, we will not default to the same setting when the next mass-casualty terrorist attack occurs. To be a truly exceptional nation, we must live by a higher standard than our enemies, which does not include waterboarding, sleep deprivation and dehumanization.

Will the US Government Ever Leave the Middle East Alone?

Larry Beck

With US boots on the ground, the military presence in the Middle East will make the situation worse.

There now seem to be well over 2,000 US boots on the ground in Iraq, assuming that each of our soldiers still has two feet and all are wearing boots. So, let's get beyond "boots on the ground." While we are at it, let's get beyond using "justice" as a substitute for "retribution."

The US government has a host of international problems, all of which would be immeasurably easier to understand if President Barack Obama could break himself off the habit of repeating things that he surely knows to be untrue, and develop a new habit of sharing his real concerns and convictions with the public.

On the international front, Obama is the best friend this country has — he has actually tried to define achievable results before putting the US war industry in motion in the pursuit of loosely-defined and unachievable results, regardless of the death and destruction to be left in its wake.

Within the US government, there seems to be a complete aversion to seeking new solutions to old problems. From the eye-for-an-eye response to horrific murder to community outrage at the death of another young black man, the same tape gets rolled again. Next up will surely be another school shooting or another US war-plane shot down with all of the predictable thoughts, prayers and anger focused on the same flawed responses as the last time and the times before

that. It would be really nice to see something new.

How about opening a dialogue with "terrorists" for starters? The US has had open diplomatic relations with some of the most reprehensible historic figures — the list is long, but Stalin, Franco, Trujillo, Batista, Duvalier, Pinochet and Idi Amin come to mind. All tortured and killed their own people and imprisoned those who got in the way, and worse.

Yet this country and others around the world found a way to try to engage. Maybe talking with the "terrorists" will not yield anything worth taking about, but how well has our strategic killing machine worked so far, even if only measured since 9/11 (with a quick nod to the Vietnam War and its 58,000 US dead, countless wounded, billions spent and a victorious enemy in control when it was all over)?

While trying to talk will not miraculously end hostilities around the world, it might create an opening to better understanding, some kind of measured readjustment of priorities and critical efforts to find common ground.

To be useful, however, those doing the talking have to stop demonizing everyone who doesn't agree with them, and threats of violence as the only reasonable response must be shelved. To be serious, talks must be direct. Israel and Hamas know each other so well that they should be on a first name basis, yet they can only engage in "indirect" talks, using the newest dictatorship on the block — the Egyptian government — as the intermediary. Would it really be so hard to leave the Egyptians out, along with the US,

and talk directly to their enemies? It is working in Colombia, as direct talks to end that intractable and deadly civil war are now underway with meaningful potential to end the conflict.

Dialogue will not achieve much in the short-term. But we do know one thing: It might be a start toward finding new solutions to old problems. Perhaps as importantly, we know for sure that over a decade of killing and providing the world with the weaponry to kill has produced only mayhem.

Today, we are told that we face a greater terrorist threat than ever before. How can that be after all the coffins that have come home and the battles fought in the “War on Terror”? It strongly suggests that either we have lost that war or are losing it badly. Maybe it is time to try something new.

After a few weeks of wandering in the strategic desert and praying on it, it appears Obama is ready to lead the way to the John McCain and Lindsey Graham promised land of more war,

savaging the savages and protecting the homeland from eight-foot-tall Sunni extremists and their 50 or so American cohorts. I am sure the word “degrade” will be the new word of the day, and join “justice” as another synonym for killing. We will ask other nations to put their boots on the ground, they will agree, then they will defer.

So, US boots on the ground — those already there and those who will miraculously appear in the weeks and months ahead — will get sucked into the vortex, and another round of killing, coffins and wounded warriors will begin.

It is difficult to see a humane way out for the US. Perhaps, for once, the US government could simply leave the Middle East to its own cataclysm. Our military presence and our weaponry only make the situation worse. Yet national vanity renders our absence seemingly impossible to accept as the better alternative.

The Case for US Intervention in the Middle East

Gary Grappo

Washington's decision to enter war in Iraq for the third time in a quarter century is consistent with long-held US policy.

The debate over isolationism vs engagement is a relatively new one in American political history. No less than George Washington and John Quincy Adams warned Americans of entangling ourselves in permanent alliances and enlisting under foreign banners regardless of how seemingly righteous.

That seemed like good advice for the young nation for well over 100 years. Then there were the two World Wars. America hesitantly entered the first, exiting with a different attitude about the world and its potential new role in it. Still, as dark clouds gathered over Europe in the 1930s and a new, more assertive power rose in Asia, few Americans were inclined to insert themselves in what was clearly a prelude to war. So resistant was the country, that for most of the period leading up to World War II, the troop levels of US armed forces were kept at dangerously low levels. Not until 1940, after the defeat of France and when all-out war appeared inevitable, did the US ramp up its army. And then there was Pearl Harbor.

Among the many lessons America learned from its Pearl Harbor and World War II experiences were three that have become cornerstones of US foreign and national security policy. First, the US, as the only major combatant nation with its infrastructure and manufacturing base largely intact at war's end, would have to step up and play a leadership role in the world. Second, its leadership efforts must strive to

attain global stability through regional and international alliances. Third, the US must be prepared to confront its enemies abroad, as opposed to at home, so as to prevent another Pearl Harbor from ever happening again.

Isolationist voices persisted, nevertheless, but the threat of communism and a nuclear-armed Soviet Union convinced the majority of Americans that their country's new role and its pro-active engagement abroad were the right course. Historically speaking, however, Americans have practiced isolationism much longer than engagement. And variations of the isolationist voice persist today, for example, urging American withdrawal from the Middle East and its current turmoil, as a recent article on Fair Observer by Larry Beck argued.

Can Washington Afford to Withdraw?

Isolationism is indeed an easier argument to make. America is flanked by two great oceans and by two stable and peace-loving democracies, Canada and Mexico — a luxury no other great power in history has had. And, of course, the US has a long list of domestic problems still unresolved. Leave the world to its problems and concentrate on fixing our own at home.

But can a nation as large as the US afford to withdraw? Or is it even possible for America to simply make itself an equal among all nations? The answer to both is simply no, not even if the US wanted to do so.

The lessons of World War II have become far more difficult in their application than in their adoption. They

remain as relevant today as they were in 1945. As the lone superpower in the world, the US is the only nation that can initiate action, preferably with the support and help of other major powers, to address and help solve crises and, yes, even enforce order from time to time.

But must the US exercise a leadership role in every conflict or crisis? And what if the conflict presents little threat to US security interests but endangers the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocents? How does the US determine which crises or conflicts present a genuine threat? Does every conflict require US military force?

There is no overarching answer to such questions. International crises, conflict and discord rarely admit to simple, overarching solutions.

Since World War II, the US has gone to war on 14 occasions — from Korea through the latest wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. That does not include dispatching US troops to far-flung locales to protect or rescue Americans, defend embassies or address humanitarian crises. The American record in these is not flawless. Vietnam and Iraq stand out as two engagements in which American judgment was severely clouded, its estimate of the threat grossly exaggerated and understanding of the local political, cultural and historical context woefully inadequate. Americans paid the price for these errors — 58,000 lives lost in Vietnam and 4,500 in Iraq, tens of thousands more adversely impacted by physical and psychological wounds and trillions of Americans' tax dollars spent. The toll on the countries themselves remains inestimable.

Bosnia, But Not Rwanda

Other engagements would appear to justify the post-World War II policy. Korea, the 1991 Gulf War, Bosnia in 1994-95 and Kosovo in 1999 all succeeded — with important help

from NATO and other allies — in halting invading forces or stopping ethnic cleansing. The 1983 Grenada invasion ended the threat to Americans living and studying there.

There have been times when the US chose not to intervene, too. It turned back Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, but merely condemned Vladimir Putin's invasion and annexation of Crimea earlier this year. US and NATO forces prevented ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, but stood by during the Khmer Rouge's 1978 genocide of nearly 2 million innocent Cambodians and the 1994 Rwandan genocide of 800,000 Tutsis. Why Bosnia but not Rwanda or Cambodia? American hands may have been clean but perhaps not their consciences.

And in the Middle East, where American policy has been challenged and criticized extensively, it has abjured military involvement in the various conflicts pitting Egypt, Jordan, Syria and the Palestinians against Israel, choosing instead to employ its no less formidable diplomatic and economic assets to address those crises. Again, the results have been mixed — Camp David in 1979 on the plus side, but the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the minus.

Successes do not offset failures. Rather, they call for a continuing debate and thorough reassessment of the policy and its implementation. While largely valid on the whole, the policy — exercising our unique global leadership role, pursuing global stability through alliances and confronting enemies abroad as opposed to at home — needs to be constantly evaluated. Also, the tools with which the US exercises the policy must be carefully considered.

The primary reason the US can maintain this policy is because it is the only nation that is able to bring massive — even overwhelming — resources to a conflict or crisis. These may be diplomatic, economic, logistical or tech-

nological. They must also include our military assets.

The latter tend to be more controversial, especially as applied in some regions like the Middle East. But for the policy to be truly effective, and for the US to acquire the support and especially the respect and trust it needs to play its outsized role, it must be able to deploy its formidable military assets.

Another Round in Iraq

For the third time in a quarter century, America finds itself militarily involved in Iraq. Americans are understandably frustrated and exhausted. “Why us again?” they fairly ask?

If the US reengagement in Iraq is measured against the policy sketched above, then it appears justified. First, as a global leader with the resources, we can involve ourselves and bring about a positive outcome. That is not to be discounted since there are conflicts or crises whose outcomes we cannot necessarily affect — such as Putin’s annexation of Crimea.

Second, the US has been able to cobble together a coalition of more than 40 Western and Arab nations. That kind of unified force is almost indispensable in today’s world to any US engagement abroad, even though Americans bear the preponderance of the burden. The symbolic and political value of such a coalition, as long as it holds, is vital.

Third, the declared enemy, the Islamic State (IS), like its ideological forbear — al-Qaeda — presents a danger both to us and our allies in the region. That argues for confronting and defeating the terrorist group in Iraq and Syria before it may strike further afield in countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Lebanon, or further destabilize Iraq.

There are other motivating factors as well. The US bears some responsibil-

ity for Iraq’s current state. While the US did help establish a framework for democracy in Iraq — however fledgling it may be at present — it also inflamed deep-seated sectarian animosities. The US cannot hope to resolve those — it failed to do so after nearly nine years in Iraq — but it can help ensure that the worst elements of sectarianism, like IS, do not threaten the established order within the country or surrounding nations. Indeed, the US managed that, albeit too briefly, with the defeat of al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2009 as a result of the so-called surge.

A second motivating factor is humanitarian. When the US decided to deploy its air forces to the region in September, IS was poised to assault Kurdistan, whose inhabitants we had helped escape the depredations of Saddam following the first Gulf War. The US could not idly stand by and watch the tremendous advances of Kurdistan and the Kurdish people threatened. Also, IS had begun a campaign to kill or enslave the minority Yazidis of northwestern Iraq. It looked like genocide, and it was one that the US had the ability to prevent. So, Bosnia or Rwanda?

What the US cannot say at present is what happens when — though the matter of the “if” may not be entirely settled for a while — the Islamic State is defeated? Instability in Syria will remain, not to mention continuing sectarianism and division in Iraq. The US record in implanting democracies abroad is sketchy — Korea’s took decades, Iraq’s hangs by a thread and Vietnam’s failed disastrously.

So, it would seem on the face of it, there is a good case for American intervention — even military — to eliminate a terrorist organization whose negotiating terms are “capitulation or death.” What neither the US, nor any other nation involved in ousting IS has been able to articulate is: What comes next?

One should not necessarily forgo the first action — elimination of a ruth-

less and heedlessly violent organization threatening the lives of thousands and even millions — because of the inability to address the second. Rather, it argues for pursuit of the first and vigor-

ous, simultaneous action to get those nations most directly involved in the conflict to answer the second question and supporting them in that effort.

US Space Capabilities: Maintaining the High Ground

Daniel Lakin

In China, the US faces its first real competitor in space-borne capabilities since the Soviet Union.

Since the middle of the 20th century and continuing into the first decades of the 21st, the United States has possessed an unparalleled command of outer space. That command, in turn, has brought with it immeasurable national security benefits. Capabilities the US has come to take for granted such as rapid transport, modern and clear communications across vast distances, and unparalleled surveillance facilities all depend, in whole or in part, on space-borne assets.

In addition, the US way of war, which has become heavily dependent on precision weaponry, information dominance and an unquestioned command of strategic commons, would not be possible without the sophisticated array of satellites and other capabilities America has put into orbit over the past decades. In both the civilian and military realms, and at strategic and tactical levels, US dominance in space is and will continue to be a vital element of the nation's overall strategic position. However, ongoing cost trends and declining competitiveness threaten to put those capabilities in jeopardy, and will impose an increasing strain on America's ability to maintain its accustomed advantage in space. This degradation in US capability could not come at a worse time, as the country faces a rising space-faring challenger in China.

Systemic Problems

According to Arati Prabhakar, the director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA),

launching military assets into space is becoming unsustainably expensive. Each launch currently costs taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and takes years to plan for. And that cost is rising. This astronomical price tag is driven by a number of factors that are hard to change in the short-term, including limited launch facilities and infrastructural bottlenecks.

However, the biggest contributor is, without a doubt, the current configuration of the military space launch system. The same two defense contractors — Boeing and Lockheed Martin — have been the main providers of launch services for decades, allowing the system to ossify, removing most pressure to keep costs low. In 2006, the two companies formed the United Launch Alliance (ULA) consortium, eliminating any vestige of competition from the system. The US military space program, as currently constituted, is oligopolistic and works to inflate per-launch costs, and unfortunately shows no sign of change from within.

Further complicating matters, the evolution of the US space program over the past years has left all government launches completely dependent on foreign assistance — specifically, from Russia. Most launches conducted by the ULA use the Atlas rocket, which currently requires a Russian-made engine, the RD-180, to fly. Recently, the future supply of these engines was threatened by tensions between Washington and Moscow over events in Ukraine, with the owner of the engine manufacturer, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin, going so far as to threaten to cut off supplies. Although pragmatism and commercial motivations have for the moment kept

that threat from being carried out, the episode did expose an unacceptable weakness in an area vital to US national security. In a hypothetical future crisis with Russia, rash moves and short tempers could completely cut off the supply of the engines, leaving future US satellites and other space assets stuck on the ground. While such an eventuality is far from certain, the threat to the American space program is real.

As the US moves further into the 21st century, the need for high-end space-based capabilities, during peacetime and war, is only going to grow. In recent decades, the American way of war has depended on information dominance and domain awareness — capabilities that, in turn, depend on space-based technology for their continued existence and predictability in a contested theater of operations. At the same time, the US economy is ever more information-driven, depending in part on government space-borne assets such as the Global Positioning System.

Given that these underlying trends are not likely to change any time soon, the US will continue to depend on secure and affordable access to space, even as the current launch infrastructure becomes increasingly unpredictable, expensive and time-consuming to field and maintain. This kind of prohibitive cost — in both time and money — will, in time, put severe limitations on American flexibility and capability in space.

The Chinese Challenge

This challenge could not have come at a worse time, since the US is now facing in China the first real competitor in space-borne capabilities since the Soviet Union. While US space efforts have slowed under massive cost pressures and bureaucratic inefficiency, 2013 was a remarkably active year for the Chinese space program. Among other developments, the period saw the second crewed mission to space lab

Tiangong-1; the beginning of plans for a successor lab and, eventually, a full-scale Chinese space station; and the landing of a robotic rover on the moon — and this is only what was publicly acknowledged.

On the clandestine side of things, in fall 2013, American observers detected a Chinese satellite, designated SY-7, behaving rather oddly. The craft changed its orbit several times and was able to make close-in rendezvous with other satellites, something a typical communications station would have no reason to do. Independent analysts concluded the maneuvering could be a test for a space-borne anti-satellite weapon, indicating a covert military dimension to Beijing's space program. When compared with the US launch schedule, China's is a hive of activity — and cheaper too. While the China's presence in space is still far behind America technologically, it has already surpassed the US in pace and affordability.

Assuming costs continue to spiral, launch timetables remain stuck in the mud, and the supply of Russian engines are threatened from political difficulties, the US will be at a sharp disadvantage in space-borne capabilities vis-à-vis China in the years and decades to come. If Washington hopes to maintain even a portion of the edge it has now, drastic steps must be taken to change the trajectory of the American space program. Fortunately, options to do so are at hand.

First and foremost, the Pentagon should allow the private company SpaceX to begin competing against the ULA for launch contracts immediately. SpaceX's impressive record since its founding in 2002 shows that such a move will bring immediate savings. In virtually every possible dimension of rocketry, SpaceX offers advantages. Both of its current mainline rockets — the Falcon 9 and the Falcon Heavy — offer a competitive alternative to the ULA's Atlas rocket, with large payloads and lower per-launch costs.

Moreover, the prospect of an independent and entrepreneurial company competing to reach a lower bottom line could yield step changes in American rocket and other space-related technology, while continuing to achieve lower costs. Most promising, SpaceX is currently experimenting with a reusable rocket that can return to earth after delivering its payload. Integrating such a spacecraft into US military launches would not only be vastly cheaper than the current regime, but it would also have important national security benefits in snapping America's dependence on a steady stream of Russian-made engines.

To be sure, SpaceX does not, and should not, hold a monopoly over future American launches. The ULA has decades of valuable expertise, an understanding of government needs, and

could still make a valuable contribution to the US space program. However, the current structure is too bureaucratically inefficient to provide the good, quick and cost-effective service the country needs. To save the best of the existing US military launch system, the Pentagon should require that Boeing and Lockheed Martin dissolve the ULA consortium and compete against SpaceX for contracts separately.

The resulting environment will offer more choice and cost savings to the government, and will give the American space launch industry just the spark it needs to compete with China in the decades to come. Over time, these initiatives will almost certainly bear fruit, giving US dominance in space a new lease on life.

8: Latin America

Social Inequality in Brazil: The People, Politics and the World Cup

Victoria Livingstone

Brazilians are unified in their frustration with the government before the World Cup.

On May 20, bus drivers in São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, went on strike, closing 11 major terminals and leaving many people stranded. The newspaper *A Folha* ran a headline that stated: "Protest Hurts the People and Not the Big Shots." After all, the people take the bus, while the political class and the rich do not. In Brazil, the divide between these classes is always visible.

Social Divisions

São Paulo, which will be hosting the opening game of the FIFA World Cup on June 12, is the wealthiest state in Brazil and has attracted migrants from other parts of the country, particularly from the poorer north, a region that has generally been ignored by politicians. Of the people who moved to São Paulo, some of them were happy to settle there, while others strived to save enough money to return home. Despite projects starting during the administration of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to invest in the northeast, Brazil's wealth is still concentrated in the south.

In addition to significant cultural differences between Brazil's states, the regions differ economically to such a degree that the country resists stereotyping. Even within São Paulo, the sharp divisions between social classes make it difficult to represent the state — or the city of the same name — in one-dimensional terms.

For a certain class of workers in the city

of São Paulo, living here means long and sometimes dangerous commutes to and from work. At a restaurant in the affluent neighborhood of Pinheiros, a waiter told me that many of his co-workers take great risks just going home from work every night. They leave the restaurant late, he explained, and since buses run infrequently at that hour, they have to walk long distances, alone, through rough neighborhoods that are only minimally patrolled by an underpaid and ineffective police force.

Another group of Paulistanos — as the people from this city are called — live closer to work, in more central neighborhoods, often in apartment buildings with double-lock gates, security guards and amenities such as gyms and small reception halls. This upper-middle class, who generally never go into the poorer neighborhoods and certainly never into the favelas, can afford to spend an outrageous 30 reais (\$13.50) for a sandwich and a coffee at one of the fancier cafés on their way back from work. This class shops at US-style malls, or they fly to New York City or Miami, avoiding high prices in Brazil. However, most of the middle-class — like schoolteachers who earn on average 890 reais (\$390) per month — simply do not have access to that lifestyle.

São Paulo, therefore, is a markedly different city for distinct economic classes. The vast majority of Brazilians do not go into the shopping malls frequented by the middle-class. This disparity has given rise to protests such as *rolezinhos* — excursions organized through social media that bring young people from poor neighborhoods en masse into the shopping centers. Some observers have interpreted this movement as a form of protest against the disparity

that exists here, while a great number, including a significant percentage of the Brazilian middle-class, believe these excursions are not ideologically motivated and that young people from the periphery are simply looking to have fun in a rather destructive way. Whatever the impetus for the movement, the rolezinhos are a reflection of a divided country.

Poor Returns

Despite the divisions between them, one thing that all classes of Brazilians — except for the elite political class — seem to share is the feeling of being cheated. The prices for food, clothes and other basic needs are exorbitant, partly due to tax, which can add 80% to the total price of the product. For all they pay, Brazilians feel like they receive few benefits. In a study conducted by the Brazilian Institute for Tax Planning that compared the returns people saw for their taxes in 30 different countries, Brazil ranked lowest on the list.

A recent Pew Research poll found that, in addition to their concerns about the high cost of living, the majority of Brazilians are unhappy with the school systems and find health care severely lacking. According to Brazil's Indicator of Functional Illiteracy, 27% of adults between the ages of 15 and 64 have only rudimentary reading and writing skills. They can read only basic texts like advertisements or short letters and handle only elementary mathematical operations such as simple monetary transactions. Some students who have graduated from public schools enter universities (usually private) and are still functionally illiterate. Underpaid and overworked university professors then face the problem of trying to teach students who cannot write a well-formed paragraph despite having finished high school.

Public hospitals are also in poor shape. Brazil's General Accounting Office recently audited 116 hospitals and found that 64% were operating

over capacity. Other problems included poor infrastructure, a shortage of doctors and nurses, and equipment so poorly maintained that it is unusable. At a hospital in the state of Piauí in April, one patient died while being treated on the floor because there were not enough beds.

The Pew Research poll also noted that almost all Brazilians (83%) say that crime is a serious problem. Many Brazilians respond to the constant threat of crime by avoiding large public events, such as the recent Virada Cultural, an all-night festival in the center of São Paulo that featured theater, concerts, dancing and other shows. Despite the presence of over 5,000 guards and military police in the center of the city that night, at least two people were shot and another two stabbed during the event. The army will be policing the streets in Rio and São Paulo during the World Cup.

Security forces face perpetual danger and are poorly paid. The civil police force recently discussed organizing strikes in 13 states. Teachers also feel they are not fairly compensated and have been staging protests. Professors at Brazil's most prestigious university, the Universidade de São Paulo, organized a strike after their salaries were not adjusted for inflation due to lack of funds.

Watching their government invest heavily in new stadiums and aesthetic improvements to infrastructure in advance of the World Cup has aggravated the sense many people have that the state is robbing them of basic necessities: health care, security and education. Groups whose services can immediately affect Brazil's capacity to host a large international event have timed their protests carefully. Metro employees in São Paulo, for example, have shut down the metro just a week before the opening game. A group of military police staged a protest outside Itaquerao stadium on June 4. These groups and others that offer essential services believe the government will

more likely cede to their demands now, in order to avoid problems during the World Cup.

World Cup: Cooperate with FIFA

Since Brazil is now enjoying — or suffering from — greater visibility in global media due to the World Cup and because presidential elections are approaching, many groups are taking advantage of the heightened attention to announce their grievances to the world. “Não vai ter Copa” (there will not be a World Cup), some groups threaten, but most know there will be games. They simply want the world to see what is happening.

In April, Mikkel Jensen, an independent Danish journalist, posted an article on his Facebook page saying he was horrified by the human rights violations in Brazil and that, although his dream had been to cover the World Cup, he was leaving the country early. He wrote that poor children were disappearing from the streets of Fortaleza in the government’s efforts to clean things up in advance of the tournament.

It is true that people have been evicted from their homes to clear the way for new infrastructure, and there have been numerous reports of human rights abuses in Brazil, particularly in regard to the campaign to pacify the country’s favelas. Jensen, however, was unable to cite any reliable sources. Brazilian journalist Luiz Caversan even called the piece farcical.

Despite the problems with Jensen’s re-

port, including his decision to leave the country rather than follow up on the story, the piece went viral in Brazil. The number of times it was enthusiastically reposted reflects the desire of many Brazilians to show the world a reality that their government and FIFA would rather hide. Brazilians, however, do not need to rely on Facebook posts to communicate their message. The metro employees standing near the turnstiles carrying giant, threatening batons and wearing all-black uniforms with white writing saying “Cooperate with FIFA” send a clear message.

Brazilians are divided in their attitudes toward the World Cup. Some view the event as an opportunity to announce their frustration to the global media and to their own government. Others are frustrated and saddened by the constant protests, which they see as rooted in petty political games more than as a genuine movement on the part of the people. Others are afraid.

Very few support the World Cup, and some people are even hoping the Brazilian team loses because they feel that victory in soccer would mean a victory for President Dilma Rousseff this October. The current mood is one of apprehension and frustration. It is difficult to predict whether the climate will change when the games begin on June 12, but one thing is certain: The world will see an image of Brazil that is far more complex than beaches and soccer fans.

Chile and Romania: Censorship in Dictatorships

Caterina Preda

Dictatorships enforce control in every realm of life, including the arts.

Dictatorships enforce a program for the arts, as they do for all other domains of human life. The divergent regimes of Augusto Pinochet — who governed Chile between 1973-90 with a right wing military government that introduced neo-liberal reforms and used a repressive strategy to impose it — and Nicolae Ceaucescu in Romania (1965-1989), who controlled all realms of life through party and state institutions, used comparable strategies to control the arts.

Dissimilar strategies that sometimes used analogous mechanisms meant to alter the way citizens conceived their societies. An initial difference between the two cases is that the Ceaucescu regime found the political space already molded by the first communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej (1948-65), whereas Pinochet had to completely annul the socialist reforms of the previous government of Salvador Allende (1970-73), in order to introduce the market oriented model of society his regime supported. The two opposed models are that of a state that controls society and dictates the program to be followed by artists and artistic institutions based on an ideological project in Romania, while the other case observed an art world dominated by the free market, in which the state plays a minor, if not an absent, role.

Eliminate and Erase

One of the first decisions a dictatorship takes, as the Pinochet regime showed, is to eliminate and erase all traces of the previous configuration, sanitizing

the public space, and dismantling the preceding institutional model, especially the one consolidated by the Unidad Popular government. This primary assignment included both physical and psychological repression of artists, the elimination of cultural goods contrary to the new ideology, and the dismantlement of artistic institutions or their monopolization by the new regime through the nomination of representatives of the military.

The same sequence of actions was seen in Romania, at the end of the 1940s, with the difference that party activists and not military men assumed the control of art. Repression was an important tool in the initial process of purges of the public space and in Chile it took various forms, “the most terrible one” being “physical elimination.” Many actors, musicians such as Victor Jara, the icon of Nueva Canción, killing in the Estadio Nacional remains emblematic, painters such as Hugo Riveros Gómez, were killed or arrested. Other awful forms of terror used were persecution ending in disappearance, imprisonment and torture, and/or exile to a remote area or exile tout court.

In Romania, the establishment of the Soviet model also meant the unleashing of physical (arrests, killings, institutional purges) and psychological repression (terror, corruption, compromise) along with public “unveilings” of those who did not submit to the new official dogma through media-campaigns and which were followed by a process of auto-critique of the designated “victim.”

Smells Like Socialism

At the beginning of the Pinochet

regime, a wild pursuit was launched against Marxist books, music, films, and posters, a definition that was very broad — “all that smelled like socialism” — and that led to the public autodafés transmitted live on television. This is one of the strongest images that led to the consideration of the Pinochet regime as an essentially anti-cultural, anti-artistic regime that was only meant to destroy. This image functioned as an example for the rest of the population leading people to burn their own books or, as Subercaseaux recalls, to bury their libraries in hope for better times.

In Romania, the establishment of the communist regime was accompanied by the interdiction of works that were contrary to the new ideology. Between 1944-48, lists of forbidden volumes were published. Marian Petcu estimates that in this period 8,779 works were banned, together with the interdiction of the “complete works” of authors that found themselves on the lists of forbidden writers such as the poet Vasile Alecsandri. Equally so, films, music, and theater works were submitted to the control of the new instances — this included both contemporary works and works that had passed previous censorship.

A third aspect that characterizes the repression phase is institutional repression: Military and party activists were nominated in charge of culture instead of artists that were evicted. In Chile, public institutions were purged of any left militant or (presumed) sympathizer after the military occupation of the most important artistic institutions such as the Quimantú editing house, Chile Films, and the Museums of Fine Arts and of Contemporary Art, as well as the National Television (Navarro-Cear-di). The military not only controlled these institutions, but also bombed universities, such as the School of Theater of the University of Chile or the Technical University, radio stations and the National Museum of Fine Arts.

Once the communist regime was

established in Romania it also entailed institutional purging and replacement of artists with party activists. Intellectuals were equally dismissed from their posts whether in the high-education system or the private sphere, such as directors of magazines that had been nationalized. Romanian authorities verified the “healthy social origin” so as to expel professors and students from universities and to deny their entry thereafter, as well as refuse them any other revenue. Furthermore, the Romanian regime used a double policy of reward/punish: It attracted intellectuals and rewarded them for their allegiance, but it also penalized (menaced or/and evicted) those that did not.

New Cultural Models

A modern dictatorship cannot only erase the past, but also censor it, that is, re-interpret and thus re-write history by choosing specific artists or intellectuals — at different times — that suit its political goals. For example, in Chile the films created before the military coup were forbidden for public projection, as were the films realized in exile. In Romania too, art exhibitions also sought to create a new perception on the “art of the past” and the only classical works selected were meant to emphasize the life of misery that preceded the communist regime.

Once dictatorships were established, the past erased, and the new cultural model imposed, preventive censorship, so as to censor the future, was set in place and specific mechanisms were imagined to deploy it.

Above all, as Ioana Macrea Toma observed for the Romania case, the defining element of censorship was its arbitrary character, the “permanent redefinition of the censorship apparatus.” This randomness creates the sentiment of omnipresence and indisputably brings about the sentiment of terror, of overwhelming control.

Self-censorship was the result of the

ubiquitous censorship and the uncertainty of the exact censors – in Chile, and in Romania after its official dismantlement in 1977. “The fear of sanction generates ... the reflex of repression of the desire of free expression called auto-censorship,” and self-censorship was the manifestation of a high “psychological cost supposed by the free expression in the public space.” “Each one of us had a militian [policeman in the communist period] inside his brain,” said a Romanian writer in the 1980s, suggesting how censorship begins with the author who anticipates the official reaction since the inception of his creation.

There are different types of censorship according to the artistic medium and to the mechanisms the regimes use. In Romania, censorship — especially before 1977, which marks its official dismantlement — was highly specialized, with different censors for each domain, as “different types of specialized censors supervised publishing houses, film houses, audio recordings, theaters, philharmonics and operas ... and in radio and television these were the most numerous.”

Cinematographic censorship was quite different from theater and literary censorship. The regimes can choose to openly forbid certain contents (preventive censorship), to alter the artistic message (mutilating it so as to allow its circulation) or to allow its transmission (semi-censorship) by rendering it inaccessible (or accessible to a limited public) whether by an exorbitant price (unaffordable), a limited time-span (unattainable). Furthermore, censorship can act a posteriori, when an artistic work has been already released, sliding between the pre-established requirements. In Romania a posteriori censorship was also applied to artists, and writers once they emigrated and whose works were thereafter erased from col-

lective memory — their works simply disappeared.

We Don't Have Censorship

In a first phase, that of establishment of the dictatorial regimes, repression meant primarily exclusion – negation of what was there before. Artists (together with the rest of intellectuals) were eliminated physically (killed, imprisoned, sent into exile) and institutionally (through persecution). This series of eliminations aimed at individuals was accompanied by the nuisance of censorship of their works, which differs accordingly, to each artistic expression. In Chile, while only literary and cinematographic censorship was codified, political control was doubled by a strong economic punishment through the imposition of high taxes — around 20% for books, theater shows and cinema.

The arbitrariness of the dictatorial regimes is perhaps best described by the words of the Chilean actor Hector Noguera: “There are no criteria so you have to decide how much you are prepared to risk. That’s why there is no censorship. If there was, you could study the guidelines before doing a production. But this arrangement allows them to say that we don’t have censorship. They decide if it is cultural or not.”

The regimes use isolated severe punishments (Pintilie’s play, the burning of the theater of La Feria, the exile of Aleph) as a warning to the rest of the artistic world – they do not have to do it repeatedly as the example prevents the others from acting. Increasingly, self-censorship eases the tasks of the censors as artists themselves become their own censors, anticipating what could be erased, forbidden or what could make the work of art “pass.”

The OAS: The Forgotten Continent's Forgotten Organization

Samuel Cuzman

Can the Organization of American States agree on reforms to the approach of regional governance?

Latin America is home to 14 different regional international organizations, which often espouse overlapping goals and have similar members. Among these, probably the best developed is the Organization of American States (OAS), which recently concluded its⁴⁴ annual summit in Paraguay's Asuncion. Unfortunately, like many things coming from Latin America, coverage of the event was close to nil in international media outlets. It comes as no surprise then that Michael Reid, The Economist's Latin America column editor, once called it "the forgotten continent."

Congress of American Republics

The OAS is one of the oldest international organizations in the world. Its origins can be traced back to Simon Bolivar's proposal in 1826 to create a congress of American republics on supranational terms. Even if his exact vision was unsuccessful, the grains of further Latin American integration were already planted. Today's organization was founded in 1948 following the signing of the Charter of the Organization of American States under the guidance of the US, officially signaling the shift from British to American hegemony in the hemisphere.

From the beginning, the purpose of the organization was three-fold: increase trade, encourage the peaceful resolution of disputes, and safeguard human rights. To this end, the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man was adopted in 1948, making

it the world's first human rights instrument, predating the United Nations Charter by more than half a year. In true post-war euphoria, the member countries rushed to expand the OAS' institutions and reach. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) was established, along with a comprehensive legal system and a tribunal with judicial powers, which was tasked with protecting human rights among the signing parties.

Over the years, hemispheric cooperation became increasingly elusive inside the organization, as its members drifted apart — caught up in the Cold War's binary logic. After an initial few promising decades, the OAS slowly fell into disarray, primarily due to declining commitment from its members.

Human Rights Promotion

For example, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (also known as the Rio Treaty), which addressed questions of regional and collective security, was famously invoked to support the American blockade during the Cuban missile crisis, sparking controversies of unjust bias and US meddling. A number of states have since left the Treaty, with the final blow coming in 2012 when the ALBA countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela) denounced it and retreated from its framework.

More political integration was hampered by the divisive attitude of the US toward the left-leaning governments of Latin America. Even once-stalwart allies of Washington in the region, such as Venezuela and Argentina, have begun to see increasing levels of anti-American feeling, leaving the OAS

powerless to act.

Instead, the organization has chosen to focus more on human rights promotion, through its most visible organism, the Tribunal of the IACHR. According to a study published by Ezequiel Malarino, a visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has consistently overstepped the mandate it received from member states with the San Jose Declaration. Indeed, the case file shows numerous occasions when the Court even extended the meaning of some human rights (such as property), or broadened its competences to judge controversies founded on acts that occurred before the state concerned had ratified the Charter (retroactivity).

Moreover, the IACHR has ordered states to enact or revoke certain laws. In Chile, the Court ordered the country to modify its constitution; in Uruguay it annulled a referendum; and in Guatemala it went so far as to order the building of public works, as its solution to addressing the Plan de Sanchez massacre of 1982. These repeated breaches of both the letter and spirit of the Pact of San Jose — Articles 76 and 77 clearly limit the Court's ability to unilaterally extend its mandate — have angered and alienated the signing states.

US Meddling

Unfortunately, these are not the sole issues that challenge the relevancy of the OAS. The organization has fallen out of grace with many members, who have denounced it as an American pawn in the region that is preoccupied with promoting Washington's own interests, and perceived as being out of touch with the needs of its still-developing members. Indeed, upon further scrutiny, such accusations seem to hold water. Many Latin American countries contend that the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (SRFE), created at Washington's behest inside the IACHR, has been used by the US to fuel political dissent in the

hemisphere.

Keeping true to the way the Court has expanded its mandate and sought to unilaterally define human rights, the SRFE has championed ideas that are seen as legal neocolonialism — the practice of using legal means to achieve control over the destiny of Latin America. The best-known example is the El Universo case, where Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa sued Emilio Palacio under the country's defamation laws, after the journalist published an article arguing that the former had committed crimes against humanity by fabricating the failed coup d'état of 2010. Before suing, the president asked Palacio to run a correction on the article, which he refused. Correa went on to win the case, only to issue a presidential pardon.

Throughout the legal saga, the case received widespread criticism from the SRFE, with Oswaldo Ruiz-Chiriboga, a former senior staff attorney of the IACHR, even arguing that the "rapporteurship should not be allowed to essentially declare a violation of human rights before the Commission decides the case. This is a basic due process rule to guarantee the forum's impartiality."

Furthermore, the fact that the SRFE receives virtually all of its funding from Washington, and has access to five times more money than any other rapporteur, raises some legitimate questions. For instance, why should the oversight of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights or socio-economic human rights be awarded fewer resources, especially when Latin American countries are still trying to find a way to reconcile their own traditions with the challenges of a globalized world. Moreover, the Office of the SRFE negates the idea that all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and equal, since the IACHR has failed to explain why "freedom of expression needs special protection over other rights and, moreover, why this right has a rapporteurship with many more

privileges than the other rapporteurships,” according to the same Oswaldo Ruiz-Chiriboga.

As goes for the US, its reluctance to sign most international human rights documents, including the IACHR’s Pact of San Jose, has left the country outside the reach of any supranational oversight. In this case, why should the headquarters of the IACHR be based in Washington DC, when the host country itself does not recognize the body’s authority?

Rethinking Objectives

An initiative put forth by the ALBA countries in 2011, and championed by Ecuador, sought to make the system more accountable and efficient. The countries argued for the creation of a single, common fund, which would collect all donations for the IACHR and ensure an equitable distribution across all the different rapporteurs. Also, moving the headquarters out of Washington DC and into a signatory country of the Pact of San Jose would also increase the legitimacy and outreach of the OAS. Correa has correctly pointed out that only seven Latin American countries have signed and agreed to be bound by all regional instruments of human rights — an untenable position if closer integration is sought.

Efforts to reform the organization thus far have been largely unsuccessful, as

the recent Paraguay summit clearly illustrates. The ALBA proposal received the cold shoulder from other members and was replaced with a declaration of support for dialogue, as well as a “call for the IACHR to consider holding sessions outside its offices in Washington.” The sole positive development was the overwhelming support for Cuba’s inclusion in the OAS, which was blocked by the US for decades. Most Latin American countries vowed to withdraw from next year’s summit, if Havana is not allowed to participate.

The OAS and the IACHR, far from being the region’s guiding force — like the European Union, for instance — have taken a nanny-state type approach in the issue of regional governance. In lack of deepening intra-continental cooperation, the notion of protecting human rights became the *raison d’être* for the OAS. Unfortunately, the brutal methods used to promote these objectives have severely shaken the members’ trust in the body.

Article 2 of the OAS Charter declares that the organization’s purposes should be achieved by “respecting the principle of nonintervention.” Some serious soul-searching is needed in Latin America, if these words are to ring true once again. The first step for policymakers should be to re-read what the organization was meant to stand for.

Argentina and the Economic Crisis Cliff

Nicolas Sarlenga

After a period of sustained economic growth, Argentina faces a series of challenges to avoid a new economic crisis.

Amid an important devaluation of its currency, and with its central bank rapidly losing reserves, Argentina is entering a critical stage as it attempts to avoid a new economic crisis. In November 2013, Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner decided to limit her public appearances and delegate to new ministers. Economy Minister Axel Kicilloff and Chief Minister Jorge Capitanich were tasked with revising the economic course of a government that is starting to show weaknesses. Today, not only is the Argentine public worried, but so too is the international community.

Consumption Over Growth

The forced devaluation of Argentina's official exchange rate, restrictions on the currency exchange market, inflation, and flaws in transport and infrastructure are the worst sides of an economic model that has prioritized consumption over sustainable growth. International indexes reflect that since 2003, the Kirchners' economic policies have been based on high levels of public expenditure, subsidies and soaring levels of consumption, which have helped the country's gross domestic product (GDP) increase at a surprising rate.

However, politicians and economists knew this model would not last forever. By maintaining a high growth rate and high levels of consumption, much needed changes that should have accompanied Argentina's progress were

put off. Plans to upgrade the country's infrastructure, as well as adopting incentives on private investment and programs for a better exploitation of Argentina's natural resources were shelved. In 2006, Néstor Kirchner's former economic minister had warned:

“There's a big risk [in decisions that the presidential office has to make], that is to accumulate mistakes that won't be noticed in the short-term ... I don't know which is the course of politics, but I can notice a temptation to give easy subsidies or to assume from the public sector investments that could be done by the private sector.”

From 2008, the ruling party has covered its deficiencies with a set of unorthodox measures that have aimed to keep economic variables balanced, but at the same time undermine the government's credibility. The Argentine government has altered its official statistic indexes; forced price agreements with the private sector; created restrictions on imports and the currency exchange market; expropriated an oil company, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales; and implemented diverse measures in order to maintain good levels of consumption and growth.

But a very high international soybean price and the discovery of new energy resources in the province of Neuquén (Vaca Muerta) encouraged the government to incorrectly assume that adjustments were not needed. Until 2013, rises in salaries exceeded inflation rates, even by the private sector's standards. The Kirchners' economic model remained successful, although it was increasingly convoluted and complex. However, none of these solutions resolved the real problem.

Following the re-election of President Fernandez in 2011, cracks began to surface: a widening deficit; the failure of local industries to meet demand; deficient and outdated infrastructure; and a lack of investment in the labor market. Over time, Argentina's growth was simply not enough to sustain the country's demands. In fact, since 2010, Argentina has spent millions of dollars from its central bank reserves on trying to import energy, as big cities and industries have suffered power outages. Moreover, on February 22, 2012, a tragic accident in one of Buenos Aires' train stations left 52 people dead. Evidence later showed the train had an outdated braking system, while the station had poorly constructed barriers that failed to stop the incoming train. A lack of investment and high levels of corruption are still being investigated by local authorities.

Even worse, economists often agree that growth generates certain levels of inflation. This phenomenon is natural and controlled when growth is sustainable and part of a solid economic strategy. But when growth is based only on consumption, high inflation ends up being a very bad symptom for a country. According to calculations by Argentine opposition parties, inflation in 2013 stood at 28%, one of the highest in the world. For the current year, union representatives have already declared they will not accept less than a 30% increase in salaries.

During the first quarter of 2014, the government decided to devalue its currency and remove some controls it had introduced to ban Argentines from exchanging pesos into dollars. Furthermore, efforts are being made to obtain international credit but first, Argentina must strike a deal with its existing credi-

tors. Recently, an agreement was signed with the Paris Club in expectation that this will pave the way for new loans.

An Out of Touch President?

Another landmark in terms of international debt and access to credit will be the decision that the US Supreme Court has to make in a case between the government and a fund that holds Argentine debt. Argentina has already stated that losing the case could force a new default. On the other hand, if the country manages to win that case, the situation could change significantly.

However, hopes for the region and the country will be high, if Argentina manages to fix its economy with a solid plan. The current economic situation was self-generated by an irresponsible policy that needs to be corrected by the Fernandez government. A key task will be to regain credibility in the eyes of the international community, private investors and among its own population. In failing to do so, no economic plan will be able to save Argentina from a new economic crisis that could have a catastrophic impact on the nation. The most difficult thing for the government will be to retrace all of its bad decisions and rebuild confidence.

The outlook does not look good with a president that has decided to take a back seat. Argentines are beginning to think that Fernandez is out of touch and has no strategy in place whatsoever. National elections will be held next year and the president could very well suffer a loss at the polls. The result will be determined by the way Fernandez's administration handles the economic crisis.

Bolivia Has Failed to Keep Its Promise on Indigenous Rights

Jessika Eichler

A critical look at Evo Morales' disguised support of right-wing politics in Bolivia.

On October 12, Bolivians elected President Evo Morales for a third time. In office since 2006, he serves the longest tenure of any democratically elected government in Bolivia since the military coup of 1982. Sixty-one percent of multinational and multiethnic Bolivians supported the Movement for Socialism (MAS) and Morales as its indigenous representative. The elections were characterized by highly fragmented opposition parties that lacked new ideas and could not counter Morales' popular slogan: "process of change."

This motto explains all three of his electoral victories. However, the meaning of the slogan has changed over the course of the president's time in office. In 2006, it meant hope for indigenous rights, and for social transformation and recognition of a multiethnic state. Morales became the world's first indigenous president and kept his promise. His first term was shaped by extensive constitutional reform. It resulted in the Political Constitution of the State in 2008 and considered Bolivia's "plurinational" character and indigenous peoples' rights. This entailed building a legal culture of multinational conviviality and the establishment of an indigenous rights catalog.

Yet Morales' victory further fosters one particular kind of indigeneity. Morales comes from the Andes, and represents mainly the Aymara and Quechua peoples of the highlands. Indigenous lowland peoples have not only encountered difficulties in being represented

in the Andean capital, La Paz; lowland nations such as Guaranís and Chiquitanos were subject to hydrocarbon and mining activities without prior consultation. Affected Mojeño, Trinitario, Yuracaré and Chimanes peoples did not participate in decisions on the large-scale infrastructure project — the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) — in their territories.

Means to an End

The process of change also implied leftist policies, as well as the reduction of transnational corporations. Morales actively combated US influence and expelled the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from the country. Bolivia's alliance with Venezuela and Cuba exemplified the president's ideological outlook. Internationally, he became known as an advocate for sustainability and pachamama "mother earth" rhetoric representing the Andean-indigenous belief in socio-ecological principles. Particularly in his first term, Morales defended indigenous peoples' rights and the buen vivir (good living) worldview, an alternative to development. Soon Morales' environmental and sustainability concerns would only be expressed in front of an international audience and disappear in Bolivia.

Morales' first election pledge included the nationalization of hydrocarbons and re-foundation of Bolivia's biggest petrol company, YPF. However, 85% of the country's hydrocarbon production remained under the control of multinational companies such as Petrobras and Repsol. At the same time, extractive activities continue to be realized without the constitutionally estab-

lished prior consultation of indigenous peoples and respect for the environment — various hydrocarbon projects in the Chaco region of Bolivia reveal this trend. Many multinational companies such as TOTAL E&P Bolivie, Gazprom, Pluspetrol, Easter, GTLI and Global Bolivia have taken advantage of this implementation gap. The failing of institutional reforms in the judiciary in the form of political submissions of judges and corrupt practices also exemplify unfulfilled campaign pledges.

The president's slogan, "process of change," continued to be important in his second term. This time it included a different agenda. It meant an alliance with hydrocarbon and mining corporations, the improvement of the banking, agribusiness and other entrepreneurial sectors to the detriment of social equality and human rights. Political and civil rights, such as freedom of expression and association, were encountered by severe assaults on the part of police forces. Fundamental due process rights are repeatedly violated, specifically in relation to Morales' political opponents. In short, the MAS converted into a right-wing party in disguise: anti-indigenous policies and neoliberal market fundamentalism reflect this change of ideology. The period was marked by social protests and inconsistencies in Morales' alleged pro-indigenous policies. His own ranks expressed serious concern.

The process of change converted into a call for economic growth and absence of social transformation. As a consequence, previous MAS members changed allegiance and moved on to new political parties to represent Morales' original ideology. On the one hand, the Movement Without Fear (MSM) tried to establish a form of urban left-wing policies. On the other, the Green Party of Bolivia (PVB) represented opposition to Morales' controversial infrastructure project through the indigenous territory and protected area TIPNIS.

Bolivians considered his third electoral victory as inevitable, as fragmented and unorganized opposition parties cleared the way for Morales' third term in office. Additionally, Morales intensified his presence in all departments and received more nationwide support than ever before. Paradoxically, the perseverative process of change was reinvented as a formula for stability. In contrast to its revolutionary and transformative beginnings, MAS has become a symbol of the status quo.

Despite the lack of social change, Bolivia's majority appreciates the thwarting of long-lasting economic deterioration. Irregularities in the electoral process, as well as disrespecting indigenous and popular demands, are regarded as collateral damage. The economic development of Bolivia has become a standard excuse for the negation of social policies and enjoyment of human rights. In short, the end justifies the means in the Morales administration.

Post-Election Aftermath

To the rest of the world, Morales and his policies may seem as the embodiment of indigenous advancement at an international level. However, in light of his failed electoral promises at the national level, his re-election only paves the way to more social inequality and extension of extractive industries. Repetitive acts of violent repression of social and indigenous movements contribute to the situation of social injustice.

The president's re-election could have manifold impacts on other indigenous groups of plurinational Bolivia. In light of a progressing mining sector and recent explorations in the country's lowlands, Chiquitano peoples are most likely to be subjected to un-consulted extractive activities in their territories. Large-scale infrastructure projects without consultation of indigenous peoples and police presence in the Bolivian Amazon area further jeopardize the respect for indigenous participatory

rights. Morales' continued role over Bolivia might exacerbate inter-indigenous conflicts and human rights violations.

Finally, Morales' recent legislative reforms will bear fruit in the coming years. This includes laws that guarantee extraction of natural resources without consulting the affected population, prioritize the corporate sector and allow mining exploration without consulting indigenous peoples. It also comprehends regulations that relieve transnational companies from responsibilities in investments and legalize illegal deforestation in indigenous territories as reflected in Law No. 516 on the Promotion of Investments.

The electoral victory of the Morales administration allows a growth-led process of change, yet it jeopardizes social transformation. Social transformation needs to involve Bolivia's social movements and indigenous peoples who have been left out in recent years. It is expected that Morales' cabinet will continue adopting legislation that violates indigenous rights. The inclusion of indigenous peoples in legislative processes, in accordance with their customs and traditions, would enhance human rights in Bolivia. The time has come for the Morales administration to turn the constitution into a tangible reality for both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

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