

Make Sense

of 2016

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Fair Observer

Atul Singh (Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief)

Abul-Hasanat Siddique (Co-Founder, COO & Managing Editor)

Anna Pivovarchuk (Co-Founder, Deputy Managing Editor & Culture Editor)

Fair Observer | 461 Harbor Blvd | Belmont | CA 94002 | USA

www.fairobserver.com | info@fairobserver.com

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ABOUT FAIR OBSERVER

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

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

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Make Sense of 2016

Atul Singh

December 31, 2016

In a turbulent year, we bring together a plurality of perspectives on issues that matter, cutting across borders, backgrounds and beliefs.

Some years are more eventful than others. A few are even historic. It would be no exaggeration to claim that mantle for 2016.

Donald Trump has become president of the United States. A self-proclaimed billionaire has managed to win over the common man without releasing his tax returns. A real-estate tycoon-turned-reality-TV star will occupy a position once held by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

Most incongruously, a man who owned beauty pageants, married multiple times and has been accused of molestation is the leader of a party that opposes abortion, extols family values and believes evolution or climate change to be dangerous ideas.

These are interesting times indeed. Even the phlegmatic and pragmatic Brits have voted for Brexit. Pax Britannica, the European Union's democratic deficit and Boris Johnson's bumbling charisma seduced English voters to cast off the chains of Brussels' red tape. The Scots did not quite agree and the vote has placed not only the future of the EU in question, but also the future of the UK.

Across the Atlantic, corruption scandals in Brazil wrecked many political careers. Dilma Rousseff, the country's first female president, was impeached after a protracted process that divided the country. A government of white men replaced her with a canny insider at the helm.

Even the Rio Olympics offered little cheer. It was an expensive circus that enabled politicians, contractors, international sports officials, television channels and sellers of consumer goods to laugh all the way till the bank, while ordinary citizens who could not afford to buy tickets to the games have been left with the bill.

It turns out that bills have been rising around the world. Families are now paying more for rents, schooling, childcare and health care — from Mumbai and Shanghai to New York and São Paulo. Even as the global economy continues to be sluggish, stock markets and house prices continue to rise. This makes the rich richer. It also increases inequality. With jobs hard to find, social mobility has also declined in most countries. At the same time, debt has ballooned to over \$199 trillion according to McKinsey. Even the Chinese have a debt problem, with their banks sitting on hundreds of billions if not trillions of nonperforming assets.

As economic woes continue, so does conflict. Aleppo marked new lows even for the brutal Syrian Civil War. Under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey is now fighting both the Kurds and the Islamic State. Terror attacks continue as angry young men heed any charismatic cleric with a call to tilt at the windmills of injustice for radical ideologies that promise Utopia in this world and heaven thereafter.

These ideologies are offering certitude in a world of uncertainty. The speed, scale and scope of change in society have increased exponentially. Automation might be wonderful in some ways, but it destroys working-class jobs. Artificial intelligence could lead to new technological achievements, but many college graduates may find they are no longer needed in the workforce.

Mark Zuckerberg might believe he is connecting the world, but Facebook along with Twitter, Instagram and other social media have decimated reading habits, put the mind in Brownian motion and created echo chambers, which can be toxic as the fake news controversy over the US elections demonstrates.

As technology marches forward, the environment marches backward. The planet is hotter and more polluted than ever. Species are going extinct by the day and vertebrate populations are dropping catastrophically. The Living Planet Report 2016 revealed that numbers of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish have declined by 58% from 1970 to 2012. Freshwater populations have experienced the steepest decline, falling by an alarming 81%.

This year has proved that the issues we face are important and complex. Like last year's edition, *Make Sense of 2016* provides you with a plurality of perspectives on these issues. It has some of our best articles of the year. The e-book is meant for

students, academics, diplomats, business professionals and all who see themselves as global citizens.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and look forward to publishing your perspective in 2017.

**Atul Singh is the founder, CEO and editor-in-chief of Fair Observer.*



AFRICA

Africa Needs to Focus on Sound Immigration Policies

Anna Twum

January 19, 2016

Africa is on the fast track of economic growth, but the continent must reform its internal immigration policies.

In 2015, [South Africa](#) was shocked by [xenophobic attacks](#), a startling déjà vu of similar attacks in 2008 that led to the killing of over 60 South Africans and was met with worldwide condemnations. Following that, at least five foreigners were killed and thousands forced to seek refuge.

This brings the issue of immigration in South Africa to the forefront, but also provides an opportunity to analyze the current state and future of immigration policy on the African continent in the face of unequal economic growth among nations and changing cross-country immigration dynamics.

Since the continent's wave of independence, African governments and regional organizations have done very little to address immigration policy within Africa. For many governments, the facts on the nature and consequences of immigration are largely unknown, and the appropriate language and policy frameworks for tackling this inevitable aspect of the economy and society of African countries are largely non-existent. Even with government focus on remittances, other key aspects of immigration policy are severely underdeveloped or are focused more on the diaspora. This is in sharp contrast to the realities of immigration on the continent.

Immigration is an African story. The press around African immigration tends to be focused on immigration of Africans to the Global North. However, according to a [World Bank report](#), the number of African immigrants who move to other African countries are in the majority two-thirds of total immigration in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This intra-Africa immigration is attributed to lower immigration costs and lack of resources and the skills needed to succeed in more competitive labor markets outside of the continent.

Over the last three decades, the most common destinations for African immigrants have been Côte d'Ivoire and [Nigeria](#) in West Africa, Gabon in Central Africa, [Kenya](#) in East Africa, and South Africa in southern Africa. According to the same report, immigrants tend to be mainly young African males (15-40 years), with some level of education beyond the primary level, whose main reasons for migrating are to seek employment, education and for family reasons.

UNEQUAL GROWTH

Given the challenges with obtaining data on immigration and the proliferation of informal immigration channels, it is very plausible that these numbers only capture part of the story that has and will continue to take on different dimensions in the face of Africa's other more sensational story: African growth.

In recent years, the African continent has been described as the next hub of growth and the new frontier market. With a continent-wide average [GDP growth rate](#) of 4% in recent years, this notion is empirically supported. However, a look at country level economic data tells a story of masked unequal growth, high levels of unemployment, and persistent poverty in many African countries. In addition, some African countries are still plagued with political instability and drawn out effects of civil war and terrorism.

Against this backdrop of challenges and inequality, many affected Africans are increasingly drawn to the relative stability of their sister countries with hopes that they can reap the benefits of better job security, education and standard of living. However, inside the borders of prime immigrant destination countries, the hopes of migrants are met with the struggles of locals who are also looking for hope and opportunity. This growing dichotomy has the potential to pose serious economic, policy and social challenges for immigrants and destination countries.

Immigration policies for African immigrants in many African countries has been shaped by reactions and sentiments to mismanaged immigration systems that fail to address the immigration challenges at their core, or fail to proactively nurture the benefits that can accrue to a well-managed immigration system.

A case in point is the [mass expulsions](#) of immigrants of African ancestry—from Ghana in 1969, Nigeria in 1983, and Côte d'Ivoire early in the past decade—which resulted in economic and social upheaval. These expulsions were largely motivated by growing impatience with undocumented African immigrants, and failed to fully tackle the problem of border control, unaffordable documentation processes and trafficking.

CREATING CHANGE

This poor structuring and management of immigration has a catalytic effect on xenophobic sentiments toward other Africans. As immigrant flows to and from other African countries continue under shaky immigration frameworks, locals more readily cast African immigrants under stereotypes of “illegal,” “criminal” and “free rider.” What this does, in addition to the unacceptable and tragic loss of life, is create a hostile environment among citizens, which can undermine any sort of regional, inter- or intra-country cooperation.

Realizing that immigration is an African story with accompanying policies that are lacking is the first step to creating change. The next step, and where a good number of challenges also lie, is mobilizing a concerted effort among African nations to facilitate better immigration policies for immigration flows across African country borders.

This is where the African Union (AU) and other African regional groups come in. In recent years, there have been working groups on internal immigration policies, and the AU has published some [reports](#). However, action is forthcoming.

The work of other non-African nations who face immigration challenges can serve as a blueprint for these efforts, but ultimately the focus needs to be on creating homegrown continental policies that African countries can use as a benchmark for their own immigration frameworks. With Africa on the fast track of economic growth, immigration within the African continent is becoming more nuanced. There has never been a better time to take action.

**Anna Twum is a research analyst at the International Monetary Fund. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Hidden Dragons in Sino-African Relations

Hugo Norton

February 5, 2016

China-Africa relations grow to be even more complicated after crucial events in 2015.

Powerful nations tend to balk at criticism that they meddle in the affairs of other states, professing to only involve themselves in issues that affect their interests, or those which take place in their own backyard. But as rich countries grow into superpowers, the size of their backyard grows exponentially. If a recent law passed in China is any indication, then it seems that the burgeoning superpower is readying itself militarily to embark upon a massive extension of its sphere of interest.

The [counterterrorism law](#), rubber stamped in December 2015, allows Chinese forces to conduct counterterrorism operations overseas for the first time. With Beijing ramping up its presence in Africa, what does this new law say about future Chinese involvement on the continent?

ACTIVE CHINA

In keeping with this new mandate, the Chinese marine corps began [desert training exercises in Xinjiang province](#), over 2000 kilometers from the sea. This is an indication that authorities in Beijing are increasingly worried about the continued strife in the Muslim-majority province and eager to make a show of force to head off any [potential separatist movement](#).

Of greater unease to Western capitals, these maneuvers also send a message that the Chinese are projecting their power in the strengthening and conditioning of their marines, capable of rapid deployment anywhere in the world. Seeing as how Beijing has expanded its military patrols off the Horn of Africa, the choice of a sandy environment for the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) first mock battleground becomes even more obvious.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army is limbering up to defend the homeland's commercial interests, as Beijing is rolling out along the proposed [One Belt, One Road](#) (OBOR) project. This 21st century redux of the ancient land and sea routes by which China traded with the world is set to see north of a trillion dollars of Chinese state-backed investment in the coming decades, much of it going into volatile political regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Pakistan. It is no surprise that Beijing wants to ensure it has the military capacity to protect its investments.

Arguably, the lynchpin in the OBOR project is the tiny East African nation of Djibouti, where China's first overseas military base is currently being built. Already home to [US, Italian, Japanese, German and French bases](#), the Chinese are attracted to Djibouti for the same reason all are: as an outpost for ensuring safe passage of oil shipments from the Persian Gulf, as well as unfettered access to the Red Sea and Suez Canal.

Vital as Djibouti will become to the successful functioning the OBOR in Asia, it also marks the thin-end of the wedge for China's involvement in Africa. [China has been investing heavily in Africa](#) over the past 15 years and is now its biggest trade partner, outstripping the European Union and the United States.

Wherever natural resources are to be found, Chinese companies have moved in to build the necessary infrastructure to mine and transport them back to China. Significant examples include the \$12 billion coastal railway in Nigeria, [China's largest foreign contract to date](#), and a deal worth over \$7 billion to swap infrastructural development for access to copper and cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite the tangible benefits from such mega-projects, China has come under fire from observers for its no-questions-asked approach, which is seen as legitimizing autocratic governments and undermining human rights and environmental standards.

As this author has written [before at Fair Observer](#), Djibouti is one such example. Buoyed by Chinese investment, which has offset the rather stabilizing American presence, the government of President Ismail Omar Guelleh has become increasingly autocratic. In December 2015, security forces killed [19 activists and opposition figures](#) in the bloodiest clash with pro-democracy elements in years. Djibouti has also stepped up its aggressive [harassment of journalists](#), arresting and torturing two prominent figures. The situation has taken a turn for the worse, and will probably

degrade even further ahead of the April polls. While the US issued a stern communiqué [condemning the violence](#), China, naturally, has kept silent.

LOSING THE WAR FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

The extent to which ordinary Africans actually benefit from China's growing presence is, therefore, limited. So far, China has been more interested in making friends with the ruling class and not, in fact, with the *hoi polloi*. While billions were flowing to the coffers of presidential palaces, over [a million Chinese immigrants](#) moved to Africa to work on projects, depriving local Africans of much needed employment. As a result, anti-Chinese sentiment is rising.

In [Angola](#), the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), a militant group fighting for independence for Cabinda, the oil rich region of the country, has demanded that all Chinese workers leave the region or risk being "severely punished." Add to this the [killing of three Chinese executives in Mali](#) last November by Islamist terrorists and one might wonder how long it will be before China's policy of nonintervention is put to the test in Africa.

This is only exacerbated by China's economic reorientation away from resource heavy manufacturing toward a Western consumption-based model, resulting in [a slump in commodity prices—hitting African economies hard](#) and sparking fears that Beijing would retreat from the continent. Fears were allayed by the recent [China-Africa Cooperation](#) Summit in Johannesburg, where China committed to \$60 billion in further development, up significantly from the \$20 billion pledged at the last meeting in 2012.

Again, the money will come with no strings attached, and there are signs that a backlash is stirring against the Chinese development model, which seems to consider Africa as a place where it can get away with practices that would be illegal elsewhere. The highly touted [contract to develop bauxite mines in Guinea](#), for example, only came about after Indonesia and Australia closed their doors to Chinese companies on environmental grounds. Malaysia is also [considering shutting](#) down its bauxite industry, after Chinese demand led to the creation of huge illegal operations that leveled forests and farms, infested waters with mercury and arsenic, and exposed thousands to carcinogens.

From expanding its counterterrorism capabilities, to building a military outpost in Djibouti, to rising anti-Chinese sentiment, Beijing will soon discover that moving forward the posts of its African backyard is easier said than done.

**Hugo Norton is an Africa policy analyst and advisor at an economic consultancy firm in Brussels. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Italy's History in Africa is a Messy Affair

Fasil Amdetsion

September 16, 2016

In the first of a three-part series, Fasil Amdetsion looks at the evolution of Italy's relationship with its former colonies in the Horn of Africa.

Earlier this year, Italy hosted the first ever Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference in Rome. Held at the cavernous travertine-laden Farnesina headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting was attended by high-level delegations from over 40 African countries.

In his closing remarks, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi underscored his intention of broadening political and economic ties with the African continent, by [voicing his hope](#) for a “future in which Africa is seen not as the greatest threat—as some demagogues would have it—but as the greatest opportunity.”

The conference, which is intended to be a biennial affair, and Renzi's visits to sub-Saharan Africa (the first ever by a sitting Italian premier) reflect the Italian government's commitment to reinvigorating the relationship.

MUTUAL BENEFITS

Italy has been late to realize the mutual benefits that can accrue from a more robust partnership with Africa. Even though it is the world's eighth largest economy, and Africa's sixth or seventh most significant trading partner, Italy's postwar political

engagement with the continent has been [episodic](#), and commercial exchanges are below their potential.

Other countries have realized much sooner that regular high-level political dialogue featuring targeted discussions about trade and development could spur investment. China and India, for example, both hold triennial summits with African leaders, whereas the United States holds the biennial US-Africa Business Summit. The French arrange an annual Africa-France Summit, Japan regularly organizes the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, and Turkey has periodically spearheaded summits with continental leaders.

What accounts for Italy's laggardness to date?

Italy's insularity and relative economic underdevelopment explains Italian officialdom's comparatively low level of engagement with Africa post-World War II. Political instability wrought by constant changes in government—63 since 1945—also stunted long-term strategic thinking at la Farnesina.

Moreover, at varying times and to varying degrees, Italy's former colonial possessions—and their relationship with Rome—were beset with problems, some of their own making, others attributable to Italy. As a result, for most of the postwar period, Italy, unlike Britain or France, could not use its former colonies as a launch pad for strengthening political and business ties elsewhere on the continent.

Understanding the factors impeding closer ties between Italy and the sub-Saharan African countries with which it had historical ties requires understanding the nature of Italy's postwar exchanges with Eritrea (an Italian colony from 1890 to 1941); Somalia (Italian Somaliland comprising most of modern-day Somalia was a colony from 1889-1941, it continued to be ruled by the Italians under a United Nations trusteeship until 1960 when, at independence, it was conjoined to British Somaliland); and Ethiopia (occupied, but never fully pacified, from 1936 to 1941).

ERITREA

The Italian community in Eritrea was mostly nestled in the picturesque capital, Asmara. Initially a settlement of a mere 150 inhabitants, Asmara was officially founded as a town when the governor of the then Ethiopian Mereb Mellash province, Ras Alula,

opted to make it his new capital. When it fell under Italian rule, Asmara blossomed. In a bid to turn it into Africa's "Little Rome," the Italians expended significant resources to modernize the city's infrastructure and to beautify it with Art Deco architecture for which it is renowned to this day.

The colony's most prominent Italian businessmen made Asmara and its environs their home. These included figures like Barattolo, who got his start in the textile sector, opening a single factory employing a mere 200 workers and eventually growing his business to around 10,000 workers.

Emma Melotti was certainly the region's most prominent female entrepreneur. After her husband's passing, she took over his namesake brewery, and under her sapient stewardship, Melotti came to dominate the Ethiopian market through a network which enveloped even remote villages. Melotti was also available throughout the region, being sold in Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Yemen and Kenya.

ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN FEDERATION

The first snag in relations between Eritrea and the Italian community—principal propulsor of relations—emerged soon after Eritrea was re-conjoined to Ethiopia under a federal arrangement in 1952, as mandated by United Nations (UN) Resolution 390 (V). Previously Ethiopian, then colonized by the Italians, and after World War II a British protectorate, Eritrea was federated to Ethiopia upon the condition that Eritrean institutions bequeathed by the British—such as the legislature and courts—would continue to function unimpeded.

This resolution of the Eritrean issue via federation—though temporary it later turned out to be—occurred in spite of competing formulas floated by other states at the UN. Among those opposed to the federal arrangement, for instance, was Italy. Though Italy's post-World War II government may have been post-fascist, it was not postcolonial.

Rome favored a solution where Eritrea remained an Italian colony; and barring that, advocated that Italy continue to administer Eritrea under UN trusteeship. Ultimately resigned to the fact that neither of these proposals would garner sufficient support, Italy called for Eritrean independence. Indeed, during this time, Ethiopia and Italy financially

supported rival (and armed) groups—pro-union on the one hand, pro-independence on the other.

Ethiopian diplomats secured a diplomatic coup by obtaining sufficient international support for the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation, but the same imperial government also helped sow the seeds of the two countries' eventual separation.

In a pique of royal obstinacy and heavy-handedness, and only 10 years after consummation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation, Emperor Haile Selassie, unwisely going against the counsel of some of his advisers, forcibly dissolved the federal arrangement. His decision subsumed Eritrea into the unitary Ethiopian state and gave further impetus to Eritrean agitation for secession.

THE DERG

The beginnings of armed resistance, and the consequent instability in Eritrea, began to hinder Italian (and, indeed, all) commercial activity. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)—a precursor to today's governing Eritrean People's Liberation Front—for instance, regularly engaged in extortion by levying “taxes” on agricultural land concessions run by Italians.

The coming to power in 1974 of Ethiopia's military government, the Derg, in 1974, made the business environment particularly inhospitable for Italians; most private enterprises were nationalized and expropriated. The Derg's decision to close all foreign consulates in Eritrea, including the Italian consulates in Asmara and the port town of Massawa, further hastened the Italian exodus.

In one particular act of ruffianism, Derg functionaries went so far as to break into the then vacated Italian consulate in Asmara and temporarily occupied its premises. The final nail in the coffin of a continued Italian presence in Eritrea was the then province's envelopment by civil war throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, much like Eritrea, the “vanguard” of Italo-Ethiopian ties were Italian residents. The Italian community thrived due to its industriousness and ingenuity. Its prosperity, however, was also enabled by Haile Selassie's injunction prohibiting retribution against Italians who had not committed war crimes.

Among the most successful businessmen entrepreneurs were Mario Buschi, who was involved in public works and ran a company with boats for hire on Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile; or Mezzedimi, the Italian architect responsible for designing a number of buildings that came to dominate Addis Ababa's postwar urban landscape, including the UN Economic Commission for Africa's sprawling Africa Hall.

Such commercial activity occurred in spite of what were often lukewarm political ties between the two countries. Closer postwar relations between the two governments were inhibited for several reasons.

In the first instance, stalled negotiations over payment of reparations hindered the establishment of closer ties. Italy reneged on its obligation to pay Ethiopia \$25 million for war damages and moral harm, as laid out in the 1947 Treaty of Peace. Indeed, at one point, the negotiating positions of both parties seemed irreconcilable. The Italian government maintained that it owed Ethiopia no money, because any moral or physical harm caused by Italy's five-year occupation of the country was supposedly outweighed by public works the Italians had built. Ethiopia countered that Italy's egregious war crimes warranted that it pay above and beyond the \$25 million stipulated by the peace treaty.

Giuliano Cora, an Italian journalist who at the time commented on the absurdity of this diplomatic impasse, rhetorically asked: "Do we really have to compromise our situation and our future in this region for want of \$25 million?" It appears that the Italian government was prepared to do so.

Ultimately, Italy secured the better bargain. Addis Ababa agreed to a lower figure of \$16.3 million and the payments occurred under the guise of "technical and financial assistance" for the construction of a dam not far from the capital and a textile mill in the town of Bahir Dar. No mention was ever made of reparations.

Even with this hurdle cleared, another remained: restitution of the 1,700-year-old Axum obelisk, which the Italians had plundered during the occupation. To placate Addis Ababa, Italy offered to build a hospital or an interstate road, in exchange for the uncontested "right" to retain this concrete reminder of its colonial past. Here, too, Italy conveniently forgot that the 1947 treaty mandated the obelisk's return.

The saga finally ended in 2005 when Italy bore the costs of surgically slicing the obelisk into three parts, so as to have it transported back to Axum in three trips aboard an Antonov plane. Ironically, it was Silvio Berlusconi's center-right government (whose governing coalition included neo-fascists) that made amends.

Italy still retains other important wartime loot, most importantly a portion of Ethiopia's prewar Ministry of the Pen archives that appears to be within the custody of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This issue has been forgotten by both sides. The government of Ethiopia ought to try [secure the archives' return](#).

HAILE SELASSIE'S IMAGINATION

The most curious stumbling block to closer postwar Italy-Ethiopia relations, however, was the delay by Rome in extending an official invitation to the emperor to visit Italy. The Ethiopian monarch fervently wanted to revisit the country he had last seen in 1924 as regent. His trip had been perennially postponed due to a disagreement over a number of issues, including negotiations over reparations and the Axum obelisk; as well as the impolitic decision by the Italians, at one point, of scheduling Haile Selassie's visit for shortly *after* the planned visit of Somalia's president, at a time when the two countries were at loggerheads over disputed land.

Perhaps no two countries captured Haile Selassie's imagination as much as Italy and France. The monarch's fondness for the French is easy to comprehend. Haile Selassie was Francophone, and after an early traditional Ethiopian church education, schooled by a Guadeloupean physician and a Francophone Ethiopian Capuchin monk. But what to make of his affection for Italy on both an emotive and psychological level?

After all, it was Italy that had unseated him, and it was in Italy that his first daughter, Princess Romanework, and two of her sons had died after having been captured by the Italians.

According to Italian historian Angelo Del Boca, Haile Selassie reputedly confided to Giulio Pascucci-Righi, the Italian ambassador accredited to Addis, in 1970:

"I owe nearly everything to Great Britain. The British gave me a place to live when I chose to go into exile, and they brought me to my homeland. All the same, as it may seem, the Ethiopian people have no love for Great Britain. Only two countries are our

friends and understand us. Those countries are France and Italy. I hope that my successors will keep the faith [with regard to] this two-fold constant.”

The likelihood that the emperor’s words reflected the Ethiopian people’s state of mind after a [brutal war and occupation is close to nil](#). His pro-Italian gestures soon after the war ended could, in theory, be attributable to a desire to play off the Italians against the British.

British forces had fought together with Ethiopian patriots to dislodge the Italians and had remained behind after Ethiopia’s liberation. It is possible that Haile Selassie wanted to guard against Britain’s accumulation of undue influence in Ethiopia, and the risk that having gained such influence, Britain would wield it to declare Ethiopia a protectorate. But the words spoken to Ambassador Pascucci-Righi were purportedly spoken in 1970, years after the threat of falling under Britain’s sway had passed.

Regardless of whether the words spoken privately to the ambassador were accurately recounted by him, clearly the emperor’s attachment was heartfelt. First, because he persisted in sending signals, at times subtle and on other occasions explicit, to the press and visiting Italian officials that he was eager to receive an invitation to visit Italy.

ENEMY COUNTRY

A further example of the emperor’s sympathy for Italy occurred in the 1960s when, having dispatched a delegation to Italy, the imperial government secured a loan from a consortium of Italian banks (with the facilitation of the Italian government). The Ethiopian government submitted the loan to the senate for final approval. The Ethiopian senate, whose members included several veterans of the Italian-Ethiopian war, rejected the loan’s terms because they considered the interest rate unduly onerous.

The emperor initially responded to the senate’s recalcitrance by claiming *lèse-majesté* and rebuking legislators for still treating Italy as an “enemy country.” Ultimately, in relenting, the emperor resorted to what Cambridge historian Christopher Clapham has termed a familiar imperial stratagem employed by Haile Selassie in the face of insurmountable political opposition to a deal: professing ignorance as to its details. The loan was never disbursed for want of the senate’s approval.

The incident bore an uncanny resemblance to an earlier loan negotiation between Italy and Ethiopia. In 1889, Ras Makonnen (the emperor's father and duke of Harar), visited Italy to conclude a loan agreement on behalf of his cousin, Emperor Menelik II. Upon his return to Ethiopia, Ras Makonnen was castigated by courtiers for having agreed to a loan with interest rates that were deemed usurious, several courtiers went so far as to impugn his patriotism.

When Haile Selassie's trip to Italy finally occurred, the emperor was received with all the pomp and pageantry reserved for Italy's most illustrious postwar guests. Perhaps the most evocative scene of the trip was described by the Italian daily, *Il Giorno*, which wrote of the emperor, with his diminutive figure, standing erect in an open state vehicle side-by-side with Italian President Giuseppe Saragat, accompanied by a phalanx of fully-mounted cuirassiers whose horses' hooves click-clocked on the Roman cobblestones as the pair majestically made their way to the Quirinale Palace.

In the run-up to, and after, the emperor's 1970 visit, official Ethiopian-Italian ties were on an upswing. Following the 1974 revolution, commerce suffered another prolonged denouement; this time caused by the military government's nationalization of private enterprises and, later, the country's descent into an all-consuming civil war.

SOMALIA

In post-independence Somalia, as was the case in Ethiopia, some leaders harbored an affinity for Italy, which encouraged continued engagement. Somalia's one-time minister of planning and international cooperation, Ahmed Habib Ahmed, in words that were somewhat similar in spirit to those reportedly uttered by Haile Selassie, remarked: "[Though] I studied in France, 'my world' is Italian; the French are distant to me."

Several decades post-independence, Italian commercial involvement in Somalia centered upon agriculture. The Italians set up cotton, sugar and banana plantations and, after 1929, the year in which worldwide cotton prices collapsed, focused mostly on bananas. Bananas eventually became Somalia's most significant export.

Indeed, of the 235 Italian concessions existing in Somalia at independence, comprising more than 45,300 hectares of land, most were devoted to bananas. During their colonial suzerainty over Somalia, and for several decades following independence,

Italy gave preferential treatment to banana imports from Somalia by imposing higher tariffs on those imported from other countries.

Italy further bolstered its political position in Somalia by tilting in its favor in territorial disputes (this policy may not have been adhered to consistently given the frequent change in governments in Rome).

Almost immediately after independence, in the early 1960s, Somalia pressed territorial claims on Ethiopian-controlled territory inhabited primarily by ethnic Somalis. It did the same with regard to lands inhabited mostly by ethnic Somalis in neighboring Kenya and Djibouti, avowedly announcing pursuit of a Greater Somalia encompassing all ethnic Somalis.

Somalia lent pressure to its irredentist claims by supporting armed militias who made frequent forays into Ethiopia, where they were pursued back into Somali territory by forces led by General Aman Andom—an Eritrean who was an interesting historical figure in his own right; in charge of Ethiopian counteroffensives against Somalia, and later, briefly, head of state after Haile Selassie was toppled, before he too suffered the same unceremonious fate.

ALL-OUT WAR

In the late 1970s, Somalia and Ethiopia actually fought an all-out war over the ethnically Somali Ethiopian Ogaden province. Italy maintained an outward veneer of neutrality, but leaned toward Mogadishu, surreptitiously allowing it to purchase military helicopters, trucks and light weaponry on the Italian market. The support emanated, in part, from the fact that since Somalia had been Italy's longest-held colony, it was treated with some affection. Beyond that, it is reasonable to surmise that Italy's support for Somalia may have emanated, at least in part, from lingering bitterness over the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation—a solution to the Eritrean question which Italy had strenuously opposed.

Aside from official institutional ties, for many years Somalia also benefited from another sort of linkage with Italy: the sympathy and support of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Promotion of commercial interests and mobilization of investment in postwar Italy were not the sole province of the government, but of political parties too. The PCI,

and its competitors, jockeyed for influence at home and abroad, by supporting foreign regimes they deemed to be their ideological brethren.

Following the 1969 Somali revolution, the PCI extended cultural and technical assistance and invested in the country through Italian labor unions and affiliated entities. It provided Mogadishu with expertise and machinery to help bolster the Somali construction and agricultural sectors. Italturist, the PCI's travel and touring company, was also tasked with arranging facilitation tours for Italian tourists in Somalia.

The Italian community in Somalia thrived as a result of the good political ties between Italy and Somalia. As was the case in Ethiopia under Haile Selassie, the Italians benefited from the protection of Siad Barre, Somalia's post-revolution strongman. Barre inveighed against any harm befalling the Italians and expressed his sympathy toward Italians on more than one occasion, such as when he declared: "I have said, and have repeated, that for us Somalis, Italians are not considered foreigners; and this is a privilege which we have not extended to any other community."

At one point, Barre even assured the Italians that he was "no Gadaffi." In saying so, he was communicating to the Italians that he would refrain from following in the footsteps of the Libyan leader who had nationalized the property of Italian settlers after Libya gained its independence from Italy.

But such sweet-talking aside, as Barre fell under the Soviets' orbit and he increasingly moved his country to the left, ideology trumped his apparent affection for Italians and a spate of nationalizations followed. The local branches of the Banca di Roma and Banca di Napoli, multiple insurance firms and AGIP—the precursor to today's oil conglomerate, ENI—were among the Italian firms affected.

Though some firms and small factories were spared, the damage was done. Italian companies and most of their expatriate personnel left the country, never to return. Once Somalia spiraled into civil war, even the small Italian community that had faithfully remained behind returned to Italy.

Italy's engagement with countries in the Horn of Africa was peripatetic. In Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country, relations were frequently rocky. Disputes arose over Eritrea and the implementation of commitments undertaken by Italy at the end of World War II by signing the 1947 Treaty of Peace; more generally, it appears that for

several decades Italy struggled to come to terms with the fact that the colonial era had ended.

Italy's focus on other geopolitical priorities, Ethiopia and Somalia's adoption of economic policies that were inimical to an Italian presence, and their enmeshment in civil wars also minimized Italy's engagement with the Horn and, by extension, other African countries.

**Fasil Amdetsion is an Ethiopian lawyer with expertise in international law and international affairs. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



How Piracy Saved Somalia

Brandon Scott

March 20, 2016

Somali piracy has had unintended positive consequences—from the economy to international cooperation.

In 2009, [piracy](#) off the coast of [Somalia](#) splashed onto the global stage at near epidemic levels. The impact of Somali piracy affected the entire international community as shipping expenses soared.

The wave of piracy attacks, however, was short-lived due to a quick and comprehensive response by the international community to counter piracy and its causes.

The global response to Somalia continues today and is a reversal of 20 years of alienation prior, which made possible the country's devolution into a failed state that the world ignored and feared simultaneously. The success in countering the three-year piracy epidemic, however, shadows the success of piracy for Somalia by demanding attention and assistance for a withering nation. In effect, piracy saved Somalia.

A UNIQUE HISTORY

To understand Somali piracy, the country's history must be understood. Unlike the majority of Africa, Somalia was never truly colonized in the traditional manner. The entirety of what is historically known as Somalia has been [sliced and diced](#) over the course of a century by the Italians, Ethiopians, British, French, Kenyans and arguably its own people in the northern area known as Somaliland.

Whereas most African nations can be viewed in the chronological construct of untouched, colonized, transitioning or independent, Somalia was effectively passed through colonist hands in more of an asymmetrical way. This left Somalia fitting the profile of a foster child who has been passed from one home to another with no consistency like the other colonized countries. This particular case makes the nation highly difficult to fit into traditional colonial paradigms like other African states.

In 1956, Somalia was granted "Internal Autonomy" by its Italian colonizers. In 1960, Somalia was given full independence. From 1960 to 1969, the country saw a slew of [border conflicts and domestic political struggles](#) that left Mohamed Siad Barre as its leader. In 1970, Barre declared Somalia a socialist state with support from the Soviet Union. It seemed that Somalia was on course for being a successful Soviet client-state in a critical juncture of the world, with ample coastline and a strategic asset overall.

Barre's zealous momentum led him to strive for a "Greater Somalia." This would include the ethnic Somali territories taken by Kenya and the Ogaden region in Ethiopia. Annexing the Ogaden region would have been the final act of the "Greater Somalia" concept. However, in an ironic turn of events, it was this attempted annexation that became the downfall of Somalia as a solidified nation.

The country's leader made a drastic miscalculation when he [invaded the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region](#) of Ethiopia in 1977. Barre had hoped for a "Greater Somalia" by bringing all Somalis into the fold of a unified Somalia. Additionally, Somalia had just been hit with a draught and Barre may have been attempting to acquire more fertile ground in Ethiopia.

Surprisingly, the Soviets opted to back Ethiopia, in turn soliciting the United States to back Somalia over the Ogaden region. This fascinating conflict consisted of not only massive Soviet backing, but also support (to include large numbers of troops) from Cuba, North Korea, South Yemen and East Germany. The eight-month-long war killed

over half a million people and ended with Somalia retreating to the pre-conflict borders with its military ravished.

As Somalia lay disheveled, with its military in ruins, it entered a state of disarray. In 1978, [Somali forces were expelled from Ethiopia](#). By 1981, internal elements showed their disdain with the Barre regime and began to work against it. By 1988, a peace accord was signed with Ethiopia. The Somali people opted to oust Barre in 1991 for his failed efforts against Ethiopia and his lack of solidarity in Somalia. Internal conflict continued afterward.

The Somali state [collapsed](#) in 1991, followed by the 1994 “[Battle of Mogadishu](#)” (more commonly known as the “Black Hawk Down” incident). It was this series of events that led to the withdrawal of nearly all international actors. Somalia had been off the grid essentially for nearly two decades since 1995, with only small occasional engagements over the last decade. This near complete disengagement left the nation open to whoever had the bigger gun, with Somalia viewed as the most dangerous country in the world.

SOMALIA AS AN INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

However, it was 2006 that really began to bring the Somalia conversation to the table. The international community acknowledged that Somalia was a moment away from becoming the next Afghanistan—a geographical security vacuum where the likes of al-Qaeda or any negative influencer or violent actor could base itself and conduct operations with international reach.

The assessment was too accurate. In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a collection of Islamic law businessmen with militias, decided to take governance into their own hands and push out the chaos-causing warlords, intent on establishing an Islamic rule of law—and they were successful in securing Mogadishu.

The great irony was that Mogadishu, for the first time in 15 years, was actually stable. There was a rule of law—albeit mostly Islamic law—and certain basic services began to trickle in, and Mogadishu’s air and seaports reopened after remaining closed for over a decade. It seemed there was a fighting chance for at least the capital city to stabilize.

This [situation was far from ideal](#) in the international community's eyes, specifically the US and Europe, having just spent half a decade battling Islamist extremism and with two counterinsurgencies waging away in Iraq and Afghanistan. To the credit of Ethiopia and its Western backers, the ICU was far from a liberal organization—the rule of law was existent, but it was violently strict.

Also, the ICU was believed to be harboring a known terrorist responsible for his involvement in the US Embassy bombings in Sub-Saharan Africa. This was enough to convince the US and its allies that the ICU was not an option. This same year, [Ethiopian troops began to engage the ICU](#) to evict them from the capital in December 2006.

For all of 2007 and 2008, Ethiopian troops combined with [African Union Mission to Somalia](#) (AMISOM), “a peace keeping mission operated by the African Union in Somalia with approval by the United Nations,” secured the bulk of Mogadishu and surrounding southern Somalia. There was resistance, however, from the ICU and warlord remnants.

In January 2009, Ethiopia withdrew its forces as planned. Immediately after their withdrawal, a new organization arrived to replace them: [al-Shabab](#). Al-Shabab was essentially a more violent, extremist splinter organization from the ICU. It believed forfeiting its power and territory was sacrosanct, and it was willing to engage in all means necessary to reclaim it. In late 2009, the world watched painfully as [al-Shabab captured town after town](#), re-instilling its version of Islamic law to include executing a full attack on Mogadishu.

As 2010 arrived, a famine had struck Somalia that would last for two years, killing over a quarter million people. Simultaneously, al-Shabab was wreaking havoc on any international organization still present, and the United Nations' World Food Program had to withdraw from al-Shabab-controlled territory, leaving little to no assistance to those starving.

In February 2010, in a not-so-surprising move, al-Shabab declared its allegiance to al-Qaeda. This moment was arguably the lowest point in recent Somali history from the perspective of the international community. All the gains made by the African Union (AU) and Ethiopian forces were not only reversed back to essentially the ICU, but also territorially, an al-Qaeda franchise took over the entire southern part of the country to

include the capital. The [situation stayed unchanged for all of 2010](#) and most of 2011, as onlookers watched to decide what to do next.

THE RISE OF PIRACY AND AL-SHABAB

One important thing did change, however, though not on land. From 2009 through 2011, a piracy epidemic took hold. For three years, off the coast of Somalia, piracy incidents to include hijacking and hostage for ransom skyrocketed to unprecedented levels. Considering the vital importance of the Gulf of Aden to global maritime transportation of all nations, this was a dire scenario.

The international community immediately moved to act by deploying naval ships from several countries to the Gulf of Aden region and further out into the Indian Ocean to protect the shipping lanes. This was a watershed moment of global relations, where the world saw actors as diverse as the US, Iran, Russia, India and China come together to neutralize the threat.

This maritime international intervention was a stellar success, and in 2012, Somali piracy was virtually nonexistent. This was for good reason, considering the World Bank calculated that [Somali piracy was costing](#) the global economy \$18 billion a year. To [summarize](#) the outcome of how Somali piracy brought the world together to solve for it, there is no better way to say it than: “This is the irony of International Security Dynamics ... ‘Piracy may be unique in international affairs for its ability to bring enemies together. Pakistan has saved Indian sailors from Somali pirates. China and Taiwan, same thing. The U.S. Navy saved Iranian sailors practically every weekend in January. Cats and dogs living together, mass hysteria, etc.’”

The result of Somali piracy was and still is a global collaborative effort to stabilize the country and its waters. The world’s navies came together to solve maritime threats, and global military, political and aid organizations came together to solve land issues. AMISOM countered al-Shabab threats on land, in order to neutralize the factors that led to piracy and the connection between piracy and al-Shabab.

Back on land, however, [al-Shabab was excelling](#), partially due to funds from piracy. Reports that al-Shabab was even executing small-scale attacks in northern Kenya led to that country’s [deployment of military forces into southern Somalia](#) in order to carve out a buffer zone.

The year 2012 saw dramatic progress for Somalia. Al-Shabab began to lose ground by a combination of Kenyan forces from the south; African Union and Somali government forces from Mogadishu; US unmanned aerial vehicles from above; and contingents of Ethiopian forces from the west. In August 2012, Somalia [swore](#) in its first parliament in over 20 years. In September, the first presidential election since 1967 occurred.

The following year continued on a trajectory of rapid progress for Somalia. It began in January 2013 when the [US recognized the government of Somalia](#) for the first time since the state's collapse in 1991. Having a formal government with a relatively al-Shabab-free zone, the international community now had a formidable entity to support. What has been seen so far is a change in strategy and tactics by al-Shabab. It shifted from a rebel group holding territory to somewhere between insurgents and terrorists. Its urban tactics resemble that of terrorism—dispersed high profile attacks. However, the organization's forfeiting of urban space to avoid direct force-on-force conflict in order to flee for the countryside and launch attacks from there is a shift to insurgency.

The likely approach will be the combination of the two, and will have a lasting impact. Al-Shabab is never going to be a conventional existential threat to the Somali state again. However, it will continue to pose a threat via terrorist methods bordering on insurgency. In April 2014, it was [announced](#) that Somalia would be deploying troops to assist with stability in South Sudan. This was a rather large step in Somalia's security paradigm as it was able to export security.

In April 2013, the US successfully petitioned the United Nations Security Council to lift the arms embargo on Somalia, making it now legal to provide weapons to the new Somali military in order to retain their ground and defend against al-Shabab forces. In March 2014, AMISOM began an [extensive](#) clearing operation that forced al-Shabab to flee into the countryside, while al-Shabab simultaneously started executing high profile attacks in Mogadishu.

With chaos in Somalia as the backdrop, it is easy to understand how and why piracy reared its ugly eye-patch.

[Piracy existed notably off the coast of Somalia](#) since the state collapsed in 1991. However, it was not until 2006 when the International Maritime Bureau reported a significant rise in piracy incidents—ten in total—that the situation escalated. This was

the first increase in three years. By the end of 2007, the bureau reported that piracy incidents had tripled in just one year.

The beginning of 2008 brought another significant increase in the first quarter alone, leading the European Union to call for “international efforts to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia.” A month later, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to permit naval vessels from nations affected into the waters of Somalia. In August of the same year, the Maritime Security Patrol Area (MSPA) was established by a coalition of navies belonging to Combined Task Force 150. Subsequently, in October 2008, NATO deployed a naval force charged with patrolling Somali waters.

On April 8, 2009, the renowned “Maersk Alabama” was [hijacked](#) by Somali pirates. This was the first American vessel to be subject to piracy in over 200 years. The US responded swiftly by sending in a Navy SEAL team to solve the problem. This event was later turned into the movie *Captain Phillips*, released in 2013.

The year 2009 [proved to be a savage boon for piracy](#), with the number of piracy incidents more than doubling to 181. It was this year that Somali piracy became regularly reported by US media. The following two years, 2010 and 2011, showed no end in sight for the piracy problem.

Incident numbers staying about the same for 2010 and 2011 illustrated a small win: While successful hijacking almost cut in half, incidents overall only dropped by about 15 incidents. This change in successful hijackings was likely due to increased onboard anti-piracy security measures, though the attempted hijacking still continued at an alarming rate.

Then something happened: In 2012, there were only 32 [incidents](#) and only seven successful hijackings. As 2013 rolled into 2014, the final annual count only listed two incidents and no hijackings. Four months into 2014, there were no hijackings and no incidents.

The reasoning behind this dramatic change, and arguably the death of Somali piracy as seen over the last half a decade, was a collaborative effort by the international community. What happened was rather remarkable in the sense that countries who were [historical enemies began helping each other](#) and working together to counter Somali piracy—and it worked.

Despite the three-year epidemic of piracy, it is critical to understand the two unintentional positive effects of piracy.

EFFECTS: SOMALI ECONOMY

First, the dramatic transfer of wealth into Somali communities was immense. In the absence of significant foreign aid to Somalia, and with little to no traditional means of income, [Somalis turned to the one opportunity available](#) to them: piracy. Despite the risk of death or imprisonment, “the 0.01 percent they might make — \$30,000 on average — is 54 times the country’s average annual salary of about \$550.”

This cost-benefit analysis was basic economics, according to Scott Carney of *Wired Magazine*, who created an [astounding analysis of Somali pirate economic](#) analysis, titled “Cutthroat Capitalism: An Economic Analysis of the Somalia Pirate Business Model.” In an extensive graphic breakdown of economic formulas and calculations made easy for the layman, Carney clarified how piracy was the best decision a pirate could make. Looking at the societal impact, it is also no wonder that piracy was supported during the peak years.

As piracy increased, so did the [wealth transfer that moved millions of dollars](#) from ransom payers to the pirates. As ransom money poured into Somalia, “it [went] into the local economy, creating jobs and wealth and fueling micro economies along the coast.” This significant transfer of wealth affected real estate development, sent basic wages through the roof, employed thousands and even created its own investment market.

As these micro-economies developed, so did the number of those employed by piracy. Despite a United Nations (UN) study that claimed 50% of the revenue went to financiers outside of Somalia, the amount of revenue that poured into traditionally impoverished pirate villages was staggering in comparison to their traditional income levels.

Out of the estimated \$400 million that was paid to pirates, “about 30% of a ransom payment goes to pirates, 10% to their shore-based helpers, 10% in gifts and bribes to the local community and 50% to financiers and sponsors, who are generally based abroad.” The same [report](#) “estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 people are employed by the pirates indirectly in related industries such as boat repair, security, and food

provision. (Other enterprising Somalis have set up special restaurants to cater to the hostages.)”

With increased revenue entering Somali pirate towns, wages began to [skyrocket](#). In one particular village, “the daily wage increased from 40,000 Somali shillings in 2005 to 120,000 in 2011 ... this is likely to reflect both direct employment opportunities and investments into local businesses.”

Aside from wage increases, piracy revenue had such an impact on Somali pirate town economies that a rather [robust](#) stock exchange of sorts was set up for investment into the industry. As one wealthy former pirate [stated](#): “[W]e decided to set up this stock exchange. We started with 15 ‘maritime companies’ and now we are hosting 72 ... the shares are open to all and everybody can take part, whether personally at sea or on land by providing cash, weapons or useful materials ... we’ve made piracy a community activity.”

A town official even added that “piracy-related business has become the main profitable economic activity in our area and as locals we depend on their output ... the district gets a percentage of every ransom from ships that have been released, and that goes on public infrastructure, including our hospital and our public schools.” The [outcome](#) is that “[p]iracy has changed [the town of] Harardheere from a small fishing village to a town crowded with luxury cars.”

The visual signs of growth were apparent too. Community real estate development increased. In January 2012, the [BBC ran an article summarizing](#) a Chatham House report [published](#) in the same month, titled “Treasure Mapped: Using Satellite Imagery to Track the Developmental Effects of Somali Piracy.” Chronological comparisons of pirate towns illustrated the growth over the years. Daytime satellite imagery analysis illustrated that the pirate town of Garowe, for example, almost doubled in size from 2002 to 2009.

The benefit was not limited to pirates. In an odd turn of events, [piracy benefited the local fishing industry](#). Before, large oversized foreign fishing vessels would troll through their fishing waters catching the fish faster than they could be replenished. Now, with the fear of piracy in the nearby shore waters, rarely does anyone come through anymore.

This left a significant increase in the supply of fish for the local fishermen and their communities. Fishermen can now catch upward of £200 a day, whereas before they averaged under £5. Even the sizes of the fish have been reported to be the largest catches in 40 years. The significant alteration in the Somali economy was the immediate positive effect. It was not, however, the only positive effect; another more global and lasting consequence was just beginning.

EFFECTS: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

As the international community began to focus on solutions to Somali piracy, it first began with counterpiracy and maritime security methods. Security contractors who historically worked in Iraq and Afghanistan began offering [solutions to Somali piracy](#). According to the [British Parliament](#), “the proportion of successful attacks has fallen dramatically, due to a combination of self-defense measures and the effects of the naval patrols.” There is no question that increased offshore security measures [decreased](#) the number of successful pirate attacks as seen [in this graphic](#).

However, the [number](#) of attempts did not decrease as fast, leaving the international community to require a solution to causes of piracy as a whole—onshore. Despite “military vessels from NATO, the European Union, Russia, China and dozens of other countries patrol[ing] the Indian Ocean waters,” the consensus for an onshore solution continued to build as analysis clarified that all “the experts agree that the only long-term [solution](#) to the problem of piracy is to restore law and order on land.”

For three years, offshore piracy incidents, including hijacking and hostage for ransom, skyrocketed to unprecedented levels. Considering the vital importance of the Gulf of Aden to global maritime transportation of all nations, this was a dire scenario. The international community immediately moved to act by deploying naval ships from several countries to the Gulf of Aden region and further out into the Indian Ocean to protect the shipping lanes.

It is no coincidence that the [peak](#) years of Somali piracy coincided with the beginning of an [integrated, international intervention](#) by the global community. The last great year of Somali piracy was 2011, which concluded three years of hyper-inflated piracy attack numbers and an increased number for the few years before that. The international aid response became highly apparent in 2011, which corresponded with foreign aid to Somalia to be roughly double of the average aid amounts for the half a decade prior.

Beginning in March 2014, AMISOM initiated a sweeping [campaign](#) to oust al-Shabab. Al-Shabab has been effectively expelled to the countryside. However, it continues with high profile terrorist attacks in the capital of Mogadishu, albeit this is far better than an active insurgency or full-scale territorial control. The international community has planned what it calls Vision 2016. This plan is to have fully democratic elections by 2016 with the security environment relatively stable.

The Somali piracy boom is [over](#), and the numbers are the lowest they have been in several years even prior to the explosion of hijackings. As of February 2014, “1,435 suspected Somali pirates or their financiers are now in custody or jail in 21 countries.” With Somali piracy in the rear-view mirror, it is now possible to assess the ramifications from it, exposing the irony of it all.

Somali piracy, executed by some of the most marginalized people on the planet, managed to affect the entire global economy and alter international foreign policy for the better. It illustrates how even negative events in history often can bring about positive change. Somalia is developing and stabilizing at a rapid rate due to the extensive aid and assistance from the international community. When popular hotel resorts return to Somalia, the global community will be vindicated in all its sacrifices—but don't forget to thank the pirates.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article was originally written in mid-2014. A couple key foci must be addressed, however, the thesis holds true. The “one person-one vote” elections scheduled for 2016 under the Vision 2016 plan [reportedly](#) will not happen. Somalia is still planning for an election—albeit a [representative](#) one. The development of Somalia continues and, despite the [occasional](#) pirate attack, piracy as a trend has [moved](#) elsewhere, while many Somali pirates have [refurbished](#) their expertise. In fact, until the November 2015 attacks, the International Maritime Bureau [reported](#) a three-year lull.

**Brandon Scott is an analyst with 15+ years of experience in intelligence and strategic security operations. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Economic Crises and Political Uncertainty Plague Zimbabwe

Nicole Beardsworth

September 13, 2016

With the economy in free fall and battling a rising tide of protest, Zimbabwe's ruling party is in crisis.

Zimbabwe is facing a transition, but the outcome remains unclear. For months, the state has been battling a rising tide of [protests](#) and “stay-aways” prompted by economic collapse and poor management of the budget. The once-formidable opposition has finally found its [unity](#) following a decade of fractiousness, while the ruling ZANU-PF descends into factionalism and rivalry around the battle to succeed nonagenarian President Robert Mugabe at the helm of the kleptocratic state.

Balancing on the verge of economic collapse for over a decade, the Zimbabwean economy faltered in the early 2000s, recovered briefly (albeit from a low base) following dollarization in 2009 and has again hit the skids as it faces a biting liquidity crisis and foreign currency shortfall, leaving the country unable to pay its foreign and domestic debts. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the African Development Bank (ADB) have been poised to intervene, but in June Zimbabwe failed to make its own deadline for paying back \$1.8 billion in arrears—a debt that must be cleared before the country can access crucial funds to restart its economy.

LIQUIDITY CRUNCH

[Unemployment levels](#) are [estimated](#) to be significantly over 90%, with the vast majority of the country's citizens engaged in work in the informal sector—predominantly small-scale cross-border trade—or reliant on [remittances](#) from family members working in South Africa, the United States or the United Kingdom. In spite of the low levels of employment, 96.8% of the country's budget is [spent on salaries](#)—a massively inflated public sector wage bill that is believed to be filled with [ghost workers](#) whose salaries form an important source of patronage for state insiders.

The liquidity crunch was prompted by a decline in foreign direct investment, disappearing diamond revenues, collapse of domestic production, externalization of funds by political elites and a growing trade deficit for the import-dependent country. As the government struggled to address these challenges, the population became ever more desperate, caught in the midst of the [worst drought](#) in 35 years.

In early 2016, the Reserve Bank governor announced the introduction of bond notes—a replacement currency to be pegged at 1:1 to the US dollar and paid out in lieu of dollars. Fearing the return of the hyperinflation experienced during the mid-2000s crisis, the announcement prompted a small wave of protests and skirmishes as well as a run on the banks as citizens tried to withdraw their funds to prevent their life savings being converted into a currency that isn't recognized outside of Zimbabwe.

ANGER AND DESPERATION

The frustration, anger and desperation caused by an economic crisis exacerbated by government inaction has led to the most sustained period of protest seen in the country for 20 years. The protests have been a long time coming, beginning with the one-man protest by [activist Itai Dzamara](#), who has since gone missing in March 2015 after being forced into an unmarked vehicle. In April 2016, a [pastor's desperate Facebook video](#) with the hashtag [#ThisFlag](#) prompted a Twitter and Facebook storm, pushing social media into direct confrontation with the state.

But rather than driving the protests, the social media campaign merely capitalized on existing frustration, broadening and extending the narrative. On July 1, protests erupted at the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa after the government banned the importation of a number of key goods in a bid to [address](#) the trade deficit. Three days later, [violence erupted](#) in downtown Harare as minibus operators protested against police harassment and the imposition of hefty new fines that would negatively affect public transport operators. Police responded with teargas and beatings, prompting outrage from civil society and the media.

On July 6, the first of three [#ShutdownZimbabwe](#) events occurred, as workers across the country stayed away, businesses remained shut and the streets deserted. The protest was initiated by unpaid civil servants, backed by the infamous [war veterans](#) and publicized by civil society bodies. The Zimbabwean government shut down the internet as it tried to undermine communication between groups of activists.

Videos and images of beatings of citizens by police circulated soon after the event. Since July 6, there have been weekly protests by various groups which have been met with increased hostility and violence by an ever more desperate government. The state has imprisoned hundreds of activists, with more than 70 currently still in custody, including prominent activist from the #Tajamuka movement, [Promise Mkwanzani](#).

VIOLENCE AND BRIBES

Having once been lauded as one of the most effective and widely-supported opposition parties on the continent, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) suffered a series of public spats and splits in 2013 that left it [weakened](#), and many of its leaders discredited.

However, in light of the MDC president's failing [health](#) and a sense of possibility engendered by ruling party [divisions](#) and mass discontent, Zimbabwe's opposition politicians appear to have papered over their differences. The country's fractured opposition and former ZANU-PF heavyweights have coalesced, creating a [grand coalition](#) called NERA—the National Election Reform Agenda—comprised of [18 parties](#), whose mass march on August 26 was [violently repressed](#) despite a court ruling that it could go ahead.

Members of civil society, the academic community and opposition groups have called for a transitional authority to take power from the faltering ZANU-PF elite, as a [temporary governing mechanism](#) to rebuild the state ahead of fresh elections.

The Zimbabwean government is on the back foot. Fighting battles on all sides, the ruling party has been unable to secure the necessary funds to buy its way out of the crisis. Instead, they have resorted to violence and [bribery](#) to try to quell the rising tide of the disaffected.

In addition, ZANU-PF is riven by internal factionalism as the [declining health](#) of 92-year-old President Mugabe, and [external pressure](#) injects a sense of urgency into the realignment of factions. "Team Lacoste," the faction backing donor-favorite Emmerson Mnangagwa, has suffered significant purges in both government and the party, making it difficult for him to inherit Mugabe's mantle. G40—or Generation 40—the faction behind President Mugabe's wife, Grace Mugabe, is seen to be able to control the purges, as it has a majority in the ruling party's national disciplinary committee.

PERSONAL LOYALTIES

Historically, Mnangagwa has been able to count on support from sections of the country's security forces, but that support isn't guaranteed. Although personal loyalties may remain at the upper levels, there are rumblings of dissent from the lower ranks. Though their salaries have always been prioritized, the state has found it increasingly difficult to pay the military.

In late August, there were [reports](#) by South African media outlets that members of the police and military have joined the protests in response to unpaid salaries and the deepening economic crisis. State media [responded](#) to this by alleging that opposition parties were responsible for having fake uniforms imported into the country in order to cause confusion.

On September 1, the day before a scheduled NERA rally, the government issues an [unconstitutional ban](#) on all protests in Harare for a two-week period. In response, state media reported that the ruling party was [considering](#) amending the 2013 constitution to prevent future protest action.

It's uncertain what impact these moves by the state might have, but it seems unlikely that they will be able to quell the wave of popular protest through legislation alone. For now, Zimbabwe is at a crossroads and the state has too little money to be able to either repress dissenters or buy supporters. This presents an opportunity for the opposition, but it's [unclear](#) as to whether or not they have a workable strategy for a post-Mugabe political dispensation. For the average Zimbabwean, it is clear that there are difficult times ahead and the road to economic recovery is likely to be long and arduous.

**Nicole Beardsworth is a South African political analyst and doctoral candidate at the University of Warwick. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



The Rohingya Issue is More Than a Humanitarian Crisis

Eunsun Cho

February 9, 2016

The ongoing religious tension fueled by extremism may become a substantial threat to Myanmar's democracy.

With a new parliament sworn in and the date for selecting a new president fast approaching, [Myanmar's](#) National League for Democracy (NLD) is now tasked with laying the foundation for the country's democratic development. At the heart of this challenge lies curbing religious extremism and integrating the Muslim Rohingya minority into Burmese society.

BUDDING BUDDHIST EXTREMISM

In the last few years, [Buddhist extremism](#) has gained momentum in Myanmar. Ma Ba Tha, an anti-Muslim group of Buddhist monks, in many ways surpasses its predecessor, the 969 Movement. If the 969 Movement was a loose network of anti-Muslim monks, [Ma Ba Tha is a well-structured organization](#) with regional chapters and a TV channel to broadcast its sermons. Experts in politics, law and technology [offer professional assistance](#) for the group's activities, such as drafting bills that ban inter-religious marriage and require government approval for religious conversion, as well as fiercely lobbying until they are passed into law. Ma Ba Tha also maintains close relationships with government and military officials who [attend](#) the group's events and openly [defend hate speech against Muslims](#).

A more worrisome indication of the group's influence, however, is that [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) and the NLD are willing to yield to its demands. Leading up to the 2015 election, the party [canceled](#) its event after dozens of monks protested against scheduled speeches of Muslim speakers. Members of the NLD [admit](#) that the party intentionally

did not nominate Muslim candidates in order to avoid a possible backlash from hardline Buddhists.

The rhetoric of Ma Ba Tha does not differ too much from that of other extremists elsewhere in the world. The group's sermons provoke fear of Muslims by characterizing Islam as an existential threat to Myanmar, claiming that Muslims are "[mad dogs](#)" and "[want to kill \[Buddhists\] with swords](#)."

The group also attacks its critics through an "us vs them" dichotomy, using the term "[Islamist traitors](#)." Human rights group members have received death threats from Ma Ba Tha for criticizing discriminatory legislations, and the group accuses the NLD and Suu Kyi of being Islamist.

It is unlikely that Burmese people are aware of the mismatch between this anti-pluralist message and the nation's progress toward democracy. A 2014 survey shows that the [majority of the public](#) has yet to associate democracy with equality, and 35% think that unpopular political parties should not be allowed to hold meetings. An even greater number—41%—said they would sever ties with friends who joined unpopular parties.

FOMENTING ANIMOSITY

If we think about how fear and hatred can make people give up liberty and reject equality even in advanced democracies, the fomenting of animosity in the fledgling democracy of Myanmar comes as a considerable concern.

Further, violence on one side often sows seeds of radicalization on the other. Currently, the Rohingya—who are segregated, denied citizenship and subject to [state-sponsored](#) violence—do not have any means to make their voices heard. But it is unrealistic to expect them to remain forever victimized and stigmatized; the long, still-expanding list of worldwide riots, wars and terrorist activities motivated by ethnic and religious tensions suggests otherwise.

Even though no organized resistance occurs, small incidents—whether inspired or [coordinated](#)—can lead to largescale violence.

This has already happened in 2012, when a rape and murder of a Buddhist woman, allegedly by three Muslim men, snowballed into sectarian violence that resulted in

more than [200 deaths](#) and a mass displacement of [140,000 people](#)—[125,000](#) of whom were Muslim.

The presence of fearmongering agitators is an obstacle to development as well, since it distracts both the government and the people from other important issues. Myanmar has multiple social and economic maladies to deal with—from [short life expectancy](#) and [low education level](#) to [stagnating labor productivity](#) and [crippled infrastructure](#). Political reform and ethnic reconciliation are two other long-term projects that the new government should embark on.

Worse still, in the process of tackling these issues, the NLD has to negotiate with the military, which still occupies a quarter of the seats in parliament and controls key industrial resources. In such a situation when the government needs to shore up maximum effort and public support, escalating ethnic tensions will only drain valuable resources.

INTER-RELIGIOUS PEACE

Of course, a great number of monks have opposed military rule and called for inter-religious peace. But many of them have [lost ground](#) due to arrests, exile and criticism from within the clergy for not being “true Buddhists.” Only too aware of this fact, extremists try to recruit these monks by [offering money and support](#). In fact, when even leaders like Suu Kyi, beloved and honored home and abroad, tell people not to “[exaggerate](#)” the Rohingya problem, there are not many who can stand up and carry the burden of openly denouncing violence against the religious minority.

It may have been partially inevitable that Suu Kyi and the NLD refrained from speaking on the Rohingya issue, since winning a majority in parliament was the utmost priority until the election. But such a position should only be a temporary political strategy. Continued apathy toward systemic violence and yielding to the demands of groups like Ma Ba Tha give the wrong signal to the public that certain religious or ethnic groups deserve alienation and subjugation.

An NLD leader [once said](#) that the party has many urgent tasks to prioritize over the Rohingya problem, such as “peace, the peaceful transition of power, economic development and constitutional reform.” However, something that NLD leaders are overlooking is the potential danger that racial tension tangled with religious extremism

poses to Myanmar's development. Although the problem is not something that can be solved in a short period of time, the government should put all of its effort into making sure that the current humanitarian crisis of the Rohingya does not evolve into a substantial obstacle to the country's future.

**Eunsun Cho is a student at Georgetown University majoring in international politics. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Thailand is Headed Down a Dark Path

Craig Moran

May 19, 2016

The culture of fear in Thailand today has cemented the nation's status as an ailing democracy.

The nations of Southeast Asia have collectively achieved a degree of notoriety for their structural instabilities—the typically gradual process of political change abandoned for recurring power vacuums and institutional landslides.

In this respect, Thailand is no different, and has suffered 19 separate coup d'états since the absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932. Even so, there has always been cautious optimism about Thailand's place in Southeast Asia as a liberal voice in a troubled region. With the 2014 coup, however, the same observers who have always patiently held out for Thailand's return to the democratic fold have started to betray a significant shift in their attitudes toward its current status.

Perhaps it is the Thai electoral commission's recently filed charges against [a group posting on Facebook](#)—accusing them of using foul language about the latest draft of the proposed constitution—that has stripped away the last remaining layers of hope. They were charged with sedition and computer crimes, and two are facing *lèse-majesté* charges under the notorious article 112.

That these charges are being filed at all is a direct result of coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha's [highly restrictive laws](#) on discussing the charter. Ostensibly to deter political

bodies from influencing the vote of the electorate, it has swiftly become apparent that the true motive underlying these laws is to silence any criticism of a patently undemocratic process ahead of the August referendum—a referendum that will allow Thais to vote for or against a new draft constitution.

On May 2, the 14 rules governing the limits of free speech on discussing the constitution [officially became law](#). “Rude, aggressive, or intimidating” interviews with government figures are banned, as well as wearing “T-shirts, pins and ribbons” that encourage others to campaign. Transgressors face up to 10 years in prison.

The law is already changing the attitudes of journalists and bloggers. In the words of one Facebook commentator quoted by *Voice of America*, [“I have to think twice about what I post and share now.”](#)

The charges filed against the Facebook group, in tandem with a number of arrests of critics across the country and the [frequent censoring](#) of international media publications, have promoted a culture of fear that is clearly far removed from the electoral commission’s pretense of organizing a free and fair election. It’s no small wonder that *The New York Times* [decided](#) to end printing and distributing its print edition in Thailand.

The new constitution has been presented to the Thai public as the sole means to get democracy back on track—the beginning of a handover process that will see the junta’s influence recede. However, the nation’s major political parties, as well as interested human rights organizations, have been swift to criticize the most recent draft (released on March 29) as further entrenching the powers and influence of the military in Thai politics, and falling far short of the promises that Prayuth’s junta had made.

Not only has the draft given the military further scope to silence critics, with sweeping powers to arrest and detain at will, but the very possibility of returning to civilian rule is doubtful. In this new constitution, for instance, all [250 members of the senate](#) would be appointed by the junta, with six positions permanently open to appointments from the military. That senate would then oversee the country’s governance for the next five years, until such a time that it saw fit to hand the reins of power over to a democratically elected government.

Yet there are worrying hints that this already most unsatisfactory of situations might prove only a temporary compromise. Since the coup of 2014, Prayuth has repeatedly backtracked on his promises to organize elections and, in order to legitimize his heavy-handed approach to governance, the general now appears determined to riddle the new constitution with subversive clauses—most worryingly the introduction of legal avenues to provide for [an unelected premier](#).

The details regarding these avenues are, as to be expected, intentionally vague, but it is not a great stretch of imagination given Prayuth's recent track record that they might be utilized toward the end of the five years to further thwart the democratic process.

BEYOND THE POINT OF NO RETURN?

A public vote in favor of the constitution this August is a distinct possibility—given the overriding desire of the Thai populace to get their lives and businesses back on track—and might seem something of a victory for Prayuth and his generals.

Sadly, even a public rejection of the constitution might play even more firmly [into the military's hands](#). Prayuth has already said that, if the draft is rejected, he will keep on making suggestions indefinitely until it is passed. The inference here is that the junta will only accept a democracy that is paradoxically governed by an unelected body and sanctioned by the military. Either the Thai public must legitimize the Thai junta through elective means, or have it forced upon them.

A return to a true form of civilian rule is now virtually impossible and the May 2014 coup should, therefore, be seen as a watershed moment in Thailand's political history. While many observers were expecting the junta to pass the baton in short order, Prayuth's behavior is indicative of a deep desire for a system that abides solely according to army rules and hierarchies.

The ambitions of the Prayuth administration have gone beyond simply preserving the legacy of the monarchic establishment, and [King Bhumibol's ailing health](#) provides the perfect springboard for Prayuth's cynical ambitions of staying in power.

There has been a paradigm shift not only in the nation's traditionally coy affair with democracy, but also in the fundamental institutions that made it possible. We are now

entering a dark new era in Thai politics more reminiscent of a time when the nation had a different name: goodbye Thailand and hello again Siam.

**Craig Moran is an independent geopolitical consultant. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Hong Kong's Endgame With China Has Just Begun

Chye Shu Wen

September 21, 2016

Will Hong Kong's recent election lead to a cohesive and sustainable approach in dealings with China?

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese revolutionary who was responsible for propelling the transformation of China to the power it is today, had a grand dream. His ambition of creating a unified China—where the regions of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan would be “reunited peacefully” with the mainland—was to be fulfilled under his policy of “one country, two systems.”

Formulated fully by 1983, the essential principles of this policy underlined how each region could retain its economic, political and social systems—built on capitalism—once communist China resumed the exercise of its sovereignty over the regions.

In reality, Deng's policy has encountered many setbacks over the last decade, and none have made peaceful unification more elusive than Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) elections on September 4. In an election with the highest ever [voter turnout](#) since Hong Kong was handed back to China by the British in 1997, non-establishment/pro-democracy candidates won 30 out of 70 contested seats—with five of those 30 seats won by young, first-time candidates from the post-Occupy movement of 2014.

Many news outlets around the world have been [quick to remark](#) that a new generation of voters has finally made its voice for more autonomy, and eventually independence, heard. But is there really much cause for celebration? What are China's concerns? And what's next for Hong Kong?

DAVID AND GOLIATH'S STAND-OFF

Hong Kong's sociopolitical battles with Beijing have long been in the making, with resistance against signs of "mainlandization" steadily building up since the 2000s. Language, for example, has become a main point of contention. Under the Basic Law of Hong Kong, Mandarin, or *Putonghua*, was made an official language along with Cantonese and English. The increased emphasis on Mandarin in institutions and schools as a medium of instruction has led to locals fearing that their cultural identity is being [pushed to the fringe](#).

Politically, Beijing has maintained a tight control on the city's institutions, and the latest round of elections has only emphasized the strict boundaries that anti-establishment forces must work within. The LegCo is responsible for passing laws and approving the government budget, but registered voters directly elect only 40 out of the 70 seats—35 through geographical constituencies and five through the District Council, with the remaining 30 elected by 28 traditional functional constituencies—which gives special representation to certain pro-establishment social and economic groups.

Beyond the LegCo, Beijing's resolve to implement a controlled framework for the first election of the chief executive through universal suffrage in 2017 has also been a spark for political activism since 2014. In August 2014, the decision made by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in China to "[make provisions](#)" in the selection of the chief executive, "so as to facilitate the building of consensus within the Hong Kong community," was a sign of Beijing's outright rejection of democracy. While the chief executive would be elected by popular vote, no open nominations would be accepted, and "two to three candidates" would be eligible to run for office—but only after each candidate has been approved by a majority of a 1,200-member election committee that is likely to be pro-establishment.

While this decision triggered the 79-day Umbrella Movement and brought Hong Kong's political [tensions with China to the world's attention](#), it did not lead to any immediate changes.

“The Umbrella Movement successfully aroused the political enthusiasm of the usually politically apathetic citizen, says Elizabeth Kit-Wai, a local commentator and journalist. “At the same time, however, the people [were] very disappointed that the movement failed to bring genuine political reforms to the city.” She adds that the events of 2014 resulted in “a small group of people” becoming drawn to the idea of independence, while many others preferred to remain on a more moderate path of demanding China to accommodate more mechanisms for democratization.

But accommodation was not a message that Beijing has conveyed, and recent events since the end of 2015 have only fueled anti-Beijing sentiments. The disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers—with one being [abducted by mainland agents](#) within Hong Kong—and the short-lived [riots in the district of Mong Kok](#) in February 2016 struck deep blows to the policy of “one country, two systems,” making the elections in September an opportune moment for localist parties to come together.

SERIOUS FRAGMENTATION

Unity, however, was not the name of the game for the pro-democracy camp, and to several people that *Fair Observer* spoke to, it is something that might not materialize for some time.

To Kit-Wai, the pro-democracy camp looks “seriously fragmented,” and this was reflected in the long list of candidates who contested in each district, especially in the New Territories East and West.

It is also likely that a consensus on just how much autonomy should be fought for will not be reached amongst pro-democracy parties in the near future. While the LegCo results showed that pro-democracy voters largely preferred candidates from parties with moderate political agendas, the victory of pro-independence candidates—such as [23-year-old Nathan Law](#), who campaigned with more extreme agendas—has made localist messages of pro-independence more mainstream, and the polarization of liberal stances might heighten in the lead up to the chief executive elections in March 2017.

“I think people who were silently supporting the localist movement would be galvanized,” says Dylan Loh, a graduate research fellow at the University of Cambridge and a faculty member at Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University.

For next year's chief executive elections, all eyes will be on whom the nominating committee puts forth as candidates for elections. Loh adds that the election result "quells any chance of having a more reformist-minded or independent candidate being put up for the CE [chief executive] elections."

The current chief executive, C.Y. Leung, is highly unpopular, and whether or not he will successfully serve the second term is a critical point of the development of local politics.

SAME OLD BAND

While China's efforts in censoring news about the LegCo elections [were run of the mill](#)—the University of Hong Kong's China Media Project [ran a database search on September 5](#) and found only one Chinese-language article about it in mainland papers—it is unlikely to alter its current paternalistic approach toward post-2014 Hong Kong. Unsurprisingly, in the lead-up to voting day on September 4, several pro-independence candidates were [banned from running](#), while others faced threats and were even [assaulted](#) for being too critical of Beijing.

The Politburo also [issued a statement on September 5](#) via the Xinhua news agency, stating that it "would not tolerate any talk of independence 'inside or outside' the legislature."

The elections may, therefore, have allowed several anti-Beijing activists to get their foot through the door, but the general composition of LegCo has essentially not changed much, with the pro-Beijing camp retaining a majority. As such, China is likely to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach.

"The issuance of warnings coupled with the increased influence in academia, media, grassroots and elite levels are sure to continue," says Loh, and such boundaries and limitations are likely to frustrate localists and create a vicious action-reaction cycle of protests.

Hong Kong does not have to look far to see how China's tolerance of resistance has dipped and become more violent in tone since 2014. China [cut off all diplomatic ties with Taiwan](#) in June 2016 after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen failed to acknowledge the concept of "one China." Within the mainland, the government's [recent](#)

[violent crackdown on Wukan](#), a village in southern China that used to pride itself for running its own government, has heightened the climate of fear and [villagers are now afraid of what will happen next](#).

If China hoped that the crackdown on Wukan would create fear in Hong Kong, it has created an opposite effect. Localist leaders have shown a stronger commitment of standing firm to their cause, with close to 100 Hong Kongers [holding a candlelight vigil](#) in solidarity with the villagers in Wukan on September 19.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

With just months to go till the chief executive elections, there are clearly mixed feelings amongst the electorate on the future of Hong Kong's politics.

“The new LegCo has given me hope—in that positive changes might actually happen, though I'm not sure where it will lead and how far localism will succeed,” says Stephanie Chiang, 24, a recent graduate. “I voted, half-thinking that my vote wouldn't make a difference but, to my surprise, it did.”

Views held by young voters like Chiang could very well propel the pro-democracy camp to get their act together and form a more cohesive front over the next few months.

A lot hinges on how the new localist lawmakers will behave. Many anti-establishment legislators within the LegCo are [infamous for filibustering](#), and the political scene stands to become more chaotic if anti-establishment legislators like Edward Leung and Baggio Leung (both Leungs are not related) take on more militant and extreme pro-independence stances during council meetings.

Militancy is an approach that could be adopted by localists over the next few years, with a recent commentary by a [Hong Kong academic suggesting](#) that localists could create “a scenario in which China is so sick of Hong Kong that it thinks the best thing to do is to expel Hong Kong” from the mainland.

This, however, is highly unlikely to happen. Hong Kong remains a strategically important entity to China. The superpower's rigid claims on Hong Kong mean expulsion would only be a wound to its dignity and reputation. It is also worthwhile to

note that it would not be possible for Hong Kong to rely on other nations after expulsion. Unlike Taiwan's strong ties with the United States, Hong Kong as an entity has never been outwardly supported diplomatically by Washington, and Beijing is likely to make sure it stays that way.

With China and Hong Kong entering uncharted political territory, it remains to be seen how Deng Xiaoping's grand ambition of having a united China can be fulfilled, given that both sides are likely to fight fire with fire to assert their own positions of power. It is, however, worth noting that compared to the Umbrella Movement, the LegCo election results are a more solid start to Hong Kong's journey of figuring out a sustainable, cohesive approach toward Beijing's goal of creating "one China."

**Chye Shu Wen is the Asia Pacific editor at Fair Observer. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Singapore's Road to Multiculturalism

Tom Benner

September 27, 2016

What lessons can multicultural Singapore offer America in light of the latter's ongoing racial and religious tensions?

Raw feelings over race and religion dominate the American political season. The talk is of walls and deportations to keep some out, "extreme vetting" for immigrants of a certain faith, and a debate over whose lives matter that is playing out in mindless violence on the streets.

The conflicting feelings over people of a different race, color or creed cannot, of course, be resolved to any one person's or group's satisfaction. But good answers to the divisiveness seem elusive. How can Americans see past their differences and get along?

As an American, I watch from afar where I live in Singapore, one of the most racially and religiously diverse nations in the world. This small country offers an approach.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER

A national poll [released a few weeks ago](#) found most Singaporeans try to live out multiracial ideals and believe in meritocracy. More than seven in 10 Singaporeans believe personal success is independent of race or ethnicity, [according to the survey](#) commissioned by Channel NewsAsia and the Institute of Policy Studies.

That's a remarkable finding for diverse Singapore, whose population is 74.2% Chinese, 13.3% Malay, 9.2% Indian and 3.3% other. It's also the most religiously diverse nation in the world, according to a [2014 analysis](#) by the Pew Research Center, its population made up of sizable portions of Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Hindus. The poll is especially noteworthy considering how far the country has come in half a century, when its early days as a new nation were beset by ethnic tensions and race riots.

Singapore's strides toward multiculturalism got a shout-out from President Obama, who played host to visiting Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in August.

"In the United States, we call ourselves a 'melting pot' of different races, religions and creeds. In Singapore, it is *rojak*—different parts united in a harmonious whole," Obama said. "We're bound by the belief that no matter who you are, if you work hard and play by the rules, you can make it." (*Rojak* is a traditional fruit and vegetable salad dish named after a Malay term for mixture.)

Singapore sets an example for the world on multiculturalism. A founding principal of the country is the integration of its ethnic and racial groups—a decision was made at the outset to treat every race, language and religion as equal. It made an asset of its ethnic and religious diversity, and the result is relative racial harmony.

MELTING POT

How did Singapore do it? One answer is forced housing integration. In Singapore, 85% live in very decent, mostly owner-occupied public housing, and racial quotas mean every block, precinct and enclave fall in line with the national ethnic population percentages mentioned above.

Forcing different peoples to live together as neighbors broke up the ethnic ghettos and the all-Chinese, all-Malay or all-Indian blocks that could be found at the country's

founding in 1965. The housing policy “was authoritarian, intrusive, and it turns out to be our greatest strength,” Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said.

The Housing Development Board (HDB) public housing high-rises were Singapore’s answer to affordable housing. Most HDB dwellers own their own flat, adding to their sense of responsibility and community pride. The units are heavily subsidized for young couples buying a starter home in one of the world’s most expensive cities. The term HDB carries none of the stigma that, say, the term housing project carries in the US.

The HDB has other positive social impacts. By clustering housing near commercial centers and transit hubs, Singapore makes it easier for its residents to live and work in the same place. The best commute, as a Harvard economist once said, is a lift downstairs. And Singapore can call itself a “Garden City” for the proportion of land that remains open. The concept of HDBs—of building up, and not out—allows Singapore to preserve much of its green space for recreation, while two-thirds of its land surface is used for rainwater catchment.

The same thinking that went into Singapore’s forced integrated housing went into its schools. People of different ethnic and racial groups not only live together, they learn and grow up together. Everyone gets a fair shot at going to a good school which in turn (and in conjunction with housing policy) leads to a meritocracy in which people of different ethnic and religious minorities are well integrated socially and economically.

FRAGILE HARMONY

Of course, there are carrots, and there are sticks. Singaporean law makes wounding the religious or racial feelings of another person a punishable crime. In a small, densely populated country with a multiplicity of races, beliefs, languages and social norms, surrounded by much larger and less diverse neighbors, the threat of a fine or a stay in jail is viewed as a necessary inducement to keep the potentially fragile harmony from breaking down.

A Westerner might view that as a heavy-handed form of political correctness and a limit on free speech. Such an individualistic argument can be made. But the Singaporean view is that freedom of religion means respect for the religion of others, and the right to practice one’s religion without the persecution or harassment of others.

Hence the poll showing Singaporeans strongly endorse government policies aimed at safeguarding racial and religious harmony. And because multiculturalism does not exist in a vacuum, Singapore's religious and community leaders have worked to make sure their faiths are practiced in a way that fits Singapore's multiracial context, with Muslim leaders [speaking out against extremist views](#) that do not represent Islam.

The poll does not paint a picture of a racial utopia or a colorblind society. One in three among minority races reported having privately felt racially prejudged. Most respondents preferred someone of the same race marrying into their family (although [interethnic marriages are up](#)). Most said they are willing to accept a president and prime minister of another race, although many expressed a preference for someone of their own race.

But by not leaving interracial harmony to chance, by aggressively promoting racial and ethnic integration, Singapore has found a way to make strides that must seem envious from other shores. Of course, much of Singapore's approach would not fly in the US. Americans are free to wound the feelings of other people who look or act differently from themselves, with impunity. That right, however, comes with responsibilities that we see going unacknowledged every time we turn on the news.

**Tom Benner is an American writer and editor based in Singapore. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



An Opportunity to Fill the Leadership Void in Korea

Michael Lammbrau

November 22, 2016

What does Donald Trump's victory mean for the future of the Korean Peninsula?

I recently returned to the United States after living, working and studying in Seoul, South Korea, for the past six years. As I prepared to return to America last spring, the US presidential election and the possibility of a Donald Trump presidency had gripped

South Korea with such ferocity that I found myself doing a tour de Seoul trying to explain the Trump phenomenon. I was invited to speak to decision makers, lawyers, business professionals and politicians, and even appear on Korea's most popular Korean-speaking foreigner show, [Abnormal Summit](#), to discuss anything American and everything Donald Trump.

I learned that despite our differences in perspectives, these differences were compounded due to the sensationalist and hysterical reporting by Western media outlets. This reckless reporting has confused and terrified my Korean friends, colleagues and counterparts by sowing seeds of fear and doubt across East Asia, a region that could do without such media sensationalism.

MEDIA REPORTING OF DONALD TRUMP

Print media's famed *Time* magazine has not let up, releasing, on November 17, another sensationalist piece entitled, "[Donald Trump Doesn't Seem to Have a North Korea Plan. That's Extremely Worrying.](#)" The article cites expert after expert, concluding: "Trump's foreign policy is generally murky, his plan for dealing with North Korea, the world's most unpredictable and clandestine regime, is nonexistent."

This type of reporting is of course understandable, as traditional print media competes with and adapts to the rapidly changing media landscape. In October, an article in *The New York Times*, "[More Wretched News for Newspapers as Advertising Woes Drive Anxiety](#)," reported: "Across the industry, similar declines in print advertising coupled with the shift to digital and, increasingly, mobile, are driving newspaper companies to reconfigure their newsrooms."

You can begin to understand the desperation to attract clicks, views and subscriptions as the news industry's business model experiences some serious growing pains, in its fight for survival and legitimacy. Print media will likely adapt and overcome, but in the meantime, in regards to maintaining and sustaining global stability and peace, such articles are incredibly irresponsible.

So, it is no wonder that my Korean friends and colleagues are terrified of a Trump presidency. They have been living in an echo chamber of media narratives that only push fear, doubt, anger and distrust. The election of Donald Trump was not about Korea or another country. The election was about the American people and their

relationship with their leadership. A relationship the people of all nations can understand.

REJECTION OF NEOLIBERALISM

As Professor Cornel West of Harvard University, in his critique of the neoliberal order and globalization, [points out](#): “The age of Obama was the last gasp of neoliberalism. Despite some progressive words and symbolic gestures, Obama chose to ignore Wall Street crimes, reject bailouts for homeowners, oversee growing inequality ... Meanwhile, poor and working class citizens of all colors have continued to suffer in relative silence ... The progressive populism of Bernie Sanders nearly toppled the establishment of the Democratic party but Clinton and Obama came to the rescue to preserve the status quo.”

This rejection of the elite political class and their affinity for the status quo, a rejection for their lip service, is a global phenomenon. It will continue as the “silent, dismissed, forgotten majority” finds its voice and shapes the direction of a new era, of new leadership.

On November 12, concerned citizens across South Korea held another peaceful and impressive mass demonstration against the same corruption, influence peddling and elitism that plagues the US government. Just like Korea’s current repudiation of the status quo is not anger toward the American people, the election of Trump was not anger toward the rest of the world, but anger toward the status quo.

These mass movements are a positive and healthy signal of a new era of accountability for the faceless bureaucrats and lobbyists. New media is now holding their feet to the fire like never before. Like the Gutenberg Press, new media, allowing for the free flow of information, debate and discourse, connects the global “silent majority” and is redefining the relationship between the political class and the people.

THE VIEW FROM ASIA

But where others see chaos and fear, there are some East Asian experts that see an opportunity to reassert US leadership in the region—leadership that has been lacking. In an interview with *The Korea Times*, Han Park, director and professor emeritus of public and international affairs at the University of Georgia, [expressed a level of](#)

[optimism](#) regarding much needed American leadership in place of the vacuous “strategic patience” policy: “Today provides an opportunity to invite a restructuring of inter-Korea relations for both South and North Korea, which would be a great challenge and opportunity for the two Koreas that have been partitioned for 70 years.”

Patricia Lewis, international security research director at Chatham House, [believes](#) “it may be possible to achieve a sustainable deal for denuclearization of the peninsula.”

John Burton, a Seoul-based journalist and former [Korea correspondent for the Financial Times](#), [points out](#): “My hunch is that Trump might decide first to pursue a conciliatory approach on North Korea since this adheres to his self-image as a ‘dealmaker,’ while reflecting his unconventional views on U.S. foreign policy ... If he appoints John Bolton, a noted ‘hawk’ on North Korea ... then his strategy toward Pyongyang might prove to be an orthodox hardline one.”

If he doesn’t, and it seems likely, then all bets are off. Trump, true to form, will look to shake up the status quo and American leadership might once again return to East Asia. Leadership that is now needed to ensure a peaceful and successful transition to a new era of the people, by the people and for the people.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGES IN KOREA

A policy of engagement and confidence through “people-to-people” exchanges, cultural, educational and sports is an important first step toward the de-escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the beginning of reconciliation, understanding and resolution between all parties in order to work toward a peaceful and prosperous Korea.

On November 21, at an event hosted by the University of Pennsylvania’s Liberty in North Korea Chapter, Congressman Charlie Rangel’s staff—alongside the Korean American community through the Divided Families movement—continued their efforts to bring to light the silent suffering of Korean Americans separated by the Korean War. Introduced by Representative Charles B. Rangel, a Korean War veteran, and Representative Ed Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the House Concurrent Resolution 40 [encourages the reunion](#) of divided Korean American families by creating a pathway between Korean Americans and their long lost relatives separated by the Korean War of 1950-53. This is a small but important step toward reconciliation, resolution and a lasting peace on the peninsula.

In the end, it is in the best interest of the United States, in cooperation with the Republic of Korea (ROK), to maintain and sustain our great alliance with renewed leadership. An alliance maintained not only by governments, businesses and military counterparts, but by personal bonds forged in blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice. The US-South Korea alliance will remain strong now and into the future, as we work together toward a strong, independent and peacefully unified Korean Peninsula.

**Michael Lammbrau is an assistant professor of intelligence studies at Mercyhurst University. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



CENTRAL & SOUTH ASIA

There Are Limits to Defining Indian Nationalism

Rita Kothari

April 14, 2016

Those who claim to speak for the state—as well as those who question the state and claim to speak for the rest—remain highly exclusive.

Terms such as “home” and “nation” have different meanings for different people. The transnational links of the Nagas and Mizos in northeastern India or those of people living in western Rajasthan and Kutch, when held to restrictive definitions of “nationalism,” provide challenges to mainland categories.

The last few months have witnessed public discourse in India deteriorate to abysmal levels. Personalities and vested interests have come to limit the possibilities of truth, the idea of which continues to remain elusive. All we know is whether to trust the pursuer of truth, and whether s/he stands to gain to stand from a particular definition of truth. The rest is surrounded by a mist of multiple interpretations.

However, while thinking through the events, something nagged at me from a not-so-distant past. People I met while working on a monograph—[*Memories and Movements: Borders and Communities in Banni, Kutch*](#)—pushed their way into my mind, adding “nonsense” to the dominant discussions.

THERE'S NO ONE BRUSH

Look at this example from a cattle-breeding family. Fahmida Mutwa (name changed) lives in a village called Dordo, part of a region called Banni in the district of Kutch in Gujarat. Dordo is the last village of Banni. It is on the edge of the vast desert that divides India and Pakistan.

For the last 40 years or so, Fahmida has listened to the radio almost every single day. She tunes in to stations in Sindh, Pakistan, and listens to women's programs or religious discussions. The world of Bollywood cinema and TV soaps that the rest of India is supposedly watching are unknown to her. She knows nothing about Salman Khan or Aishwarya Rai.

Fahmida is not the only one who is far from symbols and icons that define India as an imagined community. The fact that Fahmida doesn't watch TV—and would not be allowed to do so because most people in her region consider television to be bad for spiritual health—is only one reason. The fact that this restriction is particularly applicable to women and children is also a separate issue. However, it is common to see the entire region respond to symbols from across the border. Discussions, songs and Sufi discourse from Sindh are part of the day-to-day life in Banni.

To Fahmida, Sindh is far more relevant and immediate than Ahmedabad or Mumbai. It is likely that she would be considered anti-national in the emerging discourse of today, and it is likely that she would be lumped together with many others who hail from universities and political affiliations. As for Fahmida, she has never left the region of Kutch.

A pastoralist from the same region once said to me: "We hardly encounter Gujarat. Leave alone [the] rest of the country." The distance from the idea of nation in this case is not animated merely by disaffection, but largely by localized experiences of region and cosmopolitanism. "When [we] go on Hajj, we keep remembering that we are from Hindustan," he added.

Experiential Indianness is often times a response to the interlocutor, not by neatly defined concentric circles in which being Sindhi, Muslim, pastoralist and Indian are organized in sequential ways.

So, we must think of what our discourses look like to people who are far from our minds; to those who do not put forth a strident view for Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) or against it. Is there a world of semantics out there that we are not looking at or even aware of?

"NATIONALISM"

Thus, if “nationalism” itself is a discursive category and far from uniform, how can its supposed antithesis be stable? “Nationalism” and its antithesis have been mobilized to mean a specific set of things over the last few months. Dissent, desirable or otherwise, is now associated with “anti-nationalism,” while silence and conformity with the dominant hegemonies of caste and religion is associated with the nationalism of the ruling party.

In discussions, few notice the fact that nationalism and anti-nationalism do not have stable meanings. What many consider as anti-nationalism of the urban, educated, left-leaning stance of some is different from an emotional charge that ordinary and unnoticed people experience with relatives and language and ethos across the border. In the instances mentioned above and many more unmentioned ones, individuals are not consciously critiquing the Indian state, although their thoughts and expression might seem critical. They ask not for the freedom to express, but the freedom to be left alone.

In the shrillness of our times, we would do well to remember how our “categories”—used both by those who claim to speak for the state as well as those who question the state and claim to speak for the rest—remain highly exclusive, as usual.

**Rita Kothari is a leading translator, writer and academic from India. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Caste Politics Overshadow Sanitation Issues in India

Nilanjana Sen

May 13, 2016

In India, traditional social structures impede development.

In his short treatise [Sanitation in India](#) published in 1912, Alexander Hubbard laid out suggestions to “brighten up [the] little world” of the Indian native which was drowned in “filth and squalor.” The treatise, while best described as patronizing in its suggestions,

partially succeeded in articulating a socio-cultural reasoning behind the poor sanitary conditions in India. It recognized that for sanitary reforms to succeed one needs to be aware of the “prejudices and superstitions” that afflict large parts of the native population. The British by the beginning of the 20th century had begun to view the problem of sanitation largely as a social issue. They were no longer concerned with the [health of the soldiers](#) alone, and the general good health of the public was seen as essential for the smooth functioning of the empire.

Despite having recognized the root of the problem, the government of India was unsure of the progress it had made through much of the 19th century to improve sanitation conditions of the Indian natives. It recognized that the [Indian Sanitary Policy of 1914](#) failed because it blindly applied Western sanitation measures to a starkly different civilizational set-up and did not adequately assess the conditions of life in tropical climates. The mind of the general public had to be endowed with what the government believed was a “higher level of thought.”

[Justice Cunningham](#), who was the president of the [Health Society in Calcutta](#), referred to an angel that would have to descend on India and ennoble the humble native. The angel for him was science, which in his words was another name for “well informed common-sense.” This new scientific approach to sanitation, the British believed, could contribute significantly to improved sanitary conditions in rural and urban India. At this point the British had begun to vocally distinguish between the educated and the illiterate Indian, both of whom were responding in starkly different ways to the newly-developed scientific approach to sanitation. The government of India felt that in the “[land of the ox-cart](#)” sufficient attention had to be paid to the fact that the uneducated native was unprepared for drastic change, seen simply as a form of “interference” by them.

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Evidently, the problem of poor sanitation conditions in India could not be attributed to the lack of infrastructure alone. Indian society has a unique composition where the scavenger is a [scavenger by birth](#). B.R. Ambedkar, who belonged to the Untouchable Mahar caste, condemned this fixity that was imposed on an individual’s social identity. He recognized that in the cast-ridden Hindu society, birth qualifications preceded the actual work performed as a marker of the individual’s social identity.

The sanitation framework in India sustains itself on the traditional structure of Hindu society. It is heavily reliant on particular caste groupings who occupy the lowest position in the caste hierarchy for its unhindered existence. Any successful sanitation reform measure would have to take into account the intricate ways in which concerns for purity and pollution would determine the acceptance of reforms, as well as decide who has access to them. For Ambedkar, the problem of poor sanitation in India was a socio-cultural issue since the scavenger was [invariably an Untouchable](#) who was a permanent victim of his hereditary occupation.

Recently, the government of Narendra Modi has announced that it aims to [end open defecation](#) in the country by 2019. [Sixty percent](#) of the world's open defecators live in India and [South Asia](#) has the highest percentage of people defecating in the open. [Out of the 1 billion](#) people who have no access to toilets, nearly 600 million reside in India. The current political dispensation plans to invest in 5.2 million toilets, or [one toilet every two seconds](#) in its five year term. If lack of adequate infrastructure alone accounts for these figures, the government's effort to end open defecation is laudable.

Mehrotra and Patnaik in their study show that programs such as the [Nirmal Gram Yojana](#), initiated by the United Progressive Alliance I (UPA I) government, have failed in certain places such as Bastar primarily because of the lack of adequate infrastructure and water scarcity. But in other instances culture is often seen as the root cause of the problem of poor sanitation in India. In [Uttarakhand](#) there have been cases when Rajputs, who consider themselves to be part of an upper caste, have refused to clean their toilets as they find the task to be degrading and ritually polluting.

It is not surprising then that technological solutions that are economically feasible are not always finding much success in India. Simple pit latrines, despite being economically conducive, have not always found takers in rural India and only [10% of rural households use them](#).

A case of a slightly different nature was reported in Punjab where a dangerous mix of politics and caste impacted access to toilets for those belonging to the lower castes. The landlords in a village in [Punjab](#), who were upper caste Jat Sikhs, on the declaration of election results denied access to those belonging to the Schedule Caste to the fields, since the election results did not favor their interests. The [fields in rural India](#) are used by many as bathrooms, and this move meant that the lower-caste

people were effectively left without access to the only sanitation facility available to them.

The system of sanitation in India does not exist as an independent structure and it is not self-sustaining. Socio-cultural factors such as the dominance of caste determines the acceptance of reforms in the sanitation system, shapes social attitudes toward certain occupations and ultimately decides who gets access to sanitation facilities. Any successful sanitation reform program would have to deal with an awareness that change, for example, in the form of development of new technologies and infrastructure, cannot be neutral, since its acceptance is contingent upon social attitudes that often prioritize the maintenance of the traditional social structure.

The whole concept of latrines has assumed a unique socio-cultural meaning in India. The [recent SQUAT survey](#) suggests that it is not the scarcity of water or simply a lack of access to toilets that pushes people to use alternatives such as agricultural fields as toilets. Some claim that the [concept itself is alien](#) to many, as ownership of toilets in north India has not had a bearing on the reduction of open defecation. While some choose to use the fields because toilets close to the vicinity of the house are considered to be polluting, others do not use it because the eventual cleaning of the latrines is perceived to be ritually degrading.

CHANCE FOR CHANGE

For the successful implementation of sanitation reforms in India, the scavenger can no longer remain a scavenger by birth. At the root of the problem are socio-cultural attitudes that continue to shape and are sustained by the traditional Hindu social order, upon which the entire framework of sanitation is based.

In such a situation there are two options that can ensure the success of sanitary reforms in India: Either the entire sanitation framework is built as such that it is self-sustaining without necessarily tackling the caste question directly and focusing instead on providing alternatives to the existing system. This would involve the development of technological solutions that eliminate the reliance on former Untouchables—the term is no longer legal in India—on an unequal footing to maintain the sanitation structure.

The focus has to be not only on the building of toilets—rather it is the design of the toilets that should assume more significance. This could involve the construction

of [pour-flush latrines as opposed to dry latrines](#), since the latter rely heavily on the former Untouchable community for maintenance. But because of water scarcity, technological solutions will have to focus on designing toilets that can be sustained without access to water. [Dr. Kishore Munshi](#) has developed the dry hygienic rural toilet that is cost-efficient and eco-friendly, which sustains itself as a waterless system.

Alternatively, the second option could focus on a radical restructuring of the Hindu society to break the occupational fixity imposed by caste. This would involve sustained efforts to mainstream the former Untouchables by empowering them. This can certainly work, as is evident from the [reduced market for pit emptying services](#) today. Many claim this is because of a sense of revulsion in the minds of the former Untouchables toward what is seen by society as their traditional occupation, as much as it is because of the availability of alternative occupations they have finally begun to consider for themselves.

While poverty and the lack of infrastructure maybe partly responsible for the poor sanitation conditions in India, it must be adequately stressed that the [construction of toilets](#) in itself will not solve the problem. An awareness that the physical infrastructure and the people who sustain it are operating within a social framework that is not receptive to drastic change is essential to planning the nature of reforms—something the British had recognized early on as they set out to establish their rule in India.

A recent [UN report](#) noted that open defecation has been reduced in India by 31%. While the government focuses on building the appropriate infrastructure that is numerically significant and economically efficient, it must simultaneously address the question of caste as a major factor shaping social attitudes and policies. Is India ready for the “[annihilation of caste](#),” or is gradual change based on the development of a self-sustenance model the way ahead?

**Nilanjana Sen is a former associate editor (culture) at Fair Observer. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Music Can Combat Extremism in South Asia

Cynthia Schneider and Raza Rumi

July 4, 2016

Indigenous culture, especially music, is the way to reach young Pakistanis and counter extremism.

On June 22, the global campaign to counter violent extremism (CVE) lost one of its most powerful messengers when gunmen linked to the Pakistani Taliban [murdered the beloved qawwali singer Amjad Sabri in Karachi](#).

Not that Sabri was working with the US State Department, the Pentagon or any foreign government, but the ecstatic celebration of divine love that is qawwali music is, to quote leading Pakistani playwright Shahid Nadeem, “the most powerful and popular vehicle for spiritual and cultural uplift of the masses. It bypasses indoctrination, bigotry, sectarianism, and liberates, emancipates, empowers.”

Sabri’s case is still under investigation given the [political complexity](#) of a metropolis like Karachi, but high profile adherents of Sufi Islam remain under threat in Pakistan.

MUSIC AS A CHALLENGE

Qawwali music and the Sufi tradition to which it belongs represent the antithesis of the Wahhabi-inspired fundamentalism of militant groups such the Taliban, the Islamic State or Boko Haram, which view such practices as heresy. From North Africa to South Asia, Sufi ideas—of love for humans, communal harmony and tolerance—are part of lived faith and culture. Violent extremists within Muslim societies find this peaceful, inclusive approach to be a challenge to the dogma of fear they impose, and have been attempting to erase it.

Over the past decade, dozens of Sufi shrines have been attacked in Pakistan. The worst hit was in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where [missiles were used to destroy mausoleums of Sufi poets such as Rehman Baba](#). With the rise of the Pakistani Taliban from 2006 onward, many shrines have been attacked. In 2010,

the [oldest shrine of Ali Usman Hajwery in Lahore was bombed](#) resulting in dozens of deaths. Other than perpetuating terror, such attacks directly affect the faith practices of millions who use these shrines as comforting spaces, sometimes even as soup kitchens for there is a tradition of free food as a charitable act.

Tragically, the Sufi tradition within the history of the Indian subcontinent—embodied in political figures such as the 17th century Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh or in folk poets such as Bulleh Shah—was [expunged from Pakistan’s history](#) by General Zia al-Haq who reinforced his authoritarianism with a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Sabri belonged to a wildly popular line of musicians whose works were globally recognized. Rock stars such as Peter Townsend of The Who especially admired Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, another torchbearer of the qawwali tradition. Peter Gabriel made qawwali widely accessible by recording Khan and the Sabri brothers, a group comprising Amjad Sabri’s father and uncle. Such has been the magic of qawwali that it has informed classical, Bollywood and even the rock genre in South Asia. For instance, Salman Ahmed of the Pakistani band *Junoon* translated the qawwali genre into rock, including his [own version of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s classic *Allah Hu*](#).

Qawwali music has rock ‘n’ roll fans, but its real soulmate is gospel music. Venues such as the Fes Festival of sacred music have long paired gospel and qawwali singers for soul-stirring improvisations. In 2012, [American gospel singers were the stand out hit of Cairo’s annual Sufi festival](#), staying up all night long to jam with their Pakistani qawwali singers. At a time of virulent anti-Americanism in Egypt, the Sufi festival audience, including fully covered guests from Saudi Arabia, swayed to the sounds of the gospel hit, *When I Think About Jesus, I Feel Like Dancing*. Just as with the hypnotic pull of qawwali music, no one was thinking about whether dancing or music were “allowed” or not—everyone was swept away in the unifying feeling of shared spirituality.

That is what extremists find threatening in Pakistan and in countries such as Mali where music is the lifeblood of the country. When al-Qaeda-linked extremists invaded Timbuktu, they did the unthinkable: They banned music, prompting Tuareg singer [Fadimata Walet Oumar to declare](#) that they would have to “kill her first” before she would stop singing. As in Pakistan, the extremist invaders in Mali [destroyed shrines](#) of the venerated scholars and saints of Timbuktu, a center of Islamic learning in the Renaissance.

Since 2014, Pakistan's military offensive against jihadists has improved the overall security situation, but the ideological battle is harder and may take decades to win. In part, this is linked to the Pakistani government's continued support for Taliban ideology in neighboring Afghanistan. More worryingly, the majority of 40,000 religious seminaries—which have mushroomed since the *mujahedeen* of the 1980s—are affiliated with the Deobandi sect of South Asian Islam. The Deobandi school also rejects Sufi practices and is closer to Saudi Wahhabism.

It is no surprise that countering violent extremism involves more than military operations. Culture is an effective tool in promoting an inclusive and tolerant society. But not American culture. The Islamic tradition, especially some of the Sufi discourses and practices, are powerful antidotes to the exclusivist vision of power-seeking clerics and militias that argue for [Muslim supremacy](#) and consider non-Muslims as the “other.”

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Rather than trying to develop effective counter-narratives to extremism, the US should recognize, support and leverage authentic counter-narratives such as Sufi music and poetry. Could the US government have prevented Amjad Sabri's murder? Probably not, but it can certainly learn from it.

It is time for US policymakers to recognize what extremists have long understood: Culture anchors identity, strengthens societies and can promote tolerance and inclusion. If extremists destroy culture—living and historic—in order to dominate, shouldn't the US and its allies recognize the power of culture to provide resilience, vision and unity in countering violent extremism?

Current US strategy does not include culture as a tool in its countering violent extremism (CVE) toolbox. Occasional successes such as the [Burka Avenger](#) comic series, supported by the US Embassy in Pakistan, leveraged the power of popular culture to promote positive social change, but this type of approach has not been systematically integrated. Indeed, to do so would require a substantive change not only of mindset, but also within the relevant institutions.

The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs is hamstrung with a Cold War-era mandate of sending American cultural emissaries abroad, and it is poorly equipped to

leverage indigenous cultural leaders. Since the integration of the United States Information Agency into the State Department in 1999, the number of regional cultural experts has dwindled. But these problems are manageable with a more flexible approach to CVE that acknowledges the power of local voices and the potential of the US public and private sectors to leverage them—a point made in a congressional hearing on June 23 dubbed “[Countering the Virtual Caliphate](#).”

The private sector has already recognized the value of this approach for reaching foreign publics. Ask any young Pakistani about his or her favorite music, and chances are the answer will be [Coke Studio](#). Now entering its ninth season, this hugely popular TV show features Pakistani folk singers such as qawwali masters blending their presentation with popstars, creating distinctly hybrid Pakistani music with influences from Central and South Asia. All “brought to you” by Coca Cola. Amjad Sabri will be making his first—and sadly his last—[Coke Studio appearance](#) (already recorded) this season.

It’s time for the US government to recognize what the private sector long has understood: Indigenous culture, especially music, is the way to reach the Pakistani public. For fighting extremism in South Asia, regional music is an essential tool. Sadly, with the death of Amjad Sabri, a powerful messenger of peace and tolerance has been lost.

**Cynthia Schneider is a former US ambassador and a distinguished professor in the practice of diplomacy at Georgetown University. Raza Rumi is a Pakistani policy analyst, journalist and author. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Modi Dumps Nehru’s “Strategic Restraint” Against Pakistan

Mayank Singh

October 8, 2016

After decades of pusillanimity, India decides to counter Pakistani terrorism by conducting surgical strikes across the border.

In 1958, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru [wrote to US President Dwight Eisenhower](#): “[To] make it clear to you how anxious we have been ever since Independence to have normal and friendly relations with Pakistan. We had hoped that the old conflicts and the policy of hatred and violence, pursued by the old Muslim League, which indeed led to the Partition, would cease. It was obviously to the advantage of both countries to live in peace and friendship with each other and devote themselves to their social and economic development ... Unfortunately for us and for Pakistan, our hopes were not realised and the Pakistan government continued to pursue that policy of hatred and violence. Every government that comes to power in Pakistan bases itself on this policy of hatred against India.”

Nehru’s plaintive plea passed off as Indian policy toward Pakistan for decades. Since partition in 1947, Indian policymakers sought a hopeful utopia while the rest of the world engaged hardnosed realpolitik and furthered national interests.

URI ATTACK

Gradually, “[strategic restraint](#)” became a euphemism for this naive hope. Decades of such a weak and vacuous policy perhaps lulled the Pakistani establishment into disbelieving the director general of military affairs’ (DGMO) announcement about India reserving “[the right to respond to any act of the adversary at a time and place of our choosing](#),” after the attack on the army camp near Uri on September 18, 2016.

Pakistan ignored the new winds of change and did not pay heed to incumbent [Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s radio broadcast](#) where he declared: “[The] Indian Army does not talk; they speak through their valor. The Uri attack will not go unpunished.”

On September 29, India crossed the Rubicon when its special forces neutralized terrorist launching pads in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) through [surgical strikes](#). It was retribution for the Uri attack by the Pakistan-backed Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), a terrorist organization. With this response, India has adopted a new policy of offensive defense and has abandoned the failed policy of strategic restraint.

India has treated the Line of Control (LoC) with sanctity. Even when Pakistan crossed the LoC in 1999 and illegally took up Indian positions in Kargil, Indian troops did not cross the LoC to the Pakistani side. As a result, thousands of young men died in retaking strategic heights occupied by the Pakistanis. Crossing the LoC and besieging

these positions made better military sense. However, India was ridiculously wedded to its asinine policy of strategic restraint.

It was via this policy that Nehru first sought the intervention of the United Nations (UN) in 1947. Then, the Indian army was in the ascendant against Pakistan-backed tribal militia and soldiers who attempted to annex Kashmir. Thus, the much-deified Nehru threw away a winning hand and damned India for decades if not centuries.

Never before in the annals of military history did a nation with an upper hand in battle approach a third party for a ceasefire. India's naive optimism was exploited by Pakistan, who soon refused to adhere to the ceasefire agreement. Far from withdrawing the irregulars and tribal aggressors, it fortified its positions in Kashmir.

PAKISTAN, INDIA AND KASHMIR

Today, Kashmir has become a festering wound for India, which Pakistan continues to exacerbate at will.

Pakistan has launched many invasions of India since 1947. When none of them succeeded, it [launched guerrilla warfare](#) against its bigger neighbor. Pakistan has never quite forgotten 1971, and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state has filled it with a burning desire for revenge. It has infused the radical idea of jihad as an essential part of the asymmetric war it has waged rather successfully against India.

In 2000, Jessica Stern of Harvard Kennedy School pointed out that South Asia had replaced the Middle East as “the leading locus of terrorism in the world.” Stern [wrote](#): “If madrasahs supply the labor for ‘jihad,’ then wealthy Pakistanis and Arabs around the world supply the capital.” Not much has changed since.

Liberating Kashmir from the *kuffar* (non-believers) is an essential part of Pakistani jihad. General Zia-ul-Haq, the Islamist military dictator, [came up with this idea](#). In fact, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, his predecessor, had set the ball rolling by slyly appropriating the defense of the entire Muslim world. His dream project of building a nuclear weapon, the so-called “[Islamic bomb](#),” became a national obsession. Buoyed by support from other Muslim nations, Bhutto went on to promise that Pakistan was willing to wage a “[1,000-year war](#)” over Kashmir with India.

Zia followed in Bhutto's footsteps and gave the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) a free hand to unleash mindless violence in Kashmir. During the course of the violence, Kashmiri Pandits were massacred in cold blood and at least 100,000 were compelled to flee. It was [ethnic cleansing](#) that the Indian bureaucratic and political elite silently ignored if not condoned.

For years, the Indian response to each attack has been confused and submissive. So-called Indian strategists have been shackled by self-imposed chains of restraint. In contrast, Pakistan has become [increasingly belligerent](#).

In 2001, Pakistan-backed terrorists even [attacked India's parliament](#). Forces of both countries stood face to face in "masterly inactivity" for nine months before withdrawing to their barracks. In 2008, [militants of Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\) attacked Mumbai](#) with a savagery that shocked the world and acted as a model for the November 2015 attack in Paris.

The [1998 nuclear tests by both countries](#) emboldened Pakistan. India has adopted a "no first use" policy and also a defensive nuclear deterrence policy. Contrast that with British Prime Minister Theresa May's [willingness to press the nuclear button](#). Pakistan's policy is even more aggressive, and it believes that the threat of nuclear war makes India impotent because the country is led by half men and half shadows.

Pakistan has not been wrong in this assumption. Indian leaders have been exceedingly pusillanimous and have constantly given in to nuclear blackmail. Even Modi, supposedly a hawk, made zealous attempts to reach out to Pakistan.

Commendably, he invited Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other neighboring leaders to his 2014 inauguration ceremony. In 2015, Modi made a last minute detour to Pakistan on his way back from Afghanistan to attend a party in Sharif's family. He resisted calls from some of his hardline supporters for payback against Pakistan. It was a major political gamble for a leader who has sold himself as strong and decisive in all his campaigns.

The Uri attack and Sharif's subsequent statement at the UN that notorious terrorist Burhan Wani was a "[young leader](#)" forced Modi's hand. It is important to note that [the US State Department classifies Wani's organization, Hizbul Mujahideen, as a terrorist](#)

[organization](#). If India was like the United States, it would have killed Wani in a drone strike.

GOOD TERRORIST, BAD TERRORIST

The Pakistani establishment conveniently follows a spurious doctrine of the “[good terrorist](#)” and the “bad terrorist” that beggars belief. As per this doctrine, terrorists who strike India or even Afghanistan can be good. The bad terrorists are those who bite the hand that feeds them. India has been paying a steep price in blood for Pakistan’s policy of promoting “good terrorists.”

Pakistan has long funded terrorists in Kashmir because it draws its *raison d’être* as a state for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. Yet [as Maham Javaid writes at Al Jazeera America](#), Pakistani soldiers abducted, imprisoned and raped thousands of women in present-day Bangladesh in 1971. The Women’s Media Center chronicles rape camps where women “were raped by anywhere from two to 80 men a night.” Around 200,000 to 400,000 young girls to old grandmothers suffered this ordeal. Naturally, Bangladesh jettisoned Pakistan to emerge as an independent country.

Now, other parts are doing so. Balochistan is trying to gain independence from Pakistan, and Modi rightly referred to the human rights abuses that Pakistani troops perpetrate against Balochis in his [Independence Day speech](#). The Indian foreign minister followed up by labeling Pakistani brutality against the Baloch people as “the worst form of state oppression.” In a speech in the UN, she called on the world to [isolate Pakistan because it sponsors terrorism](#).

The Indian focus on Balochistan is a new-fangled thing. Modi has been moving toward a more robust policy after his outreach to Pakistan failed spectacularly. The surgical strikes mark a new era in India’s policy to Pakistan, which will be more assertive going forward.

Nehru’s strategic restraint is now dead and buried six feet under. Modi has decided that offensive defense is the only way forward.

**Mayank Singh is the author of the military thriller “Wolf’s Lair.” This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Afghanistan's Quest for Regional Cooperation

Abbas Farasoo

December 8, 2016

Afghanistan's regional policy is not constructed around local rivalries.

On December 4, the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process was held in Amritsar, India. The Heart of Asia process was launched in 2011 as a new and complementary framework for enhancing dialogue and consensus for regional cooperation and stability.

In his opening remarks at the conference, [Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani reiterated](#) that regional connectivity, development and counterterrorism are inevitable measures for the future stability of Afghanistan and the Heart of Asia region as a whole.

As the center of the Heart of Asia, Afghanistan has the potential to serve as a hub of connectivity between China, Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia. As a crucial part of the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan is trying to restore its historical position to play a substantive role in regional stability and connectivity. Challenges such as terrorism, [radicalization as a sociopolitical process](#), bilateral rivalries and economic fragmentation are undermining the future revival of the Silk Road.

As such, any cooperation and connectivity along the Silk Road network requires strong international support and a cooperative approach by regional players.

BAD NEIGHBORS

This type of cooperation has been particularly high on the Afghan government's agenda since 2001. In September 2014, President Ghani highlighted the new government's emphasis on regional cooperation in his [inauguration speech](#): "For stability, security and economic development, we will try to reach to a regional cooperation pact with all our neighbors. Accepting the legitimacy of each individual government shall constitute the basis of our regional cooperation pact."

On January 26, 2007, [Rangin Dadfar Spanta](#), the former minister of foreign affairs, emphasized: “[T]he realities of a globalizing world command us to move towards further regional cooperation and integration on many fronts.”

Similarly, in May 2011, [Zalmay Rasul](#), the Afghan foreign minister at the time, reiterated: “It is clear that as a massive land bridge between China, Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, Afghanistan can play a pivotal role in creating and strengthening economic cooperation and collaboration amongst regional powers. What this means in part is that the restoration of full security and long-term stability in Afghanistan will have direct and positive effects on economic growth, cooperation and prosperity in the whole region.”

These statements from previous officials indicate that regional cooperation is at the core of Afghanistan’s foreign policy, regardless of the existing rivalries that continue to undermine long-term cooperation and devastate regional order and prosperity as a whole. However, despite the existential threats of militant jihadism such as the Taliban, the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups against Afghanistan and its neighbors, other countries in the region such as Pakistan have failed to promote further result-oriented cooperation to fight terrorism and enhance economic cooperation.

The enemies of one country find safe havens in neighboring nations. Just recently, the leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Akhter Mohammad Mansour, was killed in Pakistan by US drone strikes. Osama bin Laden was killed in May 2011 in Pakistan and Mullah Mohammad Omer also died there in 2013.

STRATEGIC POSITIONS

The provision of sanctuaries in the region for terrorism has been among the chief sources of tension and mistrust, overshadowing important initiatives. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit, which was scheduled to be held in Pakistan in November 2016, was cancelled after member states announced that due to a lack of cooperation on terrorism and peace, it would be unsuitable to attend the summit.

Again, fingers pointed toward Pakistan as a country that caused a trust deficit. But the Sixth Conference of the Heart of Asia provided another opportunity for regional countries to continue dialogue on peace and prosperity.

If they find ways of cooperating in the War on Terrorism, Afghanistan finds itself strategically positioned to connect South Asia to Central Asia and Eurasia. Afghanistan has not only offered Pakistan cooperation on security, particularly in the fight against terrorism, but it has also tried for more than a decade to convince Islamabad to enhance regional economic cooperation in energy transmission and trade and transportation agreements.

For instance, Afghanistan has insisted that the [Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement](#) (APTTA) be finalized and implemented. It is working through Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTTCA) and has invited Islamabad to be part of other regional initiatives.

In order to achieve regional connectivity, Afghanistan has taken a leading role in developing and executing of major regional projects such as [CASA-1000](#), the transmission of power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline, TAP-500, transmitting electricity from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan; and the [Lapis Lazuli Transit Trade and Transport Route](#), a regional project that connects Afghanistan (and potentially the South Asia) to the Black Sea through Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia. The Lapis Lazuli agreement was [finalized](#) in November.

Moreover, Afghanistan signed the Chabahar transit and transport agreement with Iran and India to connect Central Asia to the Middle East and South Asia.

At the same time, Afghanistan signed a [memorandum of understanding with China](#) about the “One Belt, One Road” initiative to jointly revitalize the ancient Silk Road, which historically connected China to South Asia through Afghanistan. For the first time, a special railway was launched in August to transport commercial goods from Nantong of Jiangsu province of China, through Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, to Hairatan port in northern Afghanistan. On November 28, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan [opened a railway](#) that is crucial for connecting Central Asia to South Asia through Afghanistan.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Finally, Afghanistan is an active member and contributor of several regional organizations, including SAARC and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The country also gained observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). On the other hand, Afghanistan is part of other initiatives such as the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan (RECCA), which is crucial for interconnectivity and development.

All of this indicates that Afghanistan's regional policy is not constructed around local rivalries and competitive contexts. Rather, it is focused on regional connectivity as a way toward cooperation and stabilization. However, the fact that power rivalries continue to have security and economic implications on Afghanistan is one of the most difficult challenges for the country. Moreover, Afghanistan's policy for promoting regional cooperation is crucial for the international community, as it helps eradicate extremism, succeed in the fight against terrorism and enhance international security.

Overcoming massive economic challenges and the threats of terrorism require international support. Terrorist groups such as the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jundallah, al-Qaeda, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Haqqani network and the Islamic State are active in South Asia and have sanctuaries in Pakistan.

According to [Global Terrorism Index](#) and [Global Peace Index](#), Afghanistan and Pakistan are the most vulnerable countries in South Asia. The [US State Department](#) notes that "South Asia [has] remained a front-line region in the battle against terrorism." Therefore, the expansion of militant jihadists is an [existential threat](#) for all nation-states in the region.

The relationship between regional alliances and international support for cooperation can often be complicated. In Asia, one of the most successful cooperative structures is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Like South Asia, Southeast Asia has also experienced a period of colonialism, the Cold War era, cultural and geographical diversities, bilateral rivalries and territorial disputes, but it has managed to overcome them to promote cooperation.

For example, ASEAN, which helped increase economic activity in the region, played a critical role in resolving the Cambodian conflict in 1978. This is because regionalism in Southeast Asia has been consistently supported by the international community.

Afghanistan offers an opportunity for everyone in terms of its location and political approach, but the realization of successful cooperation in the region requires the support of both the international community and local powers to enforce a consensus and cooperation against terrorist threats, economic fragmentation, organized crime and drug trafficking.

The presence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan can serve as an opportunity to help promote synergy for an effective fight against terrorism. The international community must use its presence to support critical regional initiatives and encourage and pressure all stakeholders to adopt a cooperative approach and dismantle sanctuaries harboring extremists.

**Abbas Farasoo works in the civil service for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Afghanistan. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



EUROPE

Is the Snooper's Charter as Bad as You Think?

Gavin E.L. Hall

March 10, 2016

Security services lack the resources to randomly spy on people.

On March 1, UK Home Secretary Theresa May announced that the redrafting of the [Investigatory Powers Bill](#) was complete, following a call for the written evidence on the original draft in November 2015. The purpose of the bill is to clarify what activity the [British](#) security services and law enforcement can engage in online, either by restating existing practice or by introducing new powers. The ability to seek a year's worth of [Internet browsing history](#) has attracted a good deal of publicity and given rise to public concern. The issue is pressing as existing legislation was [ruled unlawful](#), following a challenge from Members of Parliament Tom Watson and David Davis, and is set to expire on March 31, 2016.

David Anderson, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, [recommends](#) that the so-called "Snooper's Charter"—the bill's unofficial name—strikes a balance between freedom and security. Such a positive statement does not appease the critics of the bill who argue, to paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, that liberty is being surrendered in search of temporary security. Is the public's fear justified as we enter a new Orwellian age, or do the security services have valid reasons for seeking access to data?

CYBER REALITY

The rule of law has developed in the Western world over centuries. The rights of the individual and the demands of the state have been in conflict during this period of legal evolution, and the present Investigatory Powers Bill can be viewed as part of this history—not just a knee jerk. Placing the bill in this historical context is important, as it enables us to establish that the existing laws of the land have been developed over a prolonged period as a series of compromises, while generally maintaining the balance

between individual freedom and state security. In other words, what invasions of privacy are permissible in the name of security is well-established, in the real world at least.

Should it be permissible to engage in the same activity in the cyber environment as in the real world, or does this new technology warrant different standards of freedom and privacy? For example, if two known terrorists are meeting at a private house, should a bug be planted? If they speak by phone, should it be tapped? Or if they speak via WhatsApp, should it be [hacked](#)? Is there a difference between these examples, or are they fundamentally the same?

The state, in the form of security services, does not randomly spy on people—it lacks the resources. The security services spend their time keeping citizens safe, and mass surveillance requires too much time, both in terms of collation as well as analysis, which would result in the inability to adequately perform the primary security function. While it may technically be possible under the bill to impugn individual freedom, John Bull has little to fear.

The mass collection of data enables the security services to keep us safe by utilizing snippets of information from a variety of sources to develop situational awareness and identify possible terrorists, with seven attacks [being prevented in the United Kingdom](#) in the last six months. This is not only in terms of the presence of information, but also the absence of information—identifying negative patterns is equally important to identifying positive ones. For example, if a known terrorist network goes quiet and stops communicating, it can be an indication that they are about to launch an attack.

Three areas are key to analyzing an individual: centrality, between-ness and degree. Centrality refers to how important the individual is; between-ness relates to a person's access to others; and degree is the number of people one interacts with. These core principles of intelligence gathering have not changed with the advent of new technology. The sole difference of the 2016 world is that an environment outside the real world exists in which information and data can be stored and transmitted.

The Investigatory Powers Bill seeks to ensure that the same powers that exist within the real world are also present in the cyber environment by avoiding potential arguments that certain powers are only legally relevant to the real world.

WHITE NOISE

Of 225 individuals charged with terrorism offenses in the United States between 9/11 and January 2014, only 17 were the result of [mass surveillance techniques used by the National Security Agency](#). Indeed, the issue of white noise—too much information cluttering the relevant information being sought—is considered to be a substantial challenge to security services.

Furthermore, the likelihood of this clause being useful against terrorists is minimal, as most are likely to be using TOR, or similar privacy ensuring tools. TOR—the onion router—is a way of connecting to the Internet that masks your IP address by bouncing the connection across a series of proxies. While the Internet service provider (ISP) record would reveal a connection to TOR, it would not show which sites had been visited. Seeking to explore what an individual has been doing online—a space where social interaction takes place—is akin to seeking information on an individual's habits in the real world. As such, asking an ISP to provide data is no more or less of an intrusion into individual privacy than asking the proprietor of a business to share customer information, either general or specific.

Companies have been resisting for commercial reasons. They perceive that their customers will not be happy if they agree to data being made available to the government. In a [Reuters poll](#), 46.3% of respondents agreed with Apple's stance of refusing to unlock the smartphone of an actual terrorist, with 35.5% disagreeing.

The potential for backdoors to be built into software has recently been the subject of sustained [dispute between the Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\) and Apple](#), and attracts the most public attention. If more specific attention was made toward educating the public as to why the state was seeking such powers and the benefits of formally codifying—in legal practice—the powers of agencies of state security, the public could be more favorable to the UK bill.

**Gavin E.L. Hall is a doctoral researcher at the University of Birmingham. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Austrian President Takes Over a Split Nation

Stefanie Leodolter

June 1, 2016

The tightest race since 1945 has brought left-wing liberal economist Alexander Van der Bellen forward as the new president of Austria.

Of all places, it is Austria's smallest municipality of Gramais in the Tyrolean Alps that has become symbolic for the political state the country is in. Only 51 people live in this village—39 of them eligible to vote. On May 22, [18 voters went to the polling station for the presidential election](#). Half of them chose Alexander Van der Bellen, a former Green Party leader who ran as an independent candidate and eventually won the race. The other half of voters in the picturesque village of Gramais checked the box for Norbert Hofer of the right-wing populist Freedom Party (FPÖ)—as did 49.7% of Austrians.

The match was so close that a final result could only be reached a day later. A striking number of [900,000 postal ballots](#) had to be counted, resulting in Van der Bellen overtaking his opponent, but only by a small sum of [31,000 votes](#). The election turned into an international media frenzy in Vienna, with hundreds of journalists watching the race almost as anxiously as Austrians themselves.

The reason for this high level of global interest was not because of President-Elect Van der Bellen. The world's eye was solely focused on Hofer and whether Austria would become yet another European nation led by a right-wing populist. It would have followed a drastic trend around the continent with the right turn of countries such as [Poland and Hungary](#).

PAST AND PRESENT

Austria has been here before. In 1986, Kurt Waldheim, a former secretary-general of the United Nations (UN), ran for president backed by the centrist People's Party (ÖVP). In his application to the UN, he lied and failed to mention his involvement under the [Nazi regime and his role in the Wehrmacht](#). Despite enormous international resistance, Waldheim was elected president by [53.9% of Austrians](#). He lasted one term

until 1992 and remained widely isolated internationally; he was [declared a persona non grata in the United States](#).

This time around, the pressure against Hofer from outside Austria came from high ranking politicians, including the presidents of the [European Commission and Parliament](#), Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Schulz, among others.

This was different from one year ago. When speaking to the public, Austrian leaders headed by Chancellor Werner Faymann of the Social Democrats (SPÖ) euphemistically presented themselves to be just fine. While the governing coalition of the SPÖ and ÖVP had taken heavy blows in regional elections in [Burgenland, Styria](#) and later in [Upper Austria](#), there was no sign that their seemingly sedated political strategy would change any time soon. And hardly anyone outside the national borders seemed to be paying much attention to the alpine republic.

Suddenly on August 28, 2015, however, all eyes were on Austria and a truck found on a highway in the eastern province of Burgenland: 71 refugees—eight women, four children and 59 men—had [tragically died on their journey to safety](#).

Soon after, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared, “We can do it!” in response to the humanitarian crisis that surfaced in the movement of refugees and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan and many other countries. Faymann followed suit, opening borders and letting thousands of refugees enter Austria, most of whom did not plan on staying but instead had the aim of reaching Germany.

The Viennese regional elections served as a final wake-up call in terms of the [growing power of the far-right](#). From that moment, the “refugees welcome” attitude adopted by Faymann and his cabinet had changed. Instead, he [introduced fierce laws to keep refugees out of the country](#). If nothing else, Faymann was brought to his knees by Hofer and his FPÖ and their aggressive anti-refugee campaigning. A large part of the population had bought into the populist strategy of fear and distrust in anything and anyone foreign. On top of that, constant disappointment and general disenchantment with politics were feeding the specter of the right-wing movement.

ALEXANDER VAN DER BELLEN

Today, Faymann is history. Booed by the left-wing of his own party at their traditional parade on May 1, he [resigned a week](#) later. [Christian Kern](#), the former national railway (ÖBB) chief and figurehead during the refugee crisis, has taken office. With him came a hint of hope in the midst of political turmoil in Austria that a final right turn may be fended off. Kern has only a little time to get his new cabinet back on track and to prove that he is the wunderkind that he is expected to be. For President-Elect Van der Bellen's campaign, Kern's appearance was the silver lining of destructive political turbulence that seemed to be helping his rival.

But who is this rawboned, chain smoking economist who has gathered half the country behind him?

[Alexander Van der Bellen](#), known by his nickname Sascha, was born in 1944 in Vienna. His father, an aristocrat of German, Dutch and Estonian descent born in Russia, and his Estonian mother had both fled Stalinism. Van der Bellen is a retired professor of economics at the University of Vienna. As a member of the Green Party, he sat in parliament for many years and acted as their federal spokesperson until 2008. During the election battle, he insisted on being an independent candidate for the presidency—although the Green Party provided not only moral, but also monetary support for his campaign.

In the end, Alexander “Sascha” Van der Bellen received 50.3% percent of the vote—many of which came his way to prevent Hofer from becoming president. Van der Bellen gathered a large committee of supporters around him consisting of influential people in politics, science and the arts. Toward the end of the race, he even managed to form unexpected alliances with the Catholic women's movement, despite leaving the Catholic Church and being without a religious denomination.

SPLIT AUSTRIA

One thing is for certain: Van der Bellen and Hofer have managed to split the country. Their average voter types could hardly be more different. The trench between them separates women and men, urban and rural, higher and lower education levels. If one was to give into a bold thought experiment of only one gender being allowed to vote—let us say women for the sake of the argument—Van der Bellen [would have won with 60%](#). Young women, living in the [city in their late 20s and with a college degree](#) went to

the polls to pick Van der Bellen. Hofer's votes came from men up to 59 years old without a high school diploma and who were in search of a "strong president."

But Van der Bellen's victory is nothing but a faint signal of reason to Europe and the world. He will be welcomed by the international community and ought to represent Austria in an adequate diplomatic manner. However, the role of the Austrian president is not what you may think. The presidency does not hold a great deal of power inside or outside the country.

Added to that, half of Austria voted against the president-elect in favor of the antipode: Hofer and the FPÖ. This is the party's greatest success, and it is to be expected that they will benefit from this historic result at the general elections in 2018.

In April, before the first round of elections, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) aired a debate between all the candidates, in which Hofer said: "[You will be surprised by what can be done](#)." While he lost the election, his statement is as worrying as ever. Governments in Europe must overcome their nationalist approach to solve global challenges, which can only be tackled if member states of the European Union manage to unite and find common ground. Otherwise, Hofer's statement may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

President-elect Van der Bellen has acknowledged that he is taking over a split nation. In his first speech after the final result, he said the trenches had been there before and that "[maybe we did not look close enough and we will have to pay more attention](#)." Because in the end, both halves of the population still matter. If he didn't feel presidential yet, he certainly did by closing his speech with: "You are as important as I am and I am as important as you are. And together we add up to this beautiful Austria."

**Stefanie Leodolter is a reporter at the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Why Brexit and the Success of Trump Should Not Surprise You

Yasmeen Sami Alamiri and Ryan J. Suto

June 27, 2016

The global economic crisis has greatly contributed to the rise of far-right politics in the West manifesting itself in outcomes such as Brexit and the unprecedented rise of Donald Trump.

On June 23, the [United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union](#) (EU) with the full effect of the economic, social and political ramifications of the decision still unknown. While the historic decision has disturbed and surprised many, the foundation for such a seismic change is squarely the product of profound social and cultural tensions—some of which are being simultaneously echoed by the United States.

Aside from the weight of the decision to leave the EU, the demographic breakdown of those who voted to leave—with a median age of over 65 years old—is notable. The bloc of voters vehemently behind the campaign for the UK to remain part of the EU had a median age of 21, [according to British pollster YouGov](#). The discrepancy is both stark and important. Those who decided to leave the EU would ostensibly only have to “live with the decision” for 16 years, while those who fought to stay in will live with the ramifications for an average of 69 years.

BABY BOOMERS

The parallels to the US are hard to dismiss. The demographic that has supported Donald Trump, the candidate many initially wrote off as an impossibility, has now been carried to the position of the presumptive presidential nominee for the Republican Party. Reports have shown repeatedly that [baby boomers are bolstering Trump's candidacy](#), the person to return them to their America—a time of greater economic stability and a more demographically homogeneous population. [A 2015 Rasmussen poll](#) showed that 56% of voters over the age of 40 want to build a wall along America's southern border, while only 36% of those aged between 18-39 support building the wall with Mexico.

Contextually, landmark events have changed the way that the US—and other Western democracies—have come to function. The events of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent War on Terror, as well as the economic down turn in 2008, have colored the way Americans regard both national security and economic stability.

The global economic crisis, combined with the rise of social media, has greatly contributed to the rise of far-right politics in the West manifesting itself in outcomes such as Brexit and the unprecedented rise of candidates such as Trump. The ability to connect exclusively with individuals and organizations that share ideologically-driven struggles and fears has exacerbated the impact of rising economic inequality, political extremism and xenophobia.

Trump himself, while visiting Scotland, made the linkage, [tweeting](#) that “many people are equating Brexit, and what is going on in Great Britain, with what is happening in the U.S. People want their country back!” This argument assumes that the countries have been taken away. It also assumes that the rise of immigration somehow works to unravel a nation’s very fabric.

Coincidentally, Western democracies have been grappling with the so-called “refugee crisis” that has been born of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, but namely Syria. Though the US is [well behind its goal](#) to accept 10,000 refugees into the country by the end of 2016 (it has only accepted 1,285 thus far), the idea of granting asylum to refugees from Syria has only widened political divides.

The American right has argued that allowing in refugees from the Middle East will be a direct threat to US national security and stability, and has viewed all immigration policies with high scrutiny. The new perceived threat, paired with resentment over economic hardship and underemployment, has led some Americans to believe that the country needs to either be “taken back,” or “made great again.”

The decision to Brexit comes at a time when European nations [have accepted](#) over a million migrants and refugees in 2015 alone. In 2015, Germany, an EU nation, received over 400,000 asylum applications. The decision to allow in refugees only grew resentment, especially in light of the November 2015 Paris attacks, for which the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility, and the [2015-16 New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Germany](#), where the perpetrators were thought to have come into Europe

among the flow of migrants and refugees. The sentiments only grew following the March 2016 bombings in Brussels—the location of the European Parliament.

BALLOT BOX OR THE STREET

While our international norms of tolerance and human rights have evolved quickly since the 1945 establishment of the United Nations, the all too human mix of fear and tribalism [remain unmitigated by the secular, liberal democratic world order](#) that Western elites created in the 20th century. To this point, George Orwell's "England Your England" has been invoked in the Brexit debate, as the writer in 1941 wrote of "the famous 'insularity' and 'xenophobia' of the English," particularly of the "working class."

The occurrence of Brexit and the success of the Trump campaign—both deemed unprecedented and surprising—are born of greater social and economic narratives. The Western assumption that the world is destined to reach a more tolerant, equal and stable condition has been questioned by the success of those narratives among baby boomers. The insular proclivities of Western elders will lead to increased conflict along demographic lines, thus ensuring the self-fulfilling prophesy of tension between the West and the rest.

Democratic ideals are either preserved at the ballot box or lost in the street. In the face of growing economic inequality and fear of the "other," insularity and fear have proved intoxicating for elders longing for an idealized past.

The onus then falls on the young to maintain faith in equality and toleration to ensure that liberal democracy remains a political reality. That reality of what the decisions to potentially choose a renegade presidential candidate, or to Brexit, will soon be revealed.

**Yasmeen Sami Alamiri is an Iraqi-American journalist working in Washington, DC. Ryan J. Suto is a writer on the United States and the Middle East. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Why Tony Blair Invaded Iraq

Ian McCredie

July 18, 2016

The Chilcot report fails to determine why George W. Bush invaded Iraq and thus misses the real reasons Tony Blair followed him.

[Sir John Chilcot's Report of the Iraq Inquiry](#), which has caused so much anger in the United Kingdom as it details the spurious reasons of why former British Prime Minister Tony Blair led the country to war, fails to answer the question of why US President George W. Bush took the decision to invade Iraq.

As a result, it misses the underlying reason of why Blair chose to join him, and Blair has compounded the confusion by claiming that the world is a [safer place](#) because of the decision he took to invade Iraq—a typical self-aggrandizing statement.

REGIME CHANGE

The reality is that the policy of regime change in Iraq, by force if necessary, was formulated years earlier by the neocons of the Bush administration—Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Doug Feith and Stephen Hadley among them—who in turn were close to and mightily influenced by the thinking in Tel Aviv.

The strand of Israeli and neocon thinking at the time was that Saddam Hussein was the last Arab leader actively confronting Israel and the last remaining supporter of Yasser Arafat and the rejectionists in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Eliminating Saddam's regime would mean that finally all Arab states would be reconciled to peaceful, if not friendly, relations with Israel, and that the PLO, having lost the last one of its Arab backers, would be forced to negotiate a settlement and, therefore, begin healing the festering sore of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. A few ornamental sprinkles were added to this by talking up the advantages of removing a monster and establishing a democratic Iraqi state that would act as a beacon of hope and reform to the rest of the Arab world.

The US decision to pursue regime change was entirely independent of the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. Indeed, the decision to pursue regime change by any means was taken long before September 11, 2001: Bush issued instructions shortly after he was elected to plan for Saddam's removal.

The events of 9/11 added momentum to the policy because Bush, egged on by the neocons and Henry Kissinger, impressed on him that the only effective response to 9/11 must be a US demonstration of its overwhelming power to would-be attackers—and that an invasion of Iraq would serve very well, with all the other benefits Tel Aviv were talking up.

CURVEBALLS

The only thing missing was a *casus belli*, and the Bush administration cast around for any reason that they could use to justify an invasion. The only one that held water was Saddam's continued violation of the terms of the United Nations (UN) inspection regime. Stephen Hadley—at the time deputy to then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice—was challenged very early on that an unprovoked invasion of Iraq would be illegal; he erupted with the rebuke that he was not concerned with legality but with policy.

Having settled on using the violation of the UN resolutions and, in a leap of logic, that therefore Saddam must be concealing WMDs as justification, the US asked the Brits to help frame the argument and join the coalition of invasion forces and so add respectability and authority to the public presentation. At this point, the search for any evidence or intelligence to support the theory that Saddam was hiding WMDs went into overdrive.

There was no evidence to support the WMDs claims, and all the intelligence was either tentative or fabricated by the likes of the Iraqi defector-turned-informant known as "[Curveball](#)" and many like him. This was a major problem for the strategy of proving noncompliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1441 as the pretext for war.

But war was coming irrespective of proving Saddam's possession of WMDs, and so Tony Blair was faced with a dilemma: Oppose the UK's most powerful ally and refuse requests for help, or stick with friends in the belief that such was their power they would win anyway—right or wrong or, as Blair put it in his [letter to Bush](#), "whatever."

Wrong on both counts.

**Ian McCredie is a former senior British foreign service official. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



The Church: Caught Between Russia and Ukraine

Brian Milakovsky

December 14, 2016

In Eastern Ukraine, the Orthodox Church finds itself in the crossfire of an ideological conflict.

“I call on those who cry out that we should restore justice with our fists: Our country is ailing, but we must treat her in a way that does not kill the patient ... We must call a sin a sin, but love the sinner. I speak of the eternal. Think of that, so that you won’t be ashamed to look in the eyes of your children, so that you won’t need to stand before the icon and cry ‘Lord, what have we done?’”

The Orthodox priest Giorgiy Gulyaev [spoke these words](#) on March 1, 2014, to a large, restive crowd in the Eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk. He was addressing a meeting attended by both sides of the rapidly polarizing city and directed his words to the pro-Russian separatists in the crowd, who comprised the majority. They roared their disapproval at him, and not long after his speech a crowd of separatists led by the new “people’s mayor” swept Father Giorgiy and their opponents from the square and seized the city administration. The Ukrainian yellow and blue was torn down and the Russian tricolor raised in its place. Ukraine had lost Donetsk. But he had done what he could. Father Giorgiy’s words were those of a Ukrainian agonized equally by his country’s “ailment”—the divisive Euromaidan revolution in Kiev that brought a pro-Western government to power and alienated millions in the country’s east, and by the “treatment” being stoked by Russia—armed separatism.

Throughout the war in the Donbass Father Giorgiy attempted to hold his ground as fault lines open beneath him. He is a sincere Ukrainian patriot who passionately serves in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP), considered by many to be Russia's cultural beachhead in the country. From his chapel in the Donetsk Metal Works he condemned both incoming and outgoing artillery strikes. He criticized radical Ukrainian nationalists who seized "Muscovite" churches and also separatists who paraded Ukrainian POWs through the streets of Donetsk.

In so many ways the center that Father Giorgiy occupied could not hold. But he shows how an ethical man can navigate seemingly intractable conflicts. One is being waged with artillery by the Russian-backed separatists and the Ukrainian Army in the rusting industrial cities of the Donbass, with horrific human consequences: almost 10,000 dead [according to the UN](#)—2,000 civilian, at a very conservative estimate—and as many as 1.7 million people [displaced within Ukraine](#) at the peak of the conflict and perhaps a million to Russia and other countries. The other conflict is within Ukrainian Orthodoxy and involves questions of loyalty, patriotism and religious liberty.

ONLY GOD TO HOPE FOR

Before the war, Father Giorgiy was both priest and press secretary for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Donetsk. The Moscow Patriarchate (MP) is recognized by the Orthodox world and warily shares Ukraine with its rival, the unrecognized but increasingly popular Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP). The former dominates the country's east and the latter its center and west. Long before the war relations were strained, with the patriarchates trading charges of "schismatics" and "Moscow agents." But Father Giorgiy could complacently enjoy the MP's majority status in Donetsk, while demonstrating an unusual openness to other confessions and secular journalists.

Father Giorgiy watched the Euromaidan revolution in the winter of 2013-14 with alarm. Support for the revolutionary movement in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions of the Donbass was [minimal](#)—around 17%—but Donetsk did have its own Maidan peopled by many liberal journalists Gulyaev had befriended. The revolution's victory in February was rapidly followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea and its subversive Russian Spring project, which fostered separatism in the Donbass.

Many Ukrainians [accuse](#) the Moscow Patriarchate of welcoming the Russian Spring and offering aid and comfort to separatists and their Russian accomplices. Father Giorgiy bristles at the accusation, claiming that MP leadership did everything they could to support the legal authorities in Donetsk, whose paralysis helped hand the city over to the separatists.

His own actions at the pro-unity rally in March 2015 demonstrate courage in the face of the armed takeover, but such gestures were not enough. Thousands of pro-unity residents fled after the city was christened capital of a separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DPR). But Father Giorgiy continued to serve at his chapel, crossing the emptying city every day under artillery fire. The church became a haven from the nerve-shattering strain and ideological radicalization of wartime Donetsk. After the factory was shelled and several workers killed, he shielded the church's entrance with stacked cement barriers.

"We learned to pray through the sound of artillery fire and ask each other for forgiveness at every service, hoping that we would meet again the next week," he [recalled](#) in 2014. Knowing that his congregation included both fervent separatists and quiet supporters of Ukrainian unity, Gulyaev fostered a distance from the world that allowed them to pray together in harmony. He notes with pride that not a single of his congregants took up arms in the Donbass conflict.

In regular Facebook posts and interviews for the Ukrainian and Russian press Gulyaev offered a glimpse into the war-wracked city and a compassionate, consistent denunciation of the conflict's brutality. "I remember the shock and crash of the outgoing artillery when the DPR began firing on the Ukrainian forces," he told me in October. "We curled up on the floor and prayed. 'God have mercy on us, God have mercy on us ...' There was no one else to hope for."

The DPR artillery incited answering fire from the Ukrainian army. But as the destructive shelling by Ukrainian forces dragged on for months, Father Giorgiy came to see it as "senseless ... incomprehensible" and a crucial factor in driving Donetsk residents away from Ukraine. "When we buried those people [killed in artillery strikes] it was difficult to understand, to explain why they died," he said in a 2015 [interview](#). "My congregants felt that they were being fired on by their own people. And through all of it they considered themselves a part of Ukraine."

He recalls delivering emergency fuel to a psychiatric hospital in Donetsk in the winter of 2014-15, when the two sides pounded each other incessantly with heavy artillery. No DPR positions were nearby, but the hospital's grounds were cratered and its windows blown out. "Only by the grace of God was the hospital itself not hit."

But many churches were. The Iversky Monastery was [destroyed](#) when the nearby Donetsk airport became one of the war's key battlegrounds. Artillery shells burned a new wooden church to the ground in separatist-controlled Horlivka. Dozens of churches would be damaged in the province of Donetsk, the majority in the territories under separatist control. Father Giorgiy was conflicted about informing his congregation of new damages to churches for fear it would inspire some to call for revenge.

TODAY, DONETSK HAS DIED

Such conditions drove Gulyaev to castigate the revolutionary government in Kiev for de-humanizing the residents of Donetsk. He [wrote](#) on Facebook: "The solution to the Donbass' problems is not to fence it off with barbed wire, 'cleanse' and 'disinfect' it. You say you want to build a new Ukraine? It is not enough to tear down monuments to totalitarian rulers, first you must topple your mental idol, which still demands bloody sacrifice. The virus of hatred toward dissent is more dangerous than the dissent itself." Such jeremiads made some Ukrainians look on Father Giorgiy as a "secret separatist." But his coldness toward the DPR authorities earned him enemies there as well, especially after he publicly opposed a decision to [parade](#) Ukrainian prisoners of war through the streets. "When the first images from that parade appeared online," he recalls, "I just sat in my empty office in front of my monitor and cried."

Then he wrote with concise rage on Facebook: "Today Donetsk has died." This harsh judgement would be thrown back at him many times by the Russian and DPR press, which began labelling him a "hidden schismatic" and a "Ukrainian fascist."

"People from both sides require of me that I share their emotions, judge who they judge and curse who they curse. They want to hold me to their preferred, inflexible position," Gulyaev [told](#) *Orthodox Life*. "But it is not my task to simply 'satisfy their religious needs.' It is my task to witness for the One who gave us the Gospel. [In doing so] I feel that I cannot satisfy either side."

In October 2015, at the urging of his own parishioners, Father Giorgiy finally left Donetsk to join his wife and children on Ukrainian-controlled territory. Divided now by the front line, Gulyaev and his Donetsk congregants try to keep alive the politically neutral, devotional space he created in his church. Most who stayed are now supporters of the unrecognized DPR, but consult by telephone with pro-unity Gulyaev on matters of faith. But he knows the bonds are fraying.

“Time is working against Ukraine,” he told me in an October Skype interview. Donetsk residents grow accustomed to the separatist authorities, saturated as they are in the Russian and DPR media spheres. And living through the shelling of Donetsk plays its role as well, requiring no spin.

Father Giorgiy [insists](#) that the Moscow Patriarchate is “the structure which can spiritually bind the Donbass to Ukraine.” He claims that the UOC-MP has resisted efforts by the DPR to turn it into a state church. “It remains the *Ukrainian* Orthodox Church, in name and practice,” he says.

The boundaries of the dioceses have not adapted to the war, with the largest in the Donbass encompassing both Donetsk and Ukrainian-controlled Mariupol. Deeply divided as they are by ideology and geopolitics, he believes that Ukrainians must make their common faith a space for dialogue and reconciliation.

A BRIDGE OR A FAULTLINE?

But many Ukrainians vigorously disagree with Father Giorgiy’s characterization of the UOC-MP as a bridge to Ukraine. There is [convincing evidence](#) that certain Moscow Patriarchate priests and lay activists took part in the separatist movement from its earliest days, [giving sanctuary](#) to armed Russian mercenaries. MP priests blessed camouflaged separatists at their roadblocks and addressed their congregants at DPR rallies, while members of other religious affiliations faced [violent repression](#) and abduction. At least four Protestants were [murdered](#) in the earliest days of the war for their “alien faith.”

Some figures from the Moscow Patriarchate have [joined](#) in the construction of the Donetsk/Luhansk People’s Republics (LPR) state ideology on the basis of “traditional values” and brotherhood with Russia. Ukraine press and social media are full of

anecdotal reports that MP priests in government-controlled areas of the Donbass praise the separatist fighters as a bulwark against Western cultural imperialism.

When I asked about separatism in his church, Father Giorgiy offered a cautious criticism: "... in the Orthodox Church we have one minus—our tendency to orient on the official local authorities. When a new [leader] arrives, we assess him for a while, and if he seems to act on some sort of legal basis then we form a relationship with him ... We are very tied to the land ... We must stay and protect our sacred relics."

But Gulyaev posits that separatist priests are rogues and do not reflect the policy of their church. Kiev-based religious scholar Yuriy Chernomorets [agrees](#), claiming that the only consistent predictor that a priest would support the DPR is whether he is a veteran of the Soviet Army. Many MP priests, including their [leader Patriarch Onufrii](#), are sympathetic to the anti-modern Russian world ideology but do not condone its military-political manifestation in the People's Republics.

But those sympathies are enough to convince many believers to vote with their feet. Since the start of the war polls indicate that more Ukrainians [associate](#) themselves with the Kyiv than the Moscow Patriarchate (44% and 21% of all believing Ukrainians, respectively), though this may not reflect actual numbers of churchgoers. Only in the Donbass does the Moscow Patriarchate remain the most common religious affiliation.

But, troublingly, the momentum against the Moscow Patriarchate goes beyond the voluntary choice of Orthodox faithful. MP parishioners in Western Ukraine claim that Kyiv Patriarchate (KP) activists and radical nationalists have attempted "hostile takeovers" of 31 churches, sometimes with the support of local police. Representatives of the Kyiv Patriarchate [claim](#) that this is a peaceful assertion of majority rights, but reports of kerchiefed babushkas being beaten up by camouflaged nationalists indicate a dark tendency toward violent coercion.

The Moscow Patriarchate has successfully countered hostile takeovers in Ukraine's courts, but has received little sympathy from the government. In fact, a [draft bill](#) is before Ukrainian parliament that would simplify transfer of churches from one confession to another. If the law is passed anyone who self-identifies as a churchgoer can vote about its future affiliation, raising fears that true parishioners could be outvoted by cooked-up majorities. Besides the Moscow Patriarchate, Ukraine's Jewish,

Roman Catholic and Lutheran communities have spoken out against the bill as a threat to religious liberty.

Nor have public figures denounced the violent language sometimes directed at the Moscow Patriarchate by KP leaders, such as the [Metropolitan of Rivne](#) who said that “We will bury those who look to the north [Russia] ... Do not let those who pray in the occupier’s tongue deceive you! God hears us, but he will never hear them.” Arson attacks on churches have become sadly frequent in Ukraine, mostly, but not exclusively, against the MP. Within a few days of this article being written, both a KP and a MP church were torched in Eastern Ukraine.

FOSTERING UNITY

The Moscow Patriarchate cannot fulfil its stated goal of fostering unity and reconciliation until it addresses the breadth of separatist sympathy within the church. But the MP’s most virulent opponents risk widening a sectarian fault line that is spreading deep into Ukraine.

Interestingly, both patriarchates are more or less at peace in the war-torn Donbass, where they both have churches on the “wrong” side of the frontlines. In the [Luhansk region](#), the KP bishop in Ukrainian-held territory protects MP churches from hostile takeovers by radical nationalists because he knows that the MP bishop in separatist-held Luhansk will do the same for KP churches, which the republican authorities have eyed for conversion.

Father Giorgiy also offers a personal example. Not only did he decline the many feelers from separatist leaders about making the MP the state church of the DPR. When he finally visited them in the paneled offices they seized from the Ukrainian security services it was to plead for the release of KP and Uniate priests held in basement prisons under suspicion of espionage. Strenuous theological and political differences did not stop him from risking his own freedom to secure that of other Ukrainian citizens and men of God.

One might wish that, like Gulyaev, the churches were united by love and Orthodox values, and not mutual fear and self-interest. But their commitment to maintain religious freedom on both sides of the frontline is nonetheless encouraging. Perhaps it

offers a model for Ukraine as a whole: practical reconciliation can begin from shared suffering. The love can come later.

**Brian Milakovsky works on humanitarian issues in eastern Ukraine. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



What's Behind Femicide in Mexico?

Terra Stanley

February 2, 2016

Cancun's unsustainable development process helps explain femicide.

On January 13, Ruth Noh, a 7-year-old, was found [raped and strangled to death](#) in her bedroom in a Cancun apartment complex. The parents were taken into custody, and neighbors said the step-dad worked nights and the mom neglected the child, since she regularly drank alcohol with different men in the apartment.

In November 2015, a horrific streak of women killings in the Mexican city included the murder of a 24-year-old female in the same apartment complex. During this time, alarm engulfed the tourist hub as five disturbing homicides of women occurred within three weeks. Four of the victims died in the city's periphery and one in the hotel zone.

THE STREAK GOES ON

After the discovery of the fourth victim, the state public safety secretary, Juan Pedro Mercader Rodríguez, [implemented a unified police command in Benito Juárez](#) (the municipality that comprises Cancun) in light of the insecurity. However, [Governor Roberto Borge stated](#) that people are irresponsibly throwing around the word femicide in Quintana Roo, the state that is home to Cancun: "It's not okay that people want to cut political profits and generate mass panic in the state."

The following day, a fifth female victim of the streak passed away in an apartment in Region 223 of the city. She was identified as Deysi del Rosario, a 31-year-old Zumba instructor. Deysi was found naked on a bed, presumably strangled.

The panic that has since surfaced is due to the disconcerting violence utilized in all five homicides, and while in a handful of the cases authorities arrested suspects, citizens distrust the "proof" implicating these detainees and perceive pervasive impunity in these crimes.

The streak began on October 18, 2015, when Rebeca Rivera Neri, 24 and originally from Veracruz, Mexico, was found dead in the same apartment complex in Region 251, where 7-year-old Noh also lived. Her body was partially naked and her face was destroyed by thrashing. The cause of death was strangulation. According to Mexican authorities, initial investigations pointed to “a crime of passion” because “[she went out with a lot of people.](#)”

On October 27, Karen Carrasco, a 19-year-old college student, was [found dead in an empty lot](#) in Region 217; signs indicated severe force to the head and thorax, as well as rape.

Later that week on November 1, up to 5,000 people marched in Cancun to protest the violence and demand its place on the Mexican government’s agenda. Several civil society organizations requested a statewide gender violence alert. For this to occur, a civil society organization must make an official request to the Federal Interior Ministry (Segob), which would analyze the situation, and subsequently invite the state government to complete certain requirements by a given date. If the state fails to meet the requirements, the Segob could then declare the alert.

Late at night on the day of the march, a municipal police officer, in what authorities ruled a [crime of passion](#), presumably murdered 18-year-old Paloma Guadalupe Balam in Region 248.

On November 3, the fourth victim, Abril Alejandra López Valencia, 36 and originally from Mérida, Yucatán, was found in the hotel zone. [Authorities arrested the victim’s ex-boyfriend](#), César N, age 29 and originally from Mexico City.

Other smaller cities of Quintana Roo have witnessed similar cases. In mid-January, an unidentified woman between 20 and 25 was found [strangled](#) behind Hotel Paradisus in Playa del Carmen. On January 5, a 16-year-old student was found [stabbed to death](#) on a trash pile in a Tulum apartment complex.

CASES OF FEMICIDE

In spite of the brutal murders, the state secretary of the interior, Gabriel Mendicuti, and Prosecutor Carlos Arturo Álvarez have denied these cases are “femicides”—meaning

murders of women due to gender-based reasons. If guilty of femicide in Quintana Roo, an aggressor could serve up to 50 years in prison, according to the state's penal code reform in May 2012.

In the reform, gender-based reasons include: the victim and aggressor were relatives, concubines, married, dating, friends or neighbors; the aggressor had authority over the victim in terms of a work or school relationship; the body is found with signs of sexual violence; the body is found in a public area; or the body exhibits degrading injuries or mutilations. The reform also sanctions public servants who knowingly fail to act according to their capabilities and obligations or, without justification, to speedily conduct an investigation.

Nonetheless, the state only “created penal definitions that were difficult or impossible to accredit,” according to the National Citizen Observatory of Femicides (OCNF). Moreover, critics argue that the state does not have a protocol to classify femicides—frequently [calling them homicides or suicides](#).

In 2014, the former state prosecutor, Gaspar Armando García Torres, stated by “decree” that authorities will only classify murders of women as femicides [when they are serial murders](#). The state has only one case of femicide: Jorge Rosales Piña is accused of killing four prostitutes in Chetumal. García said the perpetrator was angry after a prostitute infected him with HIV.

Over the past two years, several cases—labeled as femicides by the media and civil society, but not by government leaders—have [made headlines](#). In April 2015, the 13-year-old María Fernanda Sánchez was found dead with more than eight stab wounds and sexual abuse in Region 251. In June 2014, the media described the case of Laura Jovita Guzmán Morán as one of torture, femicide and child pornography in Cancun. Also in 2014, Gloria García López, age 19 and eight months pregnant, died in her house in Region 10 from cranial trauma. The presumed aggressor was her partner who is currently a fugitive.

Alejandro Betancourt Pérez, president of the Lawyers College of Quintana Roo, said authorities would not label many brutal killings of women as “femicides” because, according to law, the term applies to aggressors who only attack women. The idea is that this indicates hatred toward the female gender. If this is not the case, courts

consider the crime “a grave homicide.” It should be noted that given the “serial killer” requirement, a crime could be a “femicide” only if authorities determine the aggressor.

WHY CANCUN?

How can one begin to comprehend these disturbing stories in Cancun? A starting point is to understand the city’s development process, which revolves around international tourism, institutional abandonment of locals and short-term urban planning.

Mexico witnessed this process clearly on January 16, 2016, in the destruction of 143 acres of mangrove forest in Cancun. The objective was to build Malecón Tajamar, which would sport offices, shopping and apartments, involving 23 private companies. Before dawn on that day, 140 state and [municipal police officers protected](#) bulldozers and cranes that would flatten the area, where thousands of animals lived. Public manifestations accused the executive branch at the municipal, state and federal levels of not only being accomplices in ecocide, [but also promoting it](#). Fonatur, the Mexican tourist board, promoted the project and expected immense profits for the region.

Despite laws passed in 2007 that protect mangroves, the Malecón Tajamar project, its advocates argued, did not have to abide by the law since it was [originally approved five years](#) prior. Activists fought the project hard, including an injunction pushed by 113 local children that was granted in September, but removed after a judge ordered them to pay around \$1 million in compensation to the companies. However, as an [article](#) by Carlos Brown states, the “legal” is not always the ethically correct. But the cynical government attitude definitely has an impact on local well-being.

[Mexico leads tourism growth](#) in the Americas. From January to August 2014, international tourists to the country increased by 19% over the previous year. In Mexico, tourism provides 8.4% of the national GDP.

Cancun, strategic for this growth, grew from scratch for international tourism development purposes. Daniel Hiernaux-Nicolas [explains](#) the geopolitical selection of Cancun for a tourist hub. No important urban center existed in Quintana Roo until the invention of Cancun, and economic development was dubious. Given its proximity to Central America, the government feared an indigenous uprising in that rural area of the country. Similar concerns lie at the roots of [tourism projects](#) in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur and Ixtapa, Guerrero.

Thanks to loans from the International Development Bank and the World Bank in the 1960s, the Mexican federal government conceived the idea of Cancun as a center for mass tourism. Within a few decades, Quintana Roo passed from last place (of 32) in state GDP per capita to sixth place. Residents from surrounding deprived states paid attention to that growth. By 2007, the Benito Juárez municipality daily incorporated 74 new people, “required 15 homes, 11 cars, 42 vacancies in the labor market, schools and hospitals, [among other basic services](#).” But today, “[education is one of the sectors where](#)” there is a greater lag.

Solidaridad, the municipality that contains Playa del Carmen, developed later than Cancun and today its population grows faster. It is important to mention that of all municipalities in Mexico with a population over 15,000, Tulum, Benito Juárez and Solidaridad rank in the top ten of rape reports per capita.

One may attribute this to tourists’ greater willingness to report rapes. However, this is not necessarily the case. A study by Contreras on sexual crimes from 2005 to 2006 in Benito Juárez shows that the majority [was reported](#) in Regions 103, 101, 100, 228 and 75 (a total of 49) on the outskirts of the city, while in the Hotel Zone there were 14. This [map](#) shows the Regions of Cancun, geographically distant from the Hotel Zone. Five of the seven women killings mentioned in this article occurred on the city’s periphery: two in Region 251, and the others in Regions 217, 223 and 248.

A recent article by [El Universal](#) argues that Cancun once had the potential to be an urban sustainability model, but not anymore. The government designed Cancun for immediate profit. More than 160,000 of Cancun’s 650,000 inhabitants live in conditions of “high marginalization” and more than 50,000 in “very high marginalization.” Eighty-six percent of workers hold employment in the tertiary sector, and most of these jobs are seasonal, unstable and provide a precarious income, half of which goes toward rent.

MIGRANTS, TOURISTS AND CORRUPTION

Between 1995 and 2000, Quintana Roo was the state with the highest proportion of its population composed of migrants arriving in that period, representing 16.4% of its population. Migrants arriving between 2005 and 2010 represented 12.3% of the state population, with Quintana Roo [ranking second place](#).

Migrants in Quintana Roo tend to arrive from Tabasco, Yucatán, Chiapas and the Federal District. They arrive with expectations to obtain employment within days. According to Ariadna Rabelo, director of the Project for Migration Flows and Evaluation of Migration's Economic and Social Impact in the Northern Zone of Quintana Roo at the University la Salle, migrants can earn a better salary in Quintana Roo than where they originated. However, "in reality they are receiving minimum wages with increased costs of living ... in the end the rural poverty that they live in [becomes urban misery](#)."

The cost of living in Cancun contributes to this precariousness. According to Mercer's 2015 Cost of Living Rankings, Cancun is the second [most expensive city to live in Mexico](#), following Los Cabos, Baja California. The index considers housing, food and transport costs.

Tourism hubs are strategic points for organized crime, which benefits from high drug and alcohol demand, money laundering opportunities, sexual tourism, human trafficking and the production of child pornography. Child sexual exploitation through the Internet takes third place on the list of cybernetic crimes in Mexico (after fraud and threats), according to the federal police. In fact, "Mexico is among the tourist destinations most searched by pedophiles," mainly due to [government complacency](#). Corruption flourishes in the real-estate market in Cancun. In Cancun, "more than 70 percent of the residential developments registered in the municipality operate with several irregularities because they did not complete all of the requirements for the municipal council [to provide the corresponding public services](#)."

The accelerated growth in Cancun and Playa del Carmen detonated when the government incorporated *ejidos* into the urban terrain market, which produced uncontrollable urban problems, including rampant corruption, says M. Saul Vargas. Land invasion complicated the situation. Since the government failed to control these processes, "the settlers became the [foremost agents of urbanization](#)."

Through focus groups, Araceli Nava observes that youth in Cancun experience violence in many aspects: suicides, family- and gender-based violence, juvenile delinquency and increases in homicides. "Youth perceive an accelerating violence in all aspects of socialization and social life. However, in the more marginalized sectors, this perception [starts with the family](#)." Some young people in the focus groups perceived that "Cancun's future will look like Ciudad Juárez or Michoacán," and others

observed a clear alcohol problem in the city. Young women reiterated they have experienced sexual harassment either personally or through [near experiences](#). Focus groups of women with arrest records have experienced gender-based violence in the home from early ages, mainly by [male or paternal figures](#).

Nava emphasizes that migration processes provoke in the floating population an inadequate formation of family and social networks, which can lead to depression or despair. Forty-five percent of suicides in Quintana Roo occur in Benito Juárez, and 86% of suicide victims died in a state of intoxication. Many of the victims are between 16 and 18 years old.

Infrastructure and adequate provision of basic services (like housing and clean water access in homes) to the locals did not accompany the rapid population growth in Cancun. Tourism development in Mexico has implicated displacement and property dispossession of local indigenous groups. One can speak of a *de facto* socioeconomic apartheid in [many of Mexico's tourist destinations](#). Authorities planned space in Cancun to separate the servants from the served. Cancun's planners were [very strict](#) about segregation, more so than in Acapulco or Puerto Vallarta.

WHERE'S THE LINK?

[Christopher Tamborini argues](#) that the link between a city and global economy influences its development possibilities. In Mexico, export-oriented sectors—like global assembly and international tourism—mold patterns of female employment and gendered-jobs in the labor market. Literature has discussed the association between the *maquila* and femicide violence, but less so the link between tourism and gender-based based violence. Tourism culture reinforces commoditization of female characteristics and uses them—through advertising, for example—to invent an idea of [paradise and the exotic](#) to attract tourists. [Vivian Kinnaird and Derek Hall](#) explain this well:

“Unless we understand the gendered complexities of tourism, and the power relations they involve, then we fail to recognize the reinforcement and construction of new power relations that are emerging out of tourism process. From the values and activities of the transnational tourist operator to the differential experiences of individuals participating as either hosts or guests, all parts of the tourism experience are influenced by our collective understanding of the social construction of gender.”

While the causal relation among tourism development, migration, gendered-jobs, frenzied urbanization and gendered-based violence is imprecise, it may be a worthy starting point toward understanding femicide violence in Quintana Roo, as well as in the dormitory cities of the state of Mexico, petroleum towns of Tabasco, and export-oriented centers of Mexico's northern border.

**Terra Stanley is an American specialist on Mexican security and gender-based violence. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Don't Overlook Obama's Visit to Argentina

Jack Rosen

April 2, 2016

Argentina is the only major player in Latin America with a forward looking agenda that offers hope to its people.

In the crush of events that always weigh down a US president, and the daily eruptions of the 2016 election campaign, it would be a monumental mistake to underestimate the importance of President Barack Obama's [recent meeting with newly elected Argentine President Mauricio Macri](#). US outreach to Latin America never seems to garner sufficient priority, and the personal attention by Obama to one of the most interesting new leaders in a hugely influential country south of the border should not go unremarked.

Macri's electoral [victory in 2015 represents a long awaited change](#) from the path taken by many of Argentina's neighbors, where corruption and ineptitude seem pervasive in places like Venezuela, Bolivia and Brazil. Succeeding Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose fame, or infamy, rested on her accommodations with neighborhood thugs—not to mention her various deals with [Iran's ayatollahs](#)—Macri brings to Casa Rosada the promise of a new day for his people and a new model for Latin America.

The most important changes in the short term are his efforts to resurrect Argentina's economy, to restore investor faith in open markets, and to carry out honorable agreements to pay down the nation's huge debts. Unlike his predecessor and many of the continent's failed leaders, Macri is already demonstrating that he has the confidence to build a warm two-way relationship with the US without concern that it will suffocate his nation, a particular fear of every South American leader.

The visit of a US president to Buenos Aires also serves as a challenge to Macri to fulfill his potential as a historic figure throughout the Western Hemisphere by replacing the old cabal. Along with his decisive [early steps to enact economic reforms](#), Macri abrogated [Argentina's tendentious deals with Iran](#) to whitewash Tehran's role in sponsoring and financing its terrorist agent, the Lebanese Hezbollah, in [bombings that took the lives of scores of Argentine Jews](#).

Obama's visit took place in the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Brussels on March 22, and some of the president's [critics suggested he should have aborted the trip](#) and hurried back to Washington.

But his wise decision to travel to Argentina to embrace the change that Macri represents is unarguable in terms of advancing US, regional and global interests. Standing with Macri, President Obama is making it clear that the United States is an ally of elected leaders committed to democracy and human rights.

With Venezuela on the brink of economic collapse and Brazil's leadership almost certainly facing impeachment charges, Argentina is the only major player in the region with a forward looking agenda that offers hope to its people.

Obama's embrace of Macri is a long-term strategic play that propels the new Argentine president to the forefront of Latin America's new generation of leaders. In a rather bleak world where good news is hard to find, President Macri's emerging role on the world stage is one of the most welcome developments in recent years.

**Jack Rosen is the president of the American Jewish Congress and the chairman of the American Council for World Jewry. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Mexico Faces Uphill Battle at Summit

Ivan Farias Pelcastre

June 28, 2016

It is unlikely Mexico will reach its objectives at the North American Leaders' Summit on June 29.

In mid-June, Mexican Secretary of Finance Luis Videgaray [traveled to Montreal](#) to deliver a speech at the inaugural session of the [International Forum of the Americas](#). Videgaray affirmed that Mexico remains one of the main proponents of further and deeper North American integration as a source of joint prosperity and security for Mexico, Canada, and the United States. He made explicit Mexico's interest in working closer together with its partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to protect the region's economically competitive position, amid a global environment characterized by uncertainty and ensuring its continued physical security.

While brief, his main message, aimed at North America's policymakers, was clear: The bilateral and trilateral economic exchanges and cooperation arrangements between Canada and the US with Mexico on development, health, education and energy matters are vital to their own security and prosperity. In brief, "our North American neighbors need us."

To get this message across to the American and Canadian governments and publics, Mexico is investing significant political and diplomatic capital. Videgaray's speech was just one in a series of similar statements made over the past [few weeks by a number of politicians](#): Secretary of Foreign Affairs Claudia Ruiz Massieu; Secretary for Energy Pedro Joaquín Coldwell; Secretary for Social Development José Antonio Meade; and Undersecretary of Health Pablo Kuri.

Their statements are part of [Mexico's deliberate and coordinated effort](#) to push for the advancement of North American regional integration. Such an effort is a key part of the Mexican government's current economic strategy to promote job creation in the country and the consolidation of Mexico as an exporting nation and emerging power.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of these efforts is, presumably, to set the scene for Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto to introduce ambitious proposals on the future of the regional integration project, in the context of the [North American Leaders' Summit](#), which is set to take place in Ottawa on June 29.

Specifically, Mexico wants to secure concrete agreements on three issue-areas of strategic importance for the country: regional trade, cooperation for infrastructure development and cross-border mobility. However, there will be a significant gap between Mexico's ambitious objectives at the summit and the actual results it will likely deliver.

In these areas, Mexico will look for three things.

First, the Mexicans want to secure their privileged position in the NAFTA, in preparation for the eventual ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In practice, this will extend the privileges and advantages of NAFTA membership to nine other countries in South America, Asia and Oceania.

Second, Mexico will attempt (once again) to secure a commitment from Canada to create and participate in a North American infrastructure improvement and development fund, modeled along the lines (or built upon) the existing North American Development Bank (NADBank). It is worth remembering that during the NAFTA negotiations in the early 1990s, Canada refused to participate and jointly fund the work of the NADBank. Mexico will once again try to persuade the Canadians about the need for and the benefits of creating a truly North American development fund.

Third, Mexico will try to settle, once and for all, the diplomatic impasse created by the requirement of visas to Mexican travelers to Canada, which were imposed by the administration of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and that the new government of Justin Trudeau has vowed to eliminate, but [has not done so yet](#).

COMPLEXITIES

If these are indeed the issues and priorities that will be discussed in the North American Leaders' Summit, Mexico faces (figuratively) an uphill battle. Given the current political climate in Canada, the US, Mexico and now the rest of the world, this will be one of the most complex, difficult and probably less productive meetings

between the three heads of state to have ever taken place since the establishment of these summits in 2005.

Numerous factors account for the complexity of this meeting. One is the ever-closer presidential elections in the United States, characterized by heated debates on domestic economic issues and animosity toward Mexican immigration to the country. Another is the limited bilateral engagement between Mexico and Canada that followed the “[visa impasse](#).” Yet another factor is the recent and long delays and changes in the appointments of a US ambassador to Mexico and a Mexican ambassador to the US.

And, finally, the economic distress and [uncertainty that has been created in global markets by Brexit](#)—the [United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union](#)—which all make it hard to both visualize the construction of a solid trilateral regional project and limit the prospects of reaching such ambitious accords in the short or medium terms.

The North American integration project, which appears to be in a permanent state of crisis and self-doubt about its existence, faces an even more difficult moment. The North American Leaders’ Summit might be the start of a renewed effort of the continued decline of regional integration in North America. Mexico might be, metaphorically, very keen to reach the summit, but its companions seem to be more interested in just staying at base camp.

**Ivan Farias Pelcastre is an academic visitor at the North American Studies Programme at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



The Battle for Venezuela is Heating Up

Arysbell Arismendi

September 13, 2016

National surveys show the economic crisis and food shortages have taken their toll on the quality of life for Venezuelans.

In Venezuela, more than half a million people marched on September 1 to protest against the government, calling on the electoral authority to approve a [recall referendum against President Nicolas Maduro](#).

“In light of these objectives, amply fulfilled, I declare that the ‘taking of Caracas’ was a resounding success, marking the time of a struggle that starts now,” said Jesús Torrealba, secretary of the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD).

Opposition supporters have expressed their disagreement with government policies and said that they felt “anger” because of the difficult situation Venezuelans currently face. Food shortages exceed 80% and more than half of the population claim to have gone to bed hungry, [according to several national polls](#).

The MUD has devised new methods of protesting and called on citizens to participate in a “National Cacerolazo” at 8:00pm and pound kitchen pots outside their homes. Opponents stood in the streets for 10 minutes on September 7, and another demonstration is expected on September 14. Once enough support has been generated, Torrealba said, “we will call [everyone to take part in] ‘the taking of Venezuela’ for 24 hours straight, demanding the recall referendum.”

Parallel to the opposition protest in eastern Caracas, the Chavismo movement was concentrated in the west of the capital. Maduro spoke to his crowd of supporters, visibly smaller than the opposition’s, and said: “If you see them do something against President Maduro, take to the streets in a civilian-military union and make the most radical revolution ... Today, we defeated an attempted coup that sought to fill with deaths this beautiful Caracas.”

In his speech, the Venezuelan president announced that he would request an override of “parliamentary immunity of the opposition’s elected National Assembly members.” Days earlier, Maduro said he would file a lawsuit against opposition member Henry Ramos, the president of the National Assembly, for his “racist and violent speech.”

Three days later, on September 3, Maduro traveled to the island of Margarita, one Venezuela’s top tourist locations, and visited the Villa Rosa, a traditionally Chavista community. He toured the area without his security cordon, and a group of people pounded their kitchen pots to protest, and some even approached the president to push him. Maduro fled the place running. The government made no official statement

about the incident, but a spokesman claimed it was an opposition montage, referring to a [video](#) that later went viral. Five people were arrested.

[Political analysts](#) agree that Maduro has radicalized his speech and become more aggressive with the opposition. Before the “[taking of Caracas](#),” nine opposition leaders were arrested or transferred to prison for allegedly being involved in acts of destabilizing Venezuela. Most of them are members of Voluntad Popular, the party of political prisoner Leopoldo López.

On September 5, the Supreme Court declared null all acts of the Venezuelan parliament for the swearing in of three members of the opposition, who had been suspended by the court. The assembly was declared unfit to legislate.

POLLS FAVOR THE OPPOSITION

Between February and June 2016, the support for a recall referendum increased from 40% to 58%, according to [a poll by Venebarómetro](#), one of the biggest pollsters in Venezuela. The study concluded that more than 10 million voters would vote against the president, and this number exceeds the required number of signatures needed to carry out a recall referendum.

The discontent in popular neighborhoods also seems to affect the popularity of the president. In a national survey by Datincorp, 57% of inhabitants in shanty towns said they want Maduro to leave the government.

The opposition has accused the National Electoral Council (CNE), which is responsible for conducting the elections, of violating internal regulations and delaying the process. It is still unknown whether the recall referendum will be held this year or next. If it is carried out in 2017, Vice President Aristóbulo Istúriz would assume the presidency instead of an election being held. However, the electorate is willing to vote on both dates, according Datincorp’s study.

OPPOSITION HAS THE BALL

“What matters now, what is now different from the past, is that polls show that the opposition is the majority. And the size of this mobilization (the taking of Caracas) shows that now the opposition is able to stay in the street,” says Luis Vicente León,

director of the Datanálisis national consultancy, in an article published by [Prodavinci](#) a day after the march.

“Although it advances slowly, the recall referendum is leaving sequels that are increasingly determinants. It’s like a snowball that grows over time. The march of September 1 seems to reflect a point of no return, and what happened at Villa Rosa shows an effect of that snowball, that it is already reaching the lower strata,” [writes political analyst Michael Penfold](#).

Both León and Penfold agree that the “taking of Caracas” was a victory for members of the opposition because they showed their political muscle and their power of mobilization.

“Well, the opposition needs to keep pressure on the central objective: the fulfillment of constitutional rights. Today the issue is not size: the opposition majority is something we already knew. It is time to use [the] peaceful pressure ... that began today. The key is to understand how it is maintained,” says León.

What will the Chavismo do? Penfold responds in his article by saying: “Once the opposition has collected 20% in October, President Maduro will bet on an abstention. He will try to convince his own [base] that he can prevent the opposition getting enough votes to recall him. But Chavismo looks exhausted after a futile resistance, and it is very likely they abandon him publicly.”

The CNE has already said that a recall referendum will be held between the October 24 and 30, but it has not announced a final date.

Political analyst Alberto Aranguibel differs with León and Penfold. In a conversation with *Fair Observer*, he says that on September 1 “the winner was Venezuela ... It showed that there is full political freedom, a proper performance of democracy, and there is no risk of persecution against the opposition political leadership.”

Despite the projection, Venezuela’s political future remains uncertain. One question that remains unanswered is what will happen if parliamentary immunity is removed. How will the opposition react to this? What will the government do? Will the president of the assembly go to prison?

It seems the battle for the recall referendum will take more than a few months.

**Arysbell Arismendi is a Venezuelan journalist based in Caracas. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Amid Uncertainty, Latin America is Looking Up

Pablo Bejar

November 22, 2016

Despite a recession, the Latin America and Caribbean region is looking ahead.

For the first time since 1982-83, the Latin America and Caribbean region is expected to be in recession for two consecutive years (2015-16). According to [World Economic Outlook forecasts](#), growth is expected to be -0.6% this year following growth of -0.03% last year. The fall in commodity prices, lower global trade and continued weakness in advanced economies, combined with a set of internal factors in some of the larger regional economies, have driven growth lower.

However, there is considerable heterogeneity in the region. The simple average growth rate across the 26 regional economies is expected to be 1.6% this year, and while six countries are expected to have negative growth, 12 are expected to grow at more than 2.5% and five at 4% and higher. In addition, the baseline prospects for 2017 indicate a recovery for the region, with a growth rate of 1.6% and only two economies continuing in recession (Ecuador and Venezuela). Nineteen countries are expected to have growth rates of at least 2.5% and eight with at least 3.5% growth. The simple average growth rate of the region is expected to be 2.5%.

But there are significant risks to these projections. Currently, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the posture of advanced economies toward trade and immigration policies (important for remittances), particularly in the US. This could have significant effects particularly on Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

The impending rise in US interest rates may also impact capital flows into the region, bring back inflationary pressures, which would reduce monetary policy space via exchange rate depreciations, and thus influence lower economic activity.

Moreover, while the Chinese economy has slowed somewhat, there remains uncertainty regarding its transition to a more domestic demand- and consumption-driven economy and the potential impacts on commodity prices for importer and exporter regional economies.

RECESSION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

At the end of the third quarter, the forecast for Latin America and the Caribbean indicates a recession for a second consecutive year. However, looking beyond the numbers, there is some good news amid the current uncertainty.

To begin with, things looked considerably worse earlier in the year due to internal balance sheet and monetary adjustments, a hostile external environment dragged down by low world growth, high financial volatility prompted by foreign exchange instability, and the continuing slump in commodity prices, which fueled capital outflows from the region.

In macroeconomic terms, the region currently looks decidedly brighter as external shocks appear to have become less intense. Commodity prices are no longer in free fall, long-term interest rates in developed countries have remained ultra-low in response to continued proactive monetary policies, and access to global capital markets remains open thanks to the relative risk tolerance of international investors. Given these trends, Latin American EMBI spreads have declined by approximately 30%, capital inflows into the region have picked up, and exchange rates have stabilized in most regional economies (see Figures 1 and 2).

Although there have been worsening perspectives during 2016 for four out of six regional economies in recession, as well as Mexico due to the weaker than expected investment in the US and other risks associated to the presidential elections, major fiscal and institutional adjustments in Argentina and, most importantly, Brazil brightened the medium-term growth prospects for these two economies as well as for the entire region.

The adjustments prompted markets to both validate improvements in regional country risk and stock market conditions.

RESILIENCE

Clearly, the Latin America and Caribbean region is not a monolith, and the weight of some countries can skew regional trends. The Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) latest [Macroeconomic Report](#) documents 2014-20 as the region's lowest average growth period of the last 20 years, but not all countries have suffered equally. Although the region will contract for a second consecutive year, the six fastest growing economies will average growth rates of around 4.5%.

Indeed, given the intensity of the external shocks that have affected the region in the last few years, a strong argument can be made that the Latin America and Caribbean region has shown considerable resilience, and there has not been a repetition of the banking and currency crises that have been so problematic for the region especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, most of the larger economies in Latin America and the Caribbean have floating exchange rates and have allowed considerable depreciations in their currencies, which are now helping in the adjustment processes. These depreciations have been effected without causing a large increase in debt or widespread bankruptcies due to currency mismatches—another significant achievement since the 1990s.

There has been some pass through to domestic inflation in some cases, but given the size of the currency depreciations, this pass through has been relatively limited and inflation expectations in general indicate that inflation is likely to fall in the future back toward inflation targets. Figure 3 plots the extent of currency depreciation and inflation for a number of selected countries.

The imbalances in current accounts are also being corrected, and evidence exists that most of the large economies in the region will again be able to finance the deficit with foreign direct investment (FDI).

Regarding budgetary imbalances, 15 countries have announced explicit adjustment programs that are expected to cut spending by an average 1.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) and boost revenue by 1.1% of GDP in the next five years. For most

countries, these corrections in a context of greater growth guarantee sustainable levels of public debt to GDP.

Before breathing too deep a sigh of relief, some important caveats to this outlook are in order. The results of the US presidential election and other external developments will undoubtedly play an important role in shaping the regional economic environment going forward. Most importantly, however, countries in the region face two fundamental challenges in the coming years. First, they must stay on track with the policies that have been announced to address their imbalances. Second, they must return to a path of sustainable and inclusive growth.

Beyond what happens to “actual” growth rates in the short term, the region desperately needs to boost its “[potential GDP growth rates](#),” which have steadily fallen from 4.25% in 2008 to 3.1% in 2016—equivalent to a 25% reduction (see Figure 4).

IMPROVEMENT IN WELFARE

Moreover, after 20 years of progress in social indicators such as infant mortality, access to drinking water, elementary school enrollment and life expectancy, Latin American society has come to expect a steady improvement in its welfare. More specifically, the slowdown during the 2010-16 period has not dampened the legitimate desire of citizens across the region for more prosperous economies and personal prospects.

Returning to “actual” growth rates in the neighborhood of 3%, which is about twice the rate expected for 2017, is the first step. But this is only one step. In order to satisfy citizens’ expectations for improved well-being, it is essential to both increase the growth potential of economies—which in turn requires a complete restoration of macroeconomic imbalances—and undertake reforms to improve the underlying productivity of economies.

Of course, political economy, rather than pure economics, may be what ultimately determines whether countries reach their goals and how their economies evolve in the coming quarters. Governments must further strengthen their political institutions to be able to develop better, more targeted, more transparent and more accountable public policies. But they can’t do it alone. The private sector, specifically the technology sector, must also chip in to take on the challenge of cementing a sustainable growth

model that addresses real regional problems, such as growing unemployment and inequality.

**Pablo Bejar is a macroeconomic research fellow in the Research Department of the Inter-American Development Bank. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Will the Saudis Deploy Ground Forces to Syria?

Giorgio Cafiero and Daniel Wagner

February 10, 2016

If Saudi Arabia sends ground troops to Syria, it would be the first time that the kingdom has fought two wars at the same time in the Middle East.

In September 2014, the White House emphasized the importance of obtaining support from Sunni Arab states prior to launching an air campaign against *Daesh* ([Islamic State](#)) targets in Iraq and Syria. For the Obama administration, successfully soliciting the [help of four Gulf Arab kingdoms](#)—Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—in addition to Egypt and Jordan, represented a major foreign policy achievement. The last time Washington assembled such an international coalition to wage a military campaign on Arab soil was Operation Desert Storm in 1991, although on a much grander scale.

Since fall 2015, American politicians on both sides of the aisle have grown disappointed with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members' contribution to the US-led efforts to fight *Daesh*. A growing number of voices in the US government have [accused](#) these monarchies of shifting their focus away from the campaign against *Daesh* in Iraq and Syria to the conflict in Yemen. Indeed, in recent months, the percentage of the Washington-led coalition bombs dropped on *Daesh* targets by GCC fighter jets has been [near zero](#), with the US and France doing virtually all of the heavy lifting.

However, recent declarations from officials in [Saudi Arabia](#) raise questions about Riyadh's priorities with respect to the regional threat posed by *Daesh*. On February 4, [Saudi Brigadier General Ahmed Asseri](#) told Al Jazeera that “the Saudi kingdom announced its readiness to participate with ground troops ... against” *Daesh* because “air strikes cannot be enough.” A few days later, the UAE joined Saudi Arabia in saying a real campaign against the group has “[to include a ground force.](#)” US Secretary of

Defense Ashton Carter [welcomed](#) the news, but a healthy degree of skepticism about his enthusiasm appears warranted.

It makes sense for Saudi Arabia to deploy ground forces to fight *Daesh* in Syria, particularly given that the terrorist organization has its sights set on the kingdom, and that the Saudis have one of the world's [most highly armed militaries](#). Having waged scores of attacks in the kingdom through its web of “homegrown” cells, *Daesh* poses a significant threat to Saudi security and national cohesion. Incorporating Mecca and Medina into its so-called “caliphate” is unquestionably an objective of the group, which views the Saud family as corrupt, immoral puppets of Western powers who live an opulent and offensive lifestyle.

Daesh has supporters in many parts of the kingdom, particularly near the Iraqi-Saudi border, where tribal connections shaping bonds between some of the kingdom's subjects and *Daesh* are important, and often overlooked.

Yet winning ground wars requires a high level of experience and motivation. If history is any guide, the Saudis are unlikely to sacrifice much of their own blood to fight for their nation. In [Yemen](#), for example, although the Saudi armed forces are clearly engaged in the battle, Riyadh has [recruited hundreds](#) of Colombian [mercenaries](#) to fight the Houthi rebels, and the Saudi-led coalition has relied on African states such as [Sudan](#) to do much fighting on the ground in exchange for Saudi petro-dollars.

In addition, with Riyadh and Tehran backing opposing sides in Syria, this conflict has been an important battleground in the Saudi-Iranian geopolitical rivalry, which manifests itself in many forms across the greater Middle East and Asia. For Riyadh to deploy its forces into Syria to fight *Daesh* would imply that the Saudis are willing to fight the group alongside the kingdom's Iranian, Russian, Lebanese and Syrian foes. The likelihood of such a development appears very low, particularly given Riyadh's steadfast commitment to backing rebels fighting the Assad regime, not to mention the degree to which its military forces are so focused on the Yemen conflict, and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

PROXY WAR BETWEEN TWO NUCLEAR POWERS

Although the Syrian crisis is fluid and increasingly complicated, there is reason for the Assad regime to feel emboldened. The Syrian army—fighting alongside Russian

soldiers in ground operations—has made notable gains so far this year, recently [seizing the city of Salma](#) from rebel forces.

The Russian intervention in this conflict, in defense of the Assad regime, has severely undermined the agendas of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other actors seeking to topple President Bashar al-Assad, particularly with the Syrian army now [cutting off](#) Ankara's lines to rebel forces in Aleppo—Syria's commercial capital.

Unquestionably, if Assad's forces were to take back Aleppo, there would likely be a significant turning of the tide in Syria's civil war. Despite Saudi claims that their interests in possibly deploying ground forces to Syria center around defeating *Daesh*, their [support for Jabhat al-Nusra](#) and other Islamist extremist groups that are ideologically similar to *Daesh* suggest that Riyadh's talk of sending troops is a response to the successful collaboration between Moscow and Damascus in squeezing out Saudi-backed rebel groups in Aleppo.

The Syrian foreign minister's [warning against any military intervention](#) on the part of states entering the fray without the consent of Damascus underscores how this grander geopolitical struggle goes far beyond defeating *Daesh*. Indeed, the entry of Saudi forces into Syria, which experts agree would need US air cover, entails the risk of a confrontation between the kingdom and its NATO allies on one side, and the forces fighting for Assad—most importantly Russia—on the other. What all sides would presumably wish to avoid is a scenario in which a proxy war escalates between the world's top two nuclear powers.

Despite the potentially explosive risks and uncertainties, some officials in the US are likely to continue to welcome more Sunni Arab states in the fight against *Daesh*, particularly given neoconservatives' view that Russia and Iran's recent successes in Syria are unacceptable.

This week, the Saudi declaration is certain to be a topic of conversation when American officials meet in Brussels with defense ministers from various members in the US-led coalition. A deployment of Saudi ground forces into Syria, if it were to occur, would mark a significant shift in that country's nearly five-year long conflict.

Yet whether Riyadh actually sends troops to Syria remains to be seen. If the Saudis do so, it would represent the first time in history that the kingdom would commit ground forces to two battles in the Middle East simultaneously. Seeing is believing.

**Giorgio Cafiero is the founder and CEO of Gulf State Analytics, a geopolitical risk consultancy based in Washington, DC. Daniel Wagner is the managing director of risk solutions at Risk Cooperative and co-author of "Global Risk Agility and Decision Making." This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



What Happened to Yemen?

Fernando Carvajal

March 4, 2016

Political infighting and violence have plagued Yemen since the Arab Spring began in December 2010.

The hopes and aspirations of [Yemen](#)'s youth have dissipated into a near permanent state of war. Five years on from the electrifying momentum toward change sweeping through the Arab world's poorest nation, an entrenched stalemate has completely derailed the political transition process. The year-long civil war, now sponsored by an Arab coalition, feeds a regional war by proxy and serves as breeding grounds for the [Islamic State](#) (IS) and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The current situation has truly vaporized any sense of an [Arab Spring](#), and instead has magnified a cycle of revenge among elite political actors.

The United Nations (UN), increasingly critical of the Saudi-led military coalition, has raised alarms over the devastating impact of the ongoing war. While armed clashes continue between Zaydi-Shia Houthi rebels, allied with military forces loyal to deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and resistance militias, allied with military loyalists of President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, [reports indicate that up to 93% of casualties](#) and injuries from aerial bombardments have been civilians. The war has caused a [collapse of the country's health system](#) throughout rebel- and resistance-held areas. [Aid agencies have also reported](#) that, as of August 2015, nearly 1.5 million people have been displaced by the current civil war. Prior to the conflict, there were [300,000](#)

[internally displaced persons](#). The Arab coalition also enforces an air and sea blockade, which is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis affecting over 80% of the population.

One year into the war, Houthi rebels and forces loyal to Saleh remain unaffected and committed to multiple fronts, some of which include clashes with militants affiliated with AQAP and affiliates of IS. Local media estimate that more than 160,000 airstrikes have taken place since March 2015 in Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition. Targets include military bases in northern Yemen, Houthi positions in multiple provinces, and houses of pro-Houthi leaders or associates, as well as the residence of former President Saleh and his relatives. Yet forces aligned with President Hadi have been unable to repel Houthis and Saleh's forces from areas other than the coastal province of Aden. Fighting in Ibb, al-Jawf, Mareb and Taiz provinces remains intense and in constant flux. A number of ceasefires negotiated by UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh have failed to deliver any relief since mid-2015.

Hope for opportunities to reengage peace talks among Yemeni actors, and the Arab coalition, remain faint as the option for total war appears to sustain the stubbornness on both sides. The [recent appointment](#) of General Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar as the new deputy chief of staff implies that Hadi and the Arab coalition are committed to a military victory. But Ali Muhsin's resurrection since September 2014 may backfire and strengthen the [Houthi-Saleh alliance rather than weaken](#) their tribal pillars.

War crimes have undoubtedly been committed throughout the war, and reaching a lasting ceasefire long enough to engage peace talks remains a top priority amid growing fragmenting alliances. Reconstruction is simply beyond priorities held by warring parties at present.

ELITE BARGAINING

[Debate over the nature of the political conflict](#) that erupted in December 2010 has clearly eliminated the illusion of any populist movement, and provided overwhelming evidence of an intra-regime conflict responsible for today's devastating war. The Arab Spring-inspired protests of 2011 across the Middle East and North Africa were all unique events, yet most observers fail to understand the origins and unique trajectory of Yemen's own political infighting. It remains that an unresolved elite conflict perpetuates instability and is a principle reason for the breakdown of the transition process that was initiated in November 2011.

When Saleh stepped down after 33 years—the first phase of the transition plan—economically marginalized youth were neither empowered nor responsible for the autocrat's downfall. The first indication of such marginalization was the fact that signatories to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) transition agreement only included the ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC), and the official opposition members of the [Joint Meeting Parties](#) (JMP).

In theory, the GCC-sponsored agreement negotiated by then-UN Special Envoy Jamal Benomar simply inked a temporary solution to a political crisis, which erupted in December 2010 when the GPC moved to unilaterally amend the constitution. Protests organized by would-be 2011 Nobel Laureate Tawakkol Karman and independent Member of Parliament (MP) Ahmed Saif Hashid coincided with [the Tunisian uprising in December 2010](#). The situation escalated in Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, when the National Solidarity Council (NSC), led by Hussain Abdullah al-Ahmar, joined protests against Saleh's move to reform the electoral commission and extend his term in office to make way for his oldest son, Ahmed Ali. Karman and Ahmar were seen as proxies for the Sunni Islamist party, al-Islah, which is the senior partner in the JMP.

The crisis leading to the Day of Rage, scheduled for February 3, 2011, was meant as political positioning rather than Saleh's outright overthrow. The Islah party aimed at negotiating the parliamentary elections of April 2011, gaining further concessions from Saleh through a restructuring of economic resources and political posts, even if it meant marginalizing Sheikh Hamid Abdullah al-Ahmar's [ambitions to prevent](#) Ahmed Ali's ascent to the presidency in 2013.

Instead, the tsunami spreading from President Hosni Mubarak's overthrow in Egypt [emboldened Saleh's principle rival](#), Sheikh Hamid, an MP for the Islah party. For Sheikh Hamid, there would be no negotiations on Ahmed Ali's grasp on power. His support for the mass gatherings at Change Square undoubtedly represented a continuation of his fiery public criticism of Saleh since 2006. The stage was set for an escalation and the perfect storm gathered against Saleh—youth outside patronage networks, Sunni Islamists, Nasserists, socialists, Baathists, Houthis, GCC monarchies and even a US administration that believed time had come for democracy in the Arab world.

FAILED RECONCILIATION AND BACKROOM DEALS

The second phase of the agreed-upon transition from Saleh's rule involved the electoral ritual to elect Hadi as president. In a one-man election, under the mantra of consensus, Hadi was elected in February 2012. The process was mandated under the GCC agreement, which was meant to contain the crisis and avert a civil war rather than initiate an era of change.

Hadi served as Saleh's vice president from 1994 to 2011, and while of southern origin, people saw him as a continuation of the regime. Another source of contention for independent protesters was the [power sharing equation produced](#) by the GCC deal, where half the cabinet posts were given to the GPC, half to the JMP with Islah taking the largest share, and the appointment of Mohammed Salem Basindwa as prime minister. Each faction picked the ministry appointees, while President Hadi was allowed to appoint the minister of defense; Basindwa was chosen as a nonpartisan candidate. No posts were reserved for independents or for representatives of marginalized youth protesting against the regime.

This 35-member cabinet was to oversee the [two-year transition period scheduled](#) by the GCC. The first order of business was to restructure the national armed forces and security organizations, meant to gradually remove Saleh's grip on vital national resources, but also targeted influence wielded by General Ali Muhsin, Saleh's former close ally who defected in March 2011 and pledged to protect the "revolution." The ultimate goal was to reform the armed forces in order to expand Hadi's authority as commander in chief. The process not only bred further conflict among the elite, but eventually fragmented the military along patronage networks and further eroded President Hadi's own power, rendering him nearly incapable of mobilizing sufficient resources to address the expanding security vacuum.

BREAKDOWN OF DIALOGUE

The third phase of the transition plan was the launching of a National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Delayed by a year, the NDC was [finally established](#) in March 2013. Again, ordinary Yemenis expressed their dissatisfaction with the equation used to select delegates, and later complained of further marginalization within negotiations by President Hadi, Jamal Benomar and the political elite, who bargained away aspirations of independents behind closed doors in order to produce a final agreement. Youth

voices, in particular, were merely relegated to the occasional photo-op with the UN envoy and other diplomats.

The dialogue process began to disintegrate soon after Ramadan 2013, when war broke out in Amran province between Houthi rebels and tribes loyal to Sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar, and it [quickly spread](#) into Damaj, Sadah. This has been presented as the start of the transition's failure. The [war in Amran also led to a boycott](#) by NDC southern delegates aligned with Mohammed Ali Ahmed, who was initially allied with President Hadi to represent the southern contingent along with Yassin Makawi and then-NDC Secretary-General Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, who is now the Yemeni ambassador to the United States.

While a number of observers have fixated their analysis on the January 2015 Houthi-led coup, a trajectory of events identifies the Amran conflict as the start of both a historic realignment of the structure of power in northern Yemen, and the chaos that would ensue from August 2014. When the NDC [concluded in January 2014](#), it further exacerbated the conflict as protests erupted from the GPC, Houthis and independents. Although it had been discussed in committees, the newly announced plan to establish a six-region [federal state](#) in Yemen intensified tensions among political parties, as it had not been part of the official NDC outcomes, but rather a plan forged behind closed doors and sponsored by President Hadi.

THE CAUSE

Based on this author's conversations with people inside the country, Yemeni analysts see the failure of Hadi's government to contain the lingering elite conflict as being responsible for events that followed the NDC conclusion up until the Houthi takeover of Amran province. Houthi militia managed to capture Amran province from the 310th Brigade under [General Hamid al-Qushaybi](#), a staunch ally of General Ali Muhsin and the Islah party. Islah officials were enraged at Hadi's second failure to aid their cohorts—the war in Damaj was the first instance. Ali Muhsin, who also attempted to safeguard his position vis-à-vis Hadi, was attacked publicly by the party for his failure to deploy forces to Amran.

As events were mismanaged and the Hadi government overwhelmed, the government itself may have sealed its own fate and directly paved the way for a Houthi ascendency.

In July 2014, Prime Minister Basindwa's cabinet agreed to [lift fuel subsidies](#), handing Houthi rebels the opportunity to revive their revolutionary narrative on behalf of the masses. Houthis undoubtedly capitalized on the anger among Yemenis and reclaimed the banner of revolution from 2011. Thousands across the political spectrum answered the call to demonstrate, including GPC loyalists, who organized social media campaigns and neighborhood protests often blocking streets around Sanaa. It was an opportunity to capitalize on renewed popular discontent that neither Houthis nor Saleh could waste. A new alliance between former enemies was forged in the oddest revolutionary narratives.

BLEAK PROSPECTS BEYOND THE STALEMATE

The stage was set for a final blow on the "[model transition](#)" and a downward spin into chaos. Hadi's position was in peril, as early reports indicated that Houthis and Saleh forged their alliance of convenience outside Yemen with help from [regional powers](#). Events leading to a Houthi takeover of the Yemeni capital in September 2014 were a product of overconfidence on the part of President Hadi, and Houthi collusion with Saleh's military and tribal loyalists. Hadi is said to have opened the gates of Sanaa for Houthis in efforts to shift the balance of power away from General Ali Muhsin and the Islah party. But President Hadi, Benomar and bin Mubarak were unaware of the Houthi-Saleh alliance that ensured a military defeat of Ali Muhsin and the political downfall of Islah.

Hadi was forced to accept Houthi interpretation of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA) signed on September 22, 2014, including a new power sharing equation abrogating the entire text of the GCC initiative, especially since the president had originally been granted only a two-year term. Houthis were not signatories to the GCC agreement, therefore, the PNAP gave the rebels a seat at the table otherwise not granted by the NDC.

The period between Houthi calls to protest against the lifting of fuel subsidies and the *coup d'état* of January 2015 undoubtedly took President Hadi by surprise, along with the international community. It is clear the transition was mismanaged, and that regional and international powers underestimated a number of political actors, such as the Islah party, Ali Muhsin, Saleh and Houthis.

This view is indeed Sanaa-centric, and does neglect the role of southern secessionists, but this group remained on the sidelines of the northern power struggle until President Hadi [fled house arrest and landed](#) in Aden in February 2015. The relevance of southern actors has surged as Yemen faces a historic possibility of fragmentation. At this time, underestimating political actors, especially [Saleh's survival](#), left the international community unable to deal with strong challenges to Hadi's legitimacy, leaving only the use of force as an option against Houthis and Saleh over the past year.

Today, the situation in Yemen is far beyond a "crossroads." It is beyond "the brink." The conflict faces a dangerous impasse as low intensity clashes expand, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and widening the security vacuum across the country. It is no longer a conflict between traditional elite actors, as southern and northern Salafists have joined the fight against Houthis and Saleh's loyalists. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula no longer holds a monopoly on Yemen as Islamic State-affiliates have established a presence in various provinces. This makes it even more difficult to coordinate peace talks.

Furthermore, President Hadi has been unable to sustain support from various resistance groups fighting Houthis, as tension rises over financial and material resources provided by [Saudi Arabia](#) and the United Arab Emirates. The Saudis hope that General Ali Muhsin can serve as a uniting figure among northern tribes in order to overcome current obstacles along the military front.

After one year of airstrikes on the capital Sanaa, Amran, Hajja and Sadah provinces, observers see a [deepening quagmire for Saudi Arabia](#), at times using the Vietnam analogy. It is clear that no actor is in a position to make concessions. There is no confidence among warring parties due to weak, fragmented alliances, and UN efforts are hindered by a lack of resources.

**Fernando Carvajal is a PhD candidate in Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



How Will Saudi Arabia Revamp its Education System?

Khadija Mosaad

May 25, 2016

Without an educated and skilled workforce, it will be a tremendous challenge for Vision 2030 to meet its target goals.

As Saudi Arabia pursues economic diversification and sustainable development, the kingdom's progress on these two fronts requires a reformed education system. In April, Prince Mohammed bin Salman—Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince, defense minister and head of the Council of Economic and Developmental Affairs—[announced a new and progressive plan known as Vision 2030](#), which focuses on a variety of economic reforms, business and investment endeavors, as well as cultural and entertainment projects.

Without taking into account the importance, value and overall social implications of a quality education, it is not feasible to implement meaningful economic, cultural and business reforms. Without an educated and skilled workforce, it will be a tremendous challenge for Vision 2030 to meet its target goals. Because of outdated school curricula, ineffective teaching methods and low education standards, one aspect of the vision that will require extensive improvements is in the field of education. It is estimated that [two-thirds of the Saudi population of 29 million](#) are under the age of 30. For Vision 2030 to succeed, Saudi Arabia must take advantage of the knowledge, skills and expertise that this age group can bring to the table.

EDUCATION GOALS

The education aspect of Prince Mohammed's vision focuses on three major areas: curriculum development, higher education advancements and building skills needed for the job market. The [vision includes goals](#) such as “to have at least five Saudi universities among the top 200 universities in international rankings; help students achieve results above international averages in global education indicators; work towards developing the job specifications of every education field.”

At first glance, these goals seem ambitious, bold and hopeful. However, officials in Riyadh have not answered important questions regarding their implementation. Which five Saudi universities will be chosen? What standards will these universities follow? What are the global education indicators? How will educators, advisors and counselors help develop job specification for every education field?

These education goals do, however, align with characteristics needed in a knowledge-based economy, in which [reliance is placed on the skills and capabilities](#) of the individual rather than on physical inputs or natural resources. In order for these goals to be met, Saudi Arabia must revamp the structure and, more importantly, the quality of the current education system. The kingdom's schools stress rote memorization with little emphasis on analytical and critical thinking skills.

According to Theodore Karasik, an analyst on the Gulf, "[a gap exists between two cultures: the school versus university ethos.](#)" Students are not learning the necessary skills needed in schools such as questioning, problem solving and creative thinking. When Saudi students begin university, they will face a whole new slew of challenges. "Some factors that feed into this include studying in English, a lack of personal commitment to college education and inadequate study skills, Karasik notes. "The issue of studying in English is significant because physics, chemistry and biology traditionally use English as the basic language that directs approach, methodology and analysis."

What this creates then is a society of Saudi graduates not adequately prepared to enter the workforce, and even more difficult to compete on a global level. This has, in turn, formed a society dependent on foreign skills and expertise. Will Saudi Arabia import ideas, methods and designs to implement Vision 2030, or will the kingdom rely on homegrown solutions from Saudis themselves?

In a country deeply rooted in religion, tradition and customs, Vision 2030 will require changes in the overall mindsets of individuals, families and communities. The principles of education in Saudi Arabia are strongly rooted in the teachings and values of Islam and *sharia* law. At the K-12 level, there is a greater emphasis placed on learning about the religion, culture and history of the country as opposed to subjects related to [science, technology, engineering and mathematics](#) (STEM).

In order for students to be successful in STEM subjects at university level, it must first be heavily incorporated in the K-12 curriculum. In recent years, there have been efforts to build higher education institutions that stress the importance of science and research such as [King Abdullah University of Science and Technology](#).

STEM education and practices have yet to make a real significant impact on students throughout schools and universities in Saudi Arabia. According to a [UNESCO report on education in Saudi Arabia](#), the general goals of education in the kingdom besides religion is “to equip students with various skills and knowledge; to develop their conduct in constructive directions; to develop the society economically and culturally; and to prepare the individual to be a useful member in the building of his/her community.”

SKILLS

Saudi Arabia must build a skilled and educated workforce in order to compete in the global economy. This idea is not a new phenomenon. When King Abdullah inherited the throne in 2005, he changed the education opportunities available to both men and women. The year he took power, the late king created a program called the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) with the help and support of former US President George W. Bush. It is the largest, [fully-funded government program of its kind currently in place](#). KASP represents a massive educational effort on the kingdom’s part to send students abroad to get academic degrees and medical fellowships.

This program hoped to not only ease tensions between the United States and Saudi Arabia at a time in which tension and resentment abounded, but it also aimed at creating a new thriving generation to modernize the country.

In 2015, the [US-Saudi Arabian Business Council reported](#) that “\$6 billion was earmarked for over 207,000 Saudi students studying abroad and their families.” Under KASP, students are able to study abroad in Western higher education institutions and learn analytical and critical thinking skills, improve their English and gain real life experiences through internships and volunteer opportunities. Students who studied under KASP and returned to Saudi Arabia are now in an integral position where they can play a crucial role in the development and the implementation of Vision 2030.

K-12 INITIATIVES

The Irtiqaa program, an initiative included in Vision 2030, will measure the effectiveness of Saudi parents' engagement in their children's education. By 2020, 80% of [Saudi parents will have to participate in school activities](#) and the learning process of their children. If successful, this could be profound. Typically, housemaids are responsible for raising and caring for Saudi children. This is an important component to consider when implementing such rigorous efforts. How will the dynamics change between housemaids, children and parents?

Other programs can be incorporated into school curricula to better engage students at an early age. For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has declared [2016 as the Year of Reading](#). Children are encouraged to read for pleasure and enhance their knowledge outside of the classroom.

This program does not seem to have had a ripple effect on other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as of yet. However, it provides an example of the types of programs needed to engage children at all age levels. There is little known at this point on how these targets will be reached. Nonetheless, the education reforms are essential for promoting economic growth, facilitating development and even possibly changing the mindsets of individuals.

THE OUTLOOK

Under the kingdom's current social climate, achieving the commitments and goals outlined in Vision 2030 will be challenging. The roles of Saudi women in society, labor laws and guardianship laws are just a few of the social issues that have hindered the kingdom's advancement, both on the local and global scale. However, just this past April, officials in [Riyadh announced new regulations](#) for the Saudi religious police (*mutawaa*), stripping their powers to arrest.

Will Saudi Arabia see more of these social changes?

Ultimately, to successfully implement education plans, Saudi Arabia must utilize education advisors, experts and consultants. The education sector should take advantage of those students who studied abroad, particularly in the field of education, so they can share best practices, pedagogies and standards followed in schools, universities and institutions abroad. These ideas would then need to be incorporated

within Saudi Arabia's education system in a way in which it meets the demands of not only the job market, but also the developmental needs of students. The Saudis must emphasize "non-traditional" fields of study such as humanities, political science degrees and the arts, along with STEM subjects.

Saudi Arabia needs to build an education infrastructure in which students and families have major incentives to remain in their home country for the purpose of pursuing education opportunities. Of course, change never takes place quickly, and it is far too early to predict the fate of Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030. Only time will tell how and, more importantly, if Saudi Arabia's education will exceed expectations and break barriers at international levels.

**Khadija Mosaad is pursuing a PhD in Higher Education at George Mason University. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Turkey Coup is Erdogan's Warning

Nathaniel Handy

July 18, 2016

The Turkish coup attempt may have collapsed almost before it started, but its blunders hide dangerous contests for control of the state.

It is no surprise that many have regarded the [failed Turkish coup d'état](#) as a [false flag event](#)—one masterminded by the government itself. After all, in its failure it does appear to have vastly strengthened the hand of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This accusation has even come from the main culprit that the Turkish government is blaming: exiled cleric [Fethullah Gulen](#).

Coups have been the *modus operandi* of the Turkish state throughout its modern history. Yet what makes this one particularly curious is that it comes at a time when the public perception of military takeovers has become so negative that it was assumed no serious power player would entertain such a course of action. Indeed, coups in Turkey have often erred on the side of caution.

The coup of 1971 was a so-called “coup by memorandum,” in which the military issued a statement that led to the fall of the government. In 1997, Turkey even had what has been termed a “postmodern coup,” in that only the suggestion of the military’s wishes led Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to stand down.

This latest attempt on July 15 was either strangely old-fashioned or, as the conspiracy theorists suggest, yet another Turkish first: a false coup.

BEWARE THE PARANOIA

Turkish politics is famously opaque, with talk of a “deep state” never far from the surface. Aside from the question of whether Erdogan controls that deep state—should it exist—or is in confrontation with it, there are reasons to assume this was not a coup of his own making. Most obviously, even for a gambling man, this was one hell of a gamble.

To unleash units of your own army, resulting in bombing raids and the deaths of 265 people would be cynicism on a massive and, as Erdogan says himself, treasonous scale. As the Turkish president spoke over FaceTime via an iPhone broadcast on TV, he appeared more vulnerable than theater would have allowed.

All coups are unpredictable events, even as they occur. To have hoped to stage-manage such acts would be dangerously foolish. All sides in Turkey know that coups here often lead to death sentences. Erdogan could have reasonably feared the worst should it have been successful.

THE PEOPLE’S PRESIDENT

The second key feature that does not ring true is Erdogan’s own current position. His electoral gamble of 2015 was a triumph that has put him in a stronger position than ever. He can rightly claim the backing of the majority of Turks. To stage a coup would be the act of a desperate man, and Erdogan is not in a desperate position.

His position may not be desperate, but it is not entirely comfortable. The resignation of his prime minister and long-time party ally, Ahmet Davutoglu, in May was a blow. In foreign policy, President Erdogan has been forced to wind himself back from confrontations with Russia and Israel. There are many in Turkey who despise him, but

there are also many in his own party who are troubled by his dominance. These are unstable times for Turkish society.

This leads to the question at the heart of the failed coup once more: Just who was desperate enough to attempt such an ill-judged act?

On the face of it, the coup attempt had all the hallmarks of a classic Kemalist military takeover. The army has always been a bastion of secularism and Kemalist nationalist ideology. The statement read out on national TV claimed that the current government had undermined the secular nature of the Turkish state, a common Kemalist attack. Furthermore, the junta assuming control was named the “Peace at Home Council”—a reference to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’s famous phrase, “Peace At Home, Peace in the World.”

A HEADLESS SERPENT?

These facts would suggest a Kemalist element within the military, though it seems clear that it did not have backing from within the Republican People’s Party (CHP) leadership—the party of Ataturk’s legacy. It also appears not to have had the backing of key high-ranking figures in the military. This weakness proved fatal. The question is: Were promises made and broken?

One theory doing the rounds is that [Kemalist elements in the military coaxed Gulenists](#)—those loyal to the cleric Fethullah Gulen, who has been in a fierce battle with Erdogan’s forces for the last few years—into staging a coup they thought would have broad support. The line of this theory runs that, by doing so, Kemalists would see the removal of their Gulenist rivals in the inevitable purge.

The problem with this theory is that Erdogan currently poses a much greater threat to the Kemalist nature of the Turkish state than does Gulen’s Hizmet Movement.

This brings us back to that reclusive exiled cleric, Fethullah Gulen. Erdogan’s spat with him is clearly personal. The witch-hunt for his supporters in all areas of public life has been gathering pace. Could this have been a last desperate attempt to halt Erdogan? Despite all the posturing from the main players and all the conspiracy theories, the facts of the coup point more to chaotic bravado than strategic thinking. This coup attempt was conducted without the firm backing of vital military top brass. It failed to

make the capture of Erdogan a fundamental priority. But perhaps most importantly, it took no measure of the clear public mood in Turkey against the use of coups to further political aims.

It appears to have been a mid-level plot by elements within either the Gulenist or secular Kemalist political streams. As such, Fethullah Gulen and the CHP leadership can claim confidently not to have been involved. But the question remains that for things to have reached the point they did, it is highly likely that the people at the top may have known—discreetly—what was coming. They may have thought it was ill judged, but they may also have thought to wait and see. After all, one never knows exactly how things will play out.

**Nathaniel Handy is a writer and academic with over 10 years of experience in international print and broadcast media. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Putting the Turkey Coup in Historical Perspective

Altug Gunal

September 3, 2016

Had the Turkey coup been successful, it would have spelled disaster for the country.

When a military coup shook Greece in 1967, it exposed the country to a brutal military dictatorship that brought numerous internal and external losses for the Greek people. Recalling this part of Greek history, and taking lessons from the [coup d'état of 1974 in Cyprus](#), can enlighten us on what Turkey could have faced if the [coup attempt on July 15, 2016](#), had been successful.

After long negotiations and the signing of international treaties between the United Kingdom, Turkey and Greece, a joint state between the Greeks and Turks was formed in Cyprus in 1960. However, as neither Greeks nor Turks gave up their national aspirations, the Republic of Cyprus did not last long.

In 1963, inter-communal violence (from a Greek point of view) or Greek oppression (from a Turkish one) had started. In 1964, the [United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus](#) was stationed on the island but did not succeed in ending the bloodshed. Turkey had decided to intervene in 1964 and 1967 in order to stop the killings, but was prevented from doing so by the United States.

PROMETHEUS: FROM GREECE TO CYPRUS

On the morning of April 21, 1967, Greeks woke up to learn that a group of a middle-ranking military intelligence officers led by anti-communist Colonel George Papadopoulos had seized power in the country. Coup leaders had not issued any prior warning, and they did not encounter any serious resistance. The coup was based on a modified North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) contingency plan called [Prometheus](#), which was originally created for the possibility of a communist takeover. The main aim of the coup was to prevent George Papandreu, and his son Andreas as heralded successor, from winning the May 1967 election.

Andreas Papandreu was a leftist who criticized the massive presence of American military and intelligence in Greece, and aimed at following a more independent path from the US. This had been enough to be [labeled a communist](#) by the military, conservatives, NATO and the Americans. In fact, he was incarcerated later by the Greek junta, while his father was put under house arrest. The [14th article of the Greek constitution](#), which protects freedom of thought and expression, was suspended.

On November 25, 1973, Papadopoulos himself was overthrown by a coup within a coup, led by Greek Military Police Commander Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannides, after a bloody anti-junta student revolt at Athens Technical University. Papadopoulos' administration, which lasted about six-and-a-half years, was now replaced by an even more tough and uncompromising regime. As expected, the US saw this as an internal matter and quickly recognized the new government. During the dark and dirty seven-year period of junta rule—although relative stability and economic development was ensured—[thousands of opponents](#) were [detained, unfairly tried, dismissed or tortured](#).

In order to ensure public support, Ioannides decided to play on one of the most important national causes, namely [enosis](#): the unification of Greece and Cyprus. In

fact, many in the Greek junta had served in Cyprus and had emotional ties with the Mediterranean island.

However, even though the president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III, had desired enosis, he opposed it—stating that it was not feasible or clever to make such a unilateral declaration under military rule.

Nevertheless, Ioannides was not willing to wait and decided to use Colonel Georgios Grivas (a former Greek war hero originally from Cyprus) and the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA-B)—a Cypriot paramilitary organization founded by Grivas and aimed at achieving enosis—in order to get rid of Makarios, having attempted to assassinate him several times. On January 3, 1974, he claimed publicly that the junta was trying to [overthrow](#) him.

On June 5, 1974, Makarios sent a public letter to Greek President Phaedon Gizikis and demanded that Greek soldiers be called back to Greece. The letter brought about his end. He had once said: “I have survived 13 Greek Governments; I can survive the 14th.” But on July 15, he lost his presidency through a military coup.

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

The US had warned Greece several times that a coup attempt in Cyprus would cause an [international crisis](#) that would include Turkey as well. However, Ioannides seemed not able to think rationally about this issue. During a meeting with US representatives, he seemed to have suffered a [breakdown](#). Jumping, shouting and hitting the table, he had told American diplomats the stories of the historic wars between Byzantium, Hellenes and the Ottomans, including the conquest of Istanbul in 1453.

On the morning of July 15, 1974, Makarios’ presidential palace was attacked with tanks, armored vehicles and commandos. The Cypriot president was welcoming a group of children as guests at the time but was able to escape through the back door. His supporters and police were not able to resist for long. While Turkish Cypriots organized under Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT) were waiting to find out the result with great anxiety, tourists were trapped in their hotels as the airports and seaports were seized.

Not only militarily, but also politically, the coup was organized with great awkwardness. Perhaps the greatest mistake of the coup leaders was to make Nikos Sampson, who was an EOKA-B member, a famous killer and widely known as “Turk Eater,” the new president. Makarios was able to make a [speech at the United Nations Security Council](#), where he explicitly accused the Greek junta of organizing the coup. He also said Greece was a greater threat than Turkey. His demand for international intervention by the United Nations (UN) was, in fact, only met by Turkey.

Junta members had dismissed many qualified officers and instead promoted the incapable but loyal ones. Loyalty to the regime had replaced competence. However, an unexpected consequence of these mistakes for Greeks and Greek Cypriots was the loss of one-third of their beloved island. Turkey saw the coup by the Greek junta as a serious threat to Turkish Cypriots and Turkey’s security and as a violation of international treaties and decided to intervene.

TURKISH INTERVENTION IN CYPRUS

The intervention in Cyprus started on the morning of July 20, 1974. However, since Greeks were too exhausted from fighting each other in these three consecutive coups, and since many of the qualified officers were dismissed by the junta and polarized, they were incapable of mounting a strong resistance, nor were they organized well enough to repel Turkey’s military operation. Fortunately, Ioannides’ order to start a war against Turkey was not obeyed by his generals, who believed this was an impossible mission.

Once the cradle of European civilization, Greece had become a pariah of Europe after these coups and lost its international standing. Turkey’s intervention came when Greece was excluded from the international community and under a partial arms embargo. This was one of the reasons why world powers did not put forward a strong response to Turkey’s initial intervention.

The embarrassment caused by the defeat in Cyprus and the inability of Greece to fight against Turkey led to senior Greek military officers withdrawing their support for Ioannides. Instead, Constantine Karamanlis, a well-known politician who had lived in Paris, was invited on July 23 to assume the role of prime minister. The tide turned against Turkey immediately after Greece returned to democracy.

One can evaluate Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus as an invasion and a pretext for partitioning the island, or as a legal and just humanitarian intervention to save Turkish Cypriots. But in the aftermath, because of these coups and the internal turmoil they produced, the Greeks lost a third of the island, and Turkey found a chance to create a comparatively large safe zone for Turkish Cypriots. No doubt, the Turkish army could have won the war in any case, even without these coups. However, it would have caused considerably more casualties for Turkey and resulted in even greater international pressure.

TURKEY COUP OF 2016

If the coup of July 15, 2016, in Turkey had been successful, an important part of the military and civilians would have challenged and continued to fight against the junta for a long period. It was officially declared by Turkish armed forces that [only the 1.5%](#) of the military joined the coup attempt with inadequate military vehicles. However, an important number of generals, especially with one or two stars ([157 of 358 generals](#)), were on their side. Had they been successful in controlling governmental institutions, the main military command buildings and perhaps killing or detaining key political figures, including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, it was almost certain that the remaining army staff would have fought back after recovering from the initial shock.

It is also well known that the Kemalist section of the military has no sympathy for [Fethullah Gulen](#), an exiled Muslim cleric who has been accused of instigating the coup attempt. Instead, there has been a serious struggle between Kemalists and Gulenists since 1980s, which came to a highpoint during the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) court cases organized unlawfully by Gulenists against the Kemalist officers. In addition to that, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and President Erdogan have the support of [at least 50%](#) of the Turkish population.

The day of the Turkey coup clearly showed how a large section of the public was ready to fight against the tanks and die in order to defend the country's democratic choices. The decisive resistance of the Kemalist commanders, but especially the comparatively ill-equipped policemen, should also be taken into account.

Therefore, considering all these dimensions, the aftershock of the coup would not have subsided quickly. Instead, a confrontation between army officers, the police and civilians could have lasted for months.

Besides other terrorist organizations, the involvement of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the confrontations was also a strong possibility, since it has been fighting against Turkey for years and could have seen the weakened position of the army and police as a good opportunity to realize its aims. The tensions between the secular and the religious factions should also be kept in mind.

ESCAPING BLOOD

Considering all of these factors, Turkey would have fallen into turmoil or even a bloody civil war, and would have paid very high price both internally and externally. It is well known that this type of infighting can cause major violations of human rights and may end up with [foreign humanitarian military interventions](#)—sometimes with right intentions but sometimes as a pretext for an invasion.

A long-standing internal conflict in Turkey would have threatened all of Europe, which could have entailed an elimination of the Turkish barrier to Syrian refugees seeking to reach Europe. It would have also resulted in new Turkish and Kurdish refugees, an easy transit for terrorist groups to Europe, smuggling and illegal trafficking, instability, xenophobia, and more nationalist policies and rhetoric.

Therefore, if Turkey had not been able to end the crisis in a short period of time, NATO could have decided to intervene in a member state one way or another, for the first time in history. It is not impossible to bypass the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and international law, or reinterpret it—as was the case in the Kosovo intervention that was executed without a valid UN Security Council resolution—when vital interests are at stake and all members agree. However, past experiences have proved that foreign military interventions can cause even greater crisis and instability, as seen in Libya and Iraq.

If the coup attempt had reached its initial aims, it could have produced unexpected outcomes for Cyprus as well.

Turkey has more than 40,000 army personnel on the island. Even though it would not have been rational, had the coup organizers been successful in toppling the Turkish government, the Turkish army in northern Cyprus could have been ordered to do the same there. Indeed, just after the coup attempt, the commander of the Turkish army in Cyprus resigned and other top generals were retired by the supreme military council.

Turkey had used the military coup of 1974 in Cyprus and the humanitarian crisis as justifying factors for its military intervention. This time, the same arguments could have been used by the Greek and Greek Cypriot armies in order to take back Cyprus, as the Turkish army would have been in disorder. In fact, former Greek Member of Parliament Christos Rotsas proved that this was not just a conspiracy theory by absurdly stating that the [Greeks missed a perfect opportunity](#) by not attacking the Turkish army in Cyprus and capturing the north.

Another common practice of powerful countries in this kind of situation is to intervene militarily in order to—or at least using the excuse—protect their own citizens. In fact, a spokesman for [German Chancellor Angela Merkel](#) said: “Everything must be done to protect human lives.” The [Kremlin](#), which has never hesitated from intervening militarily in neighboring crises—as was the case in Crimea, Ukraine and South Ossetia—declared that Russia’s priority was to secure the safety of Russian institutions and citizens in Turkey.

Even though President Erdogan had chosen to mend Turkish relations with Russia just before the coup attempt, the tension between the countries had reached a concerning level after a Russian fighter jet was shot down by Turkey in 2015.

Turkey is a NATO member. However, past experiences show that Russia could choose to step up to NATO as it did in Kosovo—but it clearly would not do so when a vital neighboring country is in question: Syria. The historical [Russian dream of accessing warm seas](#) over Turkey and Syria should also be considered.

The Greek people lost so much both internally and externally due to three consecutive coups. But considering all the dangerous possibilities mentioned above, Turkey could have lost even more if the coup attempt of July 15 had succeeded. Therefore, the anti-coup and Kemalist part of the Turkish military personnel, police and civilians who resisted and prevented the coup have actually saved Turkey from a real catastrophe—and even the world from serious regional instability.

Now, the most important aim for the Turkish government should be to accurately identify the criminals from the innocents, and not to turn the investigations into a witch hunt. Instead, this regrettable incident should be used as a chance for a new beginning and reconciliation between the polarized segments of Turkish society.

**Altug Gunal is an academic visitor at the University of Oxford and a lecturer at Ege University in Izmir, Turkey. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



What the Panama Papers Have To Do With America

Scott Klinger

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Panama is not alone in the world of financial secrecy. The problem of secret financial transactions affects lives in communities throughout America.

The massive release of the [Panama Papers](#) has rocked the financial and political world. The leaked documents from Panama's Mossack Fonseca law firms contain more than 11 million files involving 214,000 companies set up over the last four decades. A dozen current or former heads of states are implicated and one, the prime minister of Iceland, has already resigned.

Despite the enormous scope of the leak—more than 1,500 times larger than Edward Snowden's WikiLeaks files—it represents just the tip of the iceberg of worldwide activity to conceal the identity of those participating in financial transactions.

Anonymous offshore companies can be used for a host of reasons, some perfectly legal, but many not, including tax evasion, theft of public funds, arms trading, human trafficking, consumer fraud, illegal campaign contributions and international drug trading. Though Mossack Fonseca says it is the fourth largest law firm that specializes in helping clients set up offshore accounts in secrecy jurisdictions throughout the world, there are tens of thousands of law firms willing to help their clients set up offshore corporations.

One of the striking things about the Panama leaks is that, to date, few Americans have been named. Several commentators have noted that Americans don't need to go to Panama to get help concealing their transactions in anonymous companies, since there are ample opportunities to do so using anonymous shell corporations set up in the United States, with the help of American law firms.

IN THE US

Mossack Fonseca's business centered on providing its customers secrecy to hide their transactions from tax authorities and law enforcement officials. But Panama is not alone in the world of financial secrecy.

In fact, it is not even the most desirable nation in providing cover to wealthy and powerful investors. The US ranked as having the third least transparent financial system according to the most recent [Financial Secrecy Index](#), an annual survey prepared by the Tax Justice Network. The US trounced Panama which ranked 13th and was bested only by Switzerland and Hong Kong.

In January, *60 Minutes* aired a segment focusing on a ground-breaking undercover investigation of anonymous corporations undertaken by Global Witness, an international human rights organization. Global Witness' undercover representative set up meetings with 13 New York law firms. He claimed to be representing an unnamed West African minister of mines looking to buy a private jet, a brownstone apartment and a yacht and needed help bringing funds into the US without detection. All but one of the firms eagerly supplied suggestions—including on how to use both foreign and domestic anonymous companies to conceal the wealth of the seemingly unscrupulous client.

Though no money was actually moved during the Global Witness investigation, anonymous US shell corporations are used for nefarious purposes every day in our country. Convicted international arms dealer Viktor Bout used a global network of shell companies, including those set up in Delaware, Florida and Texas, to sell arms that perpetuated conflicts in Africa and throughout the world. The government of Iran violated US sanctions by using an anonymous shell company in New York to disguise its ownership of a skyscraper in the heart of Manhattan. A major Mexican drug cartel used anonymous corporations based in Oklahoma to launder millions of dollars of profits in illegal drugs. Anonymous corporations have been used to rip-off vulnerable seniors and military families, promising too-good-to-be-true investment schemes.

The Federal Election Commission currently has before it several cases where anonymous companies were allegedly used to skirt campaign finance laws. Anonymous corporations have been used to rip-off taxpayers, including a school administrator in Ohio who directed funds intended to pay for school supplies into an

anonymous corporation, and an organized crime syndicate that used anonymous companies in seven states to perpetuate the largest Medicare fraud in US history.

Crimes involving anonymous shell corporations waste the time and resources of our nation's law enforcement agencies. Agents following trails of money wind up at shell company after shell company, each of whose true owners are concealed.

Why has the US been unable to stop this dangerous and costly practice?

The answer is simple: political will. In many American states, you are required to provide more information to get a library card than to set up a shell company. Comedian Stephen Colbert [set up an anonymous shell corporation](#) on his television show in less than 10 minutes.

US LAW

In the US, states are responsible for incorporating businesses. None of them require the true person who owns or controls the company—known as the “beneficial owner”—to be identified on corporate registration papers and instead allow an agent (such as a lawyer or a company formation agent) to be named instead.

Since 2008, there has been legislation in the US Congress that would change the rules and require all US corporations to disclose the names of real owners, not third-party agents. The Incorporation Transparency and Law Enforcement Assistance Act (S. 2489 in the Senate and H.R. 2489 in the House) would require states to acquire one additional piece of information from corporations they register: the names of beneficial owners. The law contains many reasonable exemptions, including public corporations (who already have registers of beneficial owners); churches and other non-profits; and owners of businesses with more than 20 employees, \$5 million in annual revenues and a physical presence such as an office.

Many law enforcement agencies, along with the FACT Coalition, a 100-member coalition of human rights, faith-based, labor, transparency and environmental organizations, have endorsed the legislation. The main opponent to date has been the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), the lobbying arm of state Secretaries of State. NASS argues against the bill because of the cost of reprogramming their databases to accommodate the names of beneficial owners.

Despite the commitment of the US Department of Justice and the US Treasury who together have pledged to provide \$40 million from a pool of funds they have seized from criminals, to help states offset the cost of implementing the collection of beneficial ownership information, NASS has refused to budge. Meanwhile, the list of shell corporations used for criminal activities in their states continues to grow.

The Panama Papers do not represent a problem that's "out there," but rather a problem of secret financial transactions that affects lives in communities throughout America. When US political leaders pledge to look into the Panama leaks, they should start by looking in their own backyards.

**Scott Klinger is an expert on tax policy and executive compensation. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



The Fourth and Final Disappearance of Muhammad Ali

Peter Isackson

June 7, 2016

Many of the issues Muhammad Ali brought to the fore are still here, some in aggravated form.

An enigmatic American cultural icon disappeared this week, for the fourth and final time. Muhammad Ali is now routinely called by the media "the greatest sportsman of the 20th century," but his iconic status had much more to do with one of the bitterest and still unresolved moments of American history than with athletic accomplishment.

Ali, the defiant draft-dodger, encapsulated the complex reality of psychedelic '60s, remembered as an epoch of artistic innovation, rebellion, anti-authority protest, transformation, liberation and unbridled expression. Cassius Clay emerged in 1960 as a graceful innovator in the techniques and style of boxing, quickly gained a reputation as a rebel against the manners of the age, morphed into a daring voice of protest,

helped transform the notion of patriotism and justice, had a serious impact as a liberator of his race and by the end of the decade established himself a wildly creative entertainer. He left a lasting impact on Americans' perception of themselves and their culture.

It was a time of cultural and political anguish and confusion punctuated by the promise of Camelot, the tidal wave of civil rights activism and the brutal backlash against it, the assassination of a president, the headlong rush into America's first serious neo-colonial war and its progressive escalation, the spontaneous emergence of hippies and then yippies alongside Black Power and the militant feminism.

Cassius Clay started it off as a talented athlete with a flair for absurdly comedic public relations. His story over that decade was one of easy success on the road to the heavyweight championship followed by a deeply agonistic struggle in the social and political sphere that called into question American values concerning race and militarism. When the butterfly Muhammad Ali emerged from Cassius Clay's cocoon in 1964, he was worse than a troublemaker. When he refused conscription, he was branded as the enemy of everything America stood for.

The construction of the comforting image we now have of Muhammad Ali on the Mount Rushmore of American sports and as a paragon of individual moral conscience was consolidated for the first time only after the confusion of the '60s had given way to disillusioned conformity of the '70s and then transformed again after his retirement from boxing, allowing him to become a symbol of the hypocrisy he had once challenged. The myth has dethroned the man and his contribution to his times. His final departure of the man behind the myth—the fourth disappearance of his lifetime—should give us the opportunity to set the record straight.

CREATING THE PERSONA

Let's go back to the beginning—the launch of Cassius Clay, winner of the Olympic gold medal and future contender for the heavyweight championship. To be a contender you need to promote yourself or be promoted. Most boxers worked with their footwork and fists alone and left promotion to the professionals. Clay was different. He had the talent, if not the science, of promotion. Combined with his exceptional skills as a boxer and his flair for innovation, he created an enduring image that the media could not ignore.

An odd parallel could be made between young Cassius Clay in 1960 and Donald Trump in 2016. The young boxer built his own image, used the force of the media and [a talent for provocation as well as prevarication to sell it](#). He possessed and even cultivated an elevated level of self-esteem. And in spite of a very negative—but deliberately provoked—initial reception by the sports establishment, Cassius ensured that he would be noticed.

This was the first step in the long and complex process that would ultimately turn him into a fixture of US culture. Ali's achievement, unlike Trump's, was already more complex because based on authentic talent and skills. It would become more complex when the dramatic events of political, social and cultural history became part of Ali's story.

Today, Ali is revered as a model of personal achievement, a symbol of personal integrity. He is honored as a self-made black man who single-handedly proved his worth, successfully battling his way to the top. He has thus become the incarnation of the myth at the heart of US culture, the heroic individual who achieved success through self-reliance and self-creation.

But that wasn't how the story played out at the time. After winning an Olympics gold medal in 1960, Cassius Clay put in action his apparently conscious plan to become the most hated young man in sports, hated for his manner and hated for promoting his race. According to the codes of the time, "darkies" weren't supposed to self-promote neither themselves nor their race. Protesting flagrant injustice, as Martin Luther King, Jr., had begun doing, was barely tolerable. Drawing attention to the beauty and culture of their race was a clear breach of good manners.

Cassius Clay was branded as a brash verbal bully, an impertinent black kid with fast hands who after his success among the amateurs in the Olympics would, without the slightest doubt, promptly get thrashed by any one of the brutal professionals he would soon face. All the pundits, experts and amateur commentators at the time expected Clay to get a quick comeuppance, if not at the hands of seasoned heavyweight ex-champions or contenders, like Floyd Patterson or Archie Moore, then surely from the unbeatable reigning champion Sonny Liston. The influential sports journalist Murray Kempton summed it up for the majority with [this comment](#): "Liston used to be a hoodlum; now he is our cop; he was the big Negro we pay to keep sassy Negroes in

line.” When the bout with Liston actually did take place in February 1964, Cassius Clay was a 7-to-1 underdog.

Grace and speed had overcome strength. The juvenile delinquent had schooled the cop. After that fight it became impossible to ignore the young boxer or dismiss him as a pretender, though some claimed at the time that the fight was fixed. But the new champion subsequently shook up the media even more than he had shaken up Liston after six rounds. Only a few days later he shocked the world when he announced that he was abandoning his “slave name” Cassius Clay in favor of his new Muslim name, Muhammad Ali.

Worse, he let it be known that he had formally adhered to the reviled religion of Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, aka Black Muslims, considered to be an extremist cult. The media had no idea how to react. Journalists couldn’t decide whether to cheer for the new champion and forgive him his bad manners, condemn him for joining a terrorist cell or hope that in a rematch Liston would prematurely terminate his career. What few Americans who hadn’t lived through that era realize today is that from that moment on, Ali—today’s legend—was authentically vilified by most of the white establishment and universally condemned by the media. Even African-Americans didn’t know what to think of him. How would this provocation affect the cause of civil rights?

Six months earlier, in August 1963, Martin Luther King had made history with his “I have a dream” speech in Washington. At the very moment when Dr. King—in spite of being himself perceived as an agitator in an age of extreme conformity zealously enforced by J. Edgar Hoover—was beginning to be accepted by white society thanks to his eloquent rhetoric and his “turn the other cheek” Christian stance, the Nation of Islam was seen as an existential threat to the American establishment, liberal and conservative alike. Southerners hated them because they were black. Northern liberals were embarrassed because they rejected their solution of tolerance and gradual integration. Dr. King still called his people “negroes” whereas the Black Muslims and the emerging Black Panthers—preaching armed revolution in the face of institutional racism—had already banished a word that sounded too close to the supreme racist epithet, “nigger.” “Are you afraid to call us black?” was the challenge both groups sent to the “ofays” and “gray boys” in the south and north alike, who proudly called themselves “white.”

For several years, only one prominent member of the sporting press, Howard Cosell, refused to call Ali by his “slave name,” Cassius Clay. Those of us teenagers who not only thrilled at Ali’s ballet-like boxing skills and hungered to see him “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee,” but who also had serious misgivings about the racial climate in the US, couldn’t help admiring Cosell’s courage as a journalist who had the guts to take Ali on his own terms, both as a boxer and a man of conscience. Already in 1964 the battle around Ali was engaged: The political and media establishment and the majority of the population of the United States concurred in branding Ali an unwanted alien. But Muhammad Ali, the iconic hero of moral and political conscience, was still waiting to be born.

I SPEAK FOR THE POOR OF AMERICA

Everything changed when in March 1966 Ali refused to step forward for the draft and accepted the promised consequences, jail time and loss of his professional status, including the coveted and quasi-mythic title “heavyweight champion of the world.” At the time, the media calmly pointed out that Ali should simply accept conscription because, as a sporting celebrity, he would have a cushy time, could continue training and would be programmed to fight exhibition matches organized by the military. It wouldn’t be any worse than Elvis’s two years of service. Any self-respecting American—patriot or not—would have accepted that.

But Ali wasn’t concerned with his own comfort. He was ready to challenge the very order of things. He felt he could not back down. He framed his refusal in the terms of an oppressed black man from the south being given incomprehensible orders by a white establishment that only needed him as cannon fodder. But his message of resistance resonated with the younger generation, who were equally called upon to go off and fight a brutal war in a distant land, conducted by a president who took office thanks to the shocking assassination of a popular young president. [Here is how Ali framed it:](#)

“My conscience won’t let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor hungry people in the mud for big powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never called me nigger, they never lynched me, they didn’t put no dogs on me, they didn’t rob me of my nationality, rape or kill my mother and father ... How can I shoot them poor people? Just take me to jail.”

Ali had officially proclaimed himself a deserter, a criminal. But the implication went further. His position wasn't just that of an opponent of the war who didn't want to serve, a position the establishment could understand but obviously not tolerate. Ali's position was that of a declared enemy of US foreign policy. He spoke from the point of view of the oppressed. And, possibly unwittingly, he was among the first to dare formulate and highlight the link between racial oppression in the US and imperialistic militarism against foreign, non-European populations.

I say "unwittingly" because Ali was never a deep thinker and never pretended to be one, to his dying day. In that sense, the braggadocio always remained humble. It's worth noting that within a year MLK may have taken the hint from Ali to articulate the link between racist practices in the US and its foreign policy. [Here is King:](#)

"Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as an American to the leaders of my own nation. The great initiative in this war is ours. The initiative to stop it must be ours."

King went on to develop the link even further when he told his staff in 1967:

"We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power... this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order."

Shortly after that, in April 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. The same mystery surrounds this event as the assassinations of JFK in 1963 and of his brother Robert in June 1968. The "house" King referred to clearly was not "in order," and one of the methods for reinforcing the existing order now appeared to be well-planned and equally well-masqueraded mafia-style elimination.

Although clear evidence of conspiracy in all three assassinations actually does exist, each of these three murders is still officially described in history books and the media as a tragic, isolated incident perpetrated by a lone gunman. What is important to retain, however, is that the suspicion that well-organized foul play was involved has remained in the American psyche even after decades of hiding the evidence and airbrushing the facts. The public perception of this series of high-profile assassinations has contributed significantly to distrust of the federal government on both sides of the political spectrum.

Had Dr. King pushed his analysis too far for his own good? Was he treading on forbidden ground? For J. Edgar Hoover and the other masters of national security, black activists, just like lobbyists, may be tolerated so long as they remain focused on their specific agenda. US culture encourages specialization for everyone, and for minorities in particular. Systemic thinkers who make embarrassing or unsettling links between disparate domains will always be suspect, particularly when they demonstrate not just the negative effects of the institutions but how the system actually produces those effects.

It may well be that, as [many claim](#), Muhammad Ali directly inspired Dr. King's critical positions on foreign policy. But as a public performer and an increasingly visible personality, Ali—still allied with the Nation of Islam—didn't attempt to join forces with King or follow his lead by attempting to develop and promote a coherent line of thought permitting to understand the system he was at odds with. Ali was still a boxer, though without a license. He continued to fight for his two privileged causes, racial justice and respect for the Muslim religion, without seeking to articulate the links between them or calling into question the economic and political system that actually explained how they were connected.

Ali was of course always more than a boxer but he clearly was never a thinker. He was too spontaneous, too much a performer. As Norman Mailer loved to point out, Ali was a brilliant talker. His talking, his provocative formulations, could inspire thinking in others. Ali's talents were indeed varied: He was first of all an artist of the ring, an innovator in his sport, but for the consumer public he was also a grating wit, a master of spontaneous verbal acrobatics that were both socially targeted and fun. There's even a good case to be made for considering Ali as the originator or, at the very least, [a key inspirer of the genre of rap and hip-hop](#).

SECOND DISAPPEARANCE: FROM ACTIVE BOXER TO LIVING LEGEND

But three and a half years of forced retirement and age had taken its toll. With his diminishing speed and agility—the key characteristics of his original style—Ali's boxing career ended in predictable failure after lasting far longer than a concern for his future well-being should have permitted. His dexterity waned, he took a few too many punches, his health was compromised and his mental faculties diminished or perhaps seriously impaired. Ultimately he lost his voice as well.

That was worse than losing his speed. The Louisville Lip, as he was called at the beginning of his career, had lost his tongue. The decline was rapid. Curiously, it paralleled a similar contradictory trajectory of US political history at the end of the 20th century. The verbose '60s had given way to the taciturn '70s. Nixon's retreat from Vietnam ended the decade-long bitter, seriously engaged debate about unjust wars, which had put ethics on the table as a national issue. Watergate provided a different kind of ethical distraction, focused on petty skullduggery, cover-up and the good old American preoccupation with the only original sin—lying. Remember George Washington and the cherry tree? Then came the Reagan years when American politics was put to sleep.

By the time Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, after a decade that saw the retreat from Saigon and Nixon's resignation, what was considered the natural default position of US ideology returned: Any war we choose to engage in must be, by definition, a just war. Vietnam had thrown some doubt on this doctrine, but order was now reestablished and it has miraculously persisted right through Barack Obama.

Ali's struggle of the '60s had already lost all meaning, partly because he no longer needed to worry about it once he was able to reprise his boxing career and even regain the championship. Just as abolishing the draft and instituting a volunteer military permitted Nixon to defuse the anger and anguish of the young, who could then calmly plot out their future.

Those issues buried, Ali no longer had even a symbolic role to play with regard to foreign policy. To the extent that his life was no longer affected either by Washington's politics or the provocative doctrines of the Nation of Islam, Ali's public persona was comfortably contained within that of the comeback boxing hero, who continued to preach for the African-American cause but without shaking the walls of the house. He

even managed the public relations coup of winning back his title not in Las Vegas but in Africa, which had its symbolic importance, albeit in the home of the corrupt Mobutu rather than that of the principled Patrice Lumumba, a victim of CIA meddling in the 1960s.

Ali's skill as a cultural observer of racial issues nevertheless came to the fore on occasion, as in this [lucid analysis of the Rocky phenomenon](#): "I have been so great in boxing they had to create an image like Rocky, a white image on the screen, to counteract my image in the ring. America has to have its white images, no matter where it gets them. Jesus, Wonder Woman, Tarzan and Rocky."

But thanks to his success story—always a key to redemption in US culture—Ali himself had become a celebrity with a positive image for the white population. The marginalized rebel was becoming increasingly familiar with the establishment, enjoying the limelight, accepting his role as a star among the beautiful people. He was careful to protect his image as "the greatest" while at the same time never betraying—though sometimes forgetting—his fundamental moral choices.

But he clearly let himself be tempted by some of the comforts of being seen as a pillar of the white establishment. In 1977 he participated in Hollywood's annual narcissistic ritual of self-celebration, playing out a scripted comedy sketch with Sylvester Stallone at the Oscars. On that occasion, Stallone called Ali "a 100% certified legend," signifying that Ali the rebel and protester had definitively gone into retirement.

Ali nevertheless always remained committed to his two fundamental principles, which had morphed from a political orientation to a purely cultural one. The themes that moved him were racial justice and religious identity. His departure from boxing and his physical disabilities took him away from any permanent public platform, but his status as a revered legend meant that the public would be curious about, if not attentive to, his declared positions on public issues.

In 1984 the cause of racial justice led him to back the unsuccessful presidential aspirations of Jesse Jackson. Jackson represented black hopes for expanded civil rights but, most of all, recognition black assertiveness. But when Jackson's campaign failed, Ali surprised everyone by endorsing Reagan. This time it was Ali's second cause, religious integrity, that guided him. He needed only one simple reason: "He's keeping God in schools and that's enough!"

The contradiction was flagrant. Why would the man sacrifice the prime of his career to oppose Johnson's Vietnam policies and American militarism turn around and support an openly militaristic president, who at the same time was fueling a brutal war against Ali's Shiite brethren in Iran as well as promoting American imperialism in Latin America and other places?

Through his deep Muslim faith Ali ignored all other differences, the real political issues, and apparently found an affinity with the party that identified with religious fundamentalism, albeit Christian and American. At the same time, Ali had already definitively repudiated the Nation of Islam (with its Shiite orientation) having converted to Sunni Islam. His decisions with regard to public issues, as always, were guided by his personal preoccupations and emotions, which is not to say his calculated self-interest. Ali remained committed to the ideals and humanitarian goals that had underpinned his objection 20 years earlier to being an instrument of death for Vietnamese peasants. He simply hadn't made the links that Dr. King had made.

ALI'S THIRD DISAPPEARANCE: THE VOICE THAT WENT SILENT

It was nevertheless sad to see his gradual transformation into a docile icon of the poorly-framed and often disastrously-applied ideals and proclaimed "good intentions" of the US government. He never endorsed them but he seemed to accept the reigning order. It is difficult for an observer to escape the impression that the brash, headstrong young man who had defied a nation at war had become a complacent, though in all probability unwitting, accomplice of the very military-industrial complex that had drafted him for service in Vietnam.

This was never clearer than when in 2005, alongside Alan Greenspan, he accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom award from George W. Bush. The rapid decline of Ali's health had by that time taken away his voice. He was reduced to the ritual of miming in public the silent persona of the man of integrity and conscience on the very stage of the imperial regime against which he had rebelled. It certainly wasn't his intention but the effect was as obvious as it was sad. What would MLK have thought of an award granted by a president and a regime considered by many to be war criminals, an award received in the company of one of the greatest promoters of unbridled capitalism, Alan Greenspan?

Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King, Jr., and even Nelson Mandela—each of them considered enemies of the state in the eras of J. Edgar Hoover, Nixon and Reagan—have all been turned, deliberately and cleverly, into icons that could be absorbed into the American mythos, their contradictions, their challenges to the system and its culture effaced. Ali and King were both highly vocal black men, strong personalities engaged in serious actions of civil disobedience, mistreated by the prevailing laws, martyrs of the system.

By being turned into legends they have been made to appear as pillars of the system that formerly pilloried them. It is what the French call *récupération*—the system’s method of neutralizing a threat by making it appear to be a vital part of the system itself, thereby justifying the system. It may be that because he no longer had a sustainable voice or because he remained solely focused only on the specific causes that were dear to him Ali allowed himself to be “recuperated.” It is highly unlikely that he chose to do so.

HISTORY AND MYTH

The public mythology we persist in being told is our “history” is a force powerfully managed by our media. Most of the public eulogies of Muhammad Ali have skirted the true history and painted a heavily airbrushed legend in its place. Here, for example, is President Obama’s sentimental tribute to the passing of Muhammad Ali:

“In my private study, just off the Oval Office, I keep a pair of his gloves on display, just under that iconic photograph of him—the young champ, just 22 years old, roaring like a lion over a fallen Sonny Liston. I was too young when it was taken to understand who he was—still Cassius Clay, already an Olympic Gold Medal winner, yet to set out on a spiritual journey that would lead him to his Muslim faith, exile him at the peak of his power, and set the stage for his return to greatness with a name as familiar to the downtrodden in the slums of Southeast Asia and the villages of Africa as it was to cheering crowds in Madison Square Garden.

‘I am America,’ he once declared. ‘I am the part you won’t recognize. But get used to me—black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own. Get used to me.’”

The president hadn't studied or misremembered his history. Obama's account of the "iconic photograph" is factually wrong. The photograph he is referring to was of Ali's rematch with Liston nearly a year and a half after winning the championship at the age of 22. Ali officially converted to Islam and changed his name in the immediate aftermath of the first bout. The man in the picture was not Cassius Clay but Muhammad Ali.

What Obama refers to as Ali's "spiritual journey" wasn't a simple voyage of self-discovery but a political and social struggle, for Ali himself but more significantly for his race and for justice itself. It was a struggle that exploded dramatically and chaotically in the riots of Los Angeles, Detroit and so many other inner cities through the rest of the decade. Reducing that to one man's "spiritual journey" is a clear case of historical revision.

Obama chooses selectively to "remember" the Olympic Gold Medal (patriotic glory) and paradoxically refers to "exile," whereas Ali was deprived of the privilege of exile when the government took his passport away, effectively preventing him from earning a living anywhere in the world.

The quote Obama cites at the end is authentic but, when spoken by Ali in 1970 in the context of his trial as a draft dodger, it was launched as an aggressive challenge, an act of defiance, a brutal calling into question of traditional white American identity. Taken out of its historical context, Obama makes it sound like an excerpt from an inspirational speech given by one of America's self-made successful entrepreneurs, not of a man humiliated and brutalized by a bellicose government.

Muhammad Ali accomplished many things. He gave us authentic thrills and moments of sublime beauty in the ring. He pulled away the veil on race relations and foreign policy at a time when the military-industrial system had begun arrogating every form of power, from military force to personal intimidation, just as Dwight Eisenhower warned in the very year Cassius Clay won his gold medal. Just as other not quite silenced voices—such as Edward Snowden's—are still reminding us today. Ali's boxing career and the deleterious effects it had on his health sadly set him on a different path preventing him from following through in his later years.

Fifty years ago Muhammed Ali was constantly in the news, sparring with his fists, his wit and his conscience in the name of causes the American public couldn't yet

understand. His contribution was immense, much greater than what the “legend of Muhammad Ali” we have since been fed will ever allow us to understand. Many of the issues he dealt with are still here, some in aggravated form. The voice of Ali of yore and that of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X still contain lessons we need to go back to their historical context to learn from.

**Peter Isackson is the chief visionary officer of SkillScaper and the creator of innovative solutions for learning in the 21st century. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



What Really Matters in This Election Cycle

Naomi Wolf

May 30, 2016

Only the intellectual empowerment of Americans can stem the tide of distracting voters from real policies, says Naomi Wolf.

The success of extremes in America’s political scene speaks, these days, to how dispossessed and voiceless many Americans now feel. A new edition of an important citizen’s guide and handbook—Jessamyn Conrad’s [What You Should Know About Politics... But Don’t](#)—explains why.

Some of the issues that are surfacing again and again in our news stream in 2016 are directly interlocking. They deal with issues of personal freedom and constitutional rights versus national security claims. Usually, these themes are reported upon as “symptoms.” For example, a protest in Detroit within the Black Lives Matter movement is reported as if it is a discrete event. The controversy over Edward Snowden’s revelations is reported as if that is simply the story of an individual making controversial individual choices.

The reportage is often personalized. Accounts of Islamic State (IS) incursions in Iraq or threats reported from IS in the United States or in western Europe are reported separately as well.

But by showing how interests are aligned or in conflict and result in legislation, this book reveals how many of these themes have common origins. How? Because a vast national security structure has been set in place with immense, and often nontransparent, funding from government sources (as well as huge profits from the private sector) with interest in militarizing domestic police forces, which in turn results in more violent crackdowns against protesters and—it is reasonable to assume—a more aggressive policing policy, less overall respect for individual civil liberties, and more black lives lost to police violence.

Is profit part of this militarization of policing and this criminalization of civic action?

The US leads the world in imprisoning its citizens, as Michelle Alexander's [*The New Jim Crow*](#) revealed. Immense profits are being generated by the prison industry, and the lobbyists for those interests actually require a certain conviction-rate commitment from elected officials before they will build prisons and fill them. Black lives matter less and less as the profit motive for locking up our fellow citizens—whose conviction rates have been proven to be higher than those of Caucasians accused of parallel crimes—escalates.

Some recent legislation, such as the Federal Prison Industries Competition in Contracting Act, shows how profitable the private incarceration sector is.

The same rise of the national security state turns a whistleblower (or traitor, depending on your perspective) such as Snowden into a lifelong fugitive. An acquittal such as that won by Daniel Ellsberg in the 1970s after leaking the Pentagon Papers—which were interpreted as being in the national interest to reveal—is entirely unlikely today. Even the IS threat must be assessed critically in the context of these vast billions that are flowing into the coffers of stakeholders in the national security apparatus, since a new global threat, real as it may be, generates even more profit by being over reported. A bill for border security details the potential of these many millions to flow to the private sector—that is, if fear and fear reportage do their work.

MEDIA REPORTING

But these pressures distort news stories. Reports from both the left and the right, ranging from [The Guardian](#) to [Reason](#), are finding that government agencies and private security companies, at times amplifying each other's efforts—as the FBI has pointed to releases from the highly unreliable private syndicator SITE Intelligence—are exaggerating or hyping up terror threats to news outlets, which often reprint assertions from these sources uncritically. In the US, a number of key claims by the FBI about “terror cells,” as I reported in [The End of America](#), have fallen apart upon further press scrutiny, when it became clear that many cases involved confused drifters entrapped by the authorities.

Fueling more of this kind of legislation that benefits the few stakeholders and their lobbyists, instead of reflecting the needs of voters, is the Supreme Court decision, Citizens Unite. Now, it is difficult for even the best-intentioned elected official to listen more to his or her constituents rather than the lobbyists who will fund his or her next campaign.

What You Should Know About Politics... But Don't spells out this corruption. A billion dollars was spent in the last presidential cycle. So we are witnessing an increase in legislation that results in greater benefit for the few who can spend heavily on lobbying. This has strengthened the income inequality that commentators such as [Robert Reich](#) report.

ELECTION CYCLE

Some of the issues that are emerging in the present election cycle, such as the passage of health care reform or Obamacare (depending on where you sit ideologically), run counter to the overall trend of the consolidation of power in fewer hands. Other currents, such as the development of green energy and the growing awareness of the seriousness of the environmental crisis, also pose challenges to this general trend.

Solving the crisis posed by global warming will involve communitarian rather than us-versus-them thinking. While the need for laws reducing carbon emissions is clear, the same obstacles to such legislation—the concentration of power in the hands of lobbyists, including those for the oil industry—stands in the way.

The direct challenges posed by climate change strongly suggest the urgent need for organizations that seek to empower voters in spite of lobbyists and special interests. A network of such civically oriented entities is now coalescing. These groups and resources range from Civic Hall in New York, a venture that houses many of the emerging civic tech startups, to nonprofit organizations such as the Sunlight and the Maplight Foundation, to a series of grassroots citizen movements.

Civic Tech is actually a fast-growing place in the digital ecosystem. These also include the much-harassed Occupy movement, now largely cordoned off; Black Lives Matter activists; and anti-surveillance leaders, such as those at the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Combined, these constitute the movement of our time.

It is clear that the old left-versus-right duality, the lens through which we have been asked to view American politics, is really dead—or rather, that we can now see that it is a distraction. The understanding that we are in a time in which the real conflicts are not conservative versus liberal, but the many against the few is far more widespread. When culture-war issues, such as gay marriage or native-born Americans versus immigrants are thrown out into the electorate, many more sophisticated voters on all sides of the political spectrum are aware that these issues are trotted out in election years to ramp up the appearance of differences between the parties.

In reality, both are largely beholden—albeit in different proportions—to the Big Six, the major special interests: what I call War Inc. (and its emerging major subsidiary, Fear Inc., or the global surveillance and security industry); Big Pharma; Big Insurance; Big Oil; Big Agriculture; and Wall Street. We can probably add Big Incarceration to that list now.

REAL PLANS FOR REAL ISSUES

Smart voters realize that whatever their political beliefs, it is those who don't hold power in these major industries—that is, all the rest of us: teachers and nurses, cops and factory workers, new immigrants and small business owners, the unemployed, the retired, veterans, the plain old middle and working class—who, whatever our views on abortion or gay marriage or bilingualism or gun ownership, are getting screwed. The only way for such outsiders as the rest of us to regain our seats at the table is through understanding what is going on behind the curtain.

Also in line with this shift from left-versus-right framing to a re-centering of debate around decisions stressing individual choice is the action taken by Congress to cede federal authority over much of education. George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, for example, was replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act, which gives states back much of their former influence in schools' curricula.

As I write, we are in the midst of a political campaign. Conrad's book explains why the discussion has migrated so far from political campaigns in the 1980s and early 1990s. That was the era before the Great Divide: the cleaving of the nation and its public servants into the haves and the have-nots. Before the Citizens United decision, presidential and congressional campaigns were substantially more centered on the issues that really affected ordinary people.

I remember when presidential candidates spoke about their real plans for real policies around infrastructure or investment in training; about tax cuts for ordinary people or plans to revitalize industry or grow new industries; about how to help small businesses thrive or whether to build more mass transit; and how to deal with delivering more nutritious school lunches.

Today, a third of political debate on the national stage is about IS, which is a subject the average citizen can do nothing about, and a third is anti-immigration rhetoric—a subject guaranteed to divide and distract the electorate without burning up any real political capital with special interests. The balance is outrage over gay rights or perhaps gun ownership, or abortion and Planned Parenthood or other culture-war hot-button talking points.

While strong feelings and fierce beliefs definitely attached to these themes, the fact is that no major candidate is going to burn up any political capital with the rich folks who write the checks by focusing on demand for real reforms rather than keeping voters distracted by such volatile issues. It is a fantastic sleight of hand, but America is far the worse for it.

In this climate, only the intellectual empowerment of citizens can stem this tide.

**Naomi Wolf is an American author, journalist and political activist. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Why is Hillary Clinton So Unpopular?

Matthew Kolasa

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The anti-Hillary sentiment is directed at the system she represents.

Ryan Lochte is to Michael Phelps in swimming what Hillary Clinton is to Donald Trump in polarizing Americans. No major party nominee save for Trump has had such strong negative opinions since opinion polling began.

While the cause for voters' distaste for the Republican nominee is clear, the strong degree of displeasure with Secretary Clinton seems more elusive. Other candidates have committed blunders, been mired in scandal, held lengthy tenures, lied and changed views for political expediency, but rarely has an American politician been so reviled by so many, even within her own party. What is so different for Hillary Clinton?

First, the usual suspects: the Benghazi incident, regardless of her level of involvement, recklessness in using her email server, voting for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, achieving power because of her husband—disregarding her own accomplishments—and staying with her husband, for which she has been accused of everything from Machiavellian calculus to anti-feminism to Stockholm syndrome. There are the [Wall Street speech fees](#) and the [Clinton Foundation donations, especially by foreign nationals](#), her biased judgment favoring rich donors, the accusations that she is either too liberal or too conservative, her being a woman and, finally, that she has been in politics too long and it is time for a change.

PERCEIVED INEVITABILITY

Each reason may put off some voters, and taken together they partly explain the polarization on display in the polls, but this is not the whole story. Many of these criticisms are not new and as recently as 2013 her approval rating was 67% and her negatives were as low as 26%—comparable to Barack Obama's in 2008, according to [The Washington Post/ABC poll](#).

There is one cause the media has largely ignored: her perceived inevitability in 2016. The early decision by party leaders to rally behind a candidate long before the

first vote was cast in the Iowa caucus has made voters see her as chosen not by them, but by élites in smoke-filled rooms.

Frustrated leftists tried to rally around Bernie Sanders, an independent who surprised with his performance but never rose beyond a minority protest against the organized and disciplined Clinton campaign, even after a nigh-miraculous upset in the Michigan primary.

Centrist Democrats who would have preferred a more conservative choice also felt excluded from the process. Consider one demographic supporting Sanders: poor whites, including lifelong Democrats, in the heart of coal country felt betrayed by the Obama administration's aggressive approach to environmental regulation and saw Clinton as a continuation of his current policies, and thus voted for a left-wing candidate they might otherwise have never considered.

OBAMA 2.0

First, internal party conflict and then a "[circular firing squad](#)" of 17 Republican candidates allowing the rise of Trump have left many conservative Democrats and swing-voters without a viable alternative, choosing the lesser of two undesirables. A less divisive Republican nominee or a stronger opponent in the primaries would have made more Americans think of her as their choice rather than the establishment's next-in-line. Would people be as anti-Hillary had she beaten Joe Biden in the primaries and been leading Bobby Jindal in the general election?

Add Obama's popularity and anyone unhappy about electing Obama 2.0 can easily feel disenfranchised, particularly after Senator Sanders struggled to implicitly criticize the Obama administration and the Republican Party failed to rally around an alternative. In a world of Yelp reviews, reality-TV voting and instant social media feedback, voters have come to expect a feeling of empowerment. Factor in the echo-chamber effect of the blogosphere and Google and Facebook algorithms, and a Republican or a Sanders supporter may wonder how anyone could vote for Hillary at all.

Democracy is now more than ever about a feeling of empowerment, and many voters who think of her as an heir who has not earned their votes will fear she is not beholden to them, but to other identity groups, donors or party elites.

Anti-Hillary is not only about Hillary or her policies: They may well be good reasons, but not the primary ones.

It is about the system she represents. While she will probably be the next president, if the perception Trump is promoting of conniving insiders subverting democratic institutions takes root and dominates political discourse, she will enter office with little political capital.

As a result, America will only become more splintered among political, regional and ethnic factions. In an era when the US is more polarized than ever, the risk of paralyzed institutions and a weaker republic after the election is a real one.

**Matthew Kolasa is an attorney and journalist. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*



Donald Trump and the End of Liberal History

Joachim Koops

November 14, 2016

Donald Trump and Brexit could mark the end of Western liberal history.

In German history, November 9 is known as *Schicksalstag* (Day of Fate), with far-reaching implications for Europe. On November 9, 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated in the wake of the popular uprising of the “November revolution” and the proclamation of the first German republic. During this short-lived experimentation with democracy, an attempted coup d’état by a radical right-wing group linked to Adolf Hitler failed on November 9, 1923. On November 9, 1938, the Nazis orchestrated violent pogroms against Jewish citizens, which were seen as the start of unspeakable atrocities to come. And on November 9, 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall promised a new era for German, European and international politics.

It is ironic, therefore, that November 9, 2016, could become an American, transatlantic and global “Day of Fate” of another kind. The election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States of America is feared by some as leading to a US exit from liberal order.

THE END OF LIBERAL HISTORY?

To put it even more dramatically, 27 years after Francis Fukuyama’s infamous essay, [“The End of History,”](#) and the belief in Western and even global triumph of political and economic liberalism, may we be witnessing the “end of liberal history” for the Western world—and indeed the planet.

Let us make no mistake: 2016 has already been a historical caesura for the Western claim of supporting a liberal order. Just like the [Brexit](#) night of June 23-24 shattered the axiomatic belief in European integration amidst the slogan of “taking back control,” the night of November 8-9 sent shockwaves across the Atlantic amid European populists’ jubilation about an American “liberation.”

Yet this shock should not have come as a complete surprise. The rise of angry and desperate populism is not just a phenomenon of 2016, but has been accelerating in the West since at least the financial crisis of 2008. Even though economics and income inequality cannot explain the full complex picture of the rise of populism, it has been a decisive cause behind a wave of anti-liberal and anti-democratic sentiments on both sides of the Atlantic.

Globalization and trade liberalization might have benefitted the world in general terms and aggregate numbers—even though institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have recently questioned the benefit of neoliberal policies—but these arguments are not convincing enough for the individual voter who has not seen his or her income rise in relation to the upper elites.

It might be counterintuitive or irrational to expect a self-declared multibillionaire to improve the lives of struggling blue collar workers, but post-factual politics channels frustration, anger and despair to the ballot box on the expense of rationality.

DONALD TRUMP AND CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss the motives and concerns of many Trump voters, and to make wrong assumptions about his supporters' socioeconomic backgrounds. In fact, Trump garnered significant support among high-earning and highly educated white voters. His success was also due to protest votes, anti-establishment feelings and a strong desire for "radical change," even at the cost of basic Western values.

Indeed, Donald Trump's election campaign was built on the seemingly erratic, but actually a highly calculated spurring of protest votes against core values of liberalism. Open attacks on immigrants, Muslims, political opponents and people of different sexual orientation or beliefs, as well as free trade, collective defense and measures against climate change, have resonated with the majority of the American electorate.

A similar kind of radicalization and perceived legitimization of anti-foreigner sentiments, as witnessed in the aftermath of Brexit in the United Kingdom, could also emerge in the US. The rifts in American society that already opened during the election campaign, fueled by divisive rhetoric, are set to widen further.

Either President Trump will try to implement some of his illiberal election promises and severely damage basic democratic values, or he chooses not to implement his promises and risk more vitriolic anger among his electorate about feeling duped.

The expectations among many voters who, above all, wanted a president that stood for "radical change" (however illiberal) and a break from the "establishment" will be disappointed if most of the outlandish election promises will not be kept. This creates a dangerous dilemma domestically. This election will not only change US politics and society, but will also have far-reaching implications for European geopolitics and global governance.

Trump's comments during the election campaign about the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) being "obsolete," and his questioning of Article 5 in the case of a Russian attack, have deeply worried the Baltic states. Across Europe, as right-wing populists such as Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders welcomed the "US revolution" and "American Patriotic Spring," fears of a knock-on effect on European liberalism and democracy are emerging.

THE LIBERAL MOVEMENT

But are we really witnessing the “end of Western liberal history” as we know it? Probably not. Despite a high level of uncertainty and lack of predictability, even a Trump administration will have to adjust to the realities of international politics.

Even though the Republican grip on Congress and the Senate will allow Trump significant room to maneuver, the reconciliatory tone of the president-elect’s acceptance speech indicated that election rhetoric and actual governing will be two different things.

International and transatlantic politics have been built around strong norms, institutions and international organizations. And even though the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, the IMF and the World Trade Organization face strong problems of their own, they provide important incentives for international cooperation.

Yet this is neither to ignore the damage that Trump’s vitriolic rhetoric has already caused, nor to belittle the negative impact of his presidency on the probability of solving major global problems, such as climate change, economic governance and international security.

The biggest strength of ugly populism has always been the passivity and silence of those who were not ready to actively oppose it. It is, therefore, imperative not only for governments to strengthen liberal institutions, but also for anyone sincerely interested in a world of decency, humanism, open-mindedness, multiculturalism, fairness and global problem-solving to defend core liberal values, which we have taken for granted for far too long.

This might also be easier said than done. Calling for, and building up, a liberal counter-movement will not be easy. But as liberals, we will only have ourselves to blame if we accept the end of Western liberal history without a stir.

**Joachim Koops is the dean of Vesalius College, Free University of Brussels. This article is available online at [Fair Observer](#).*

