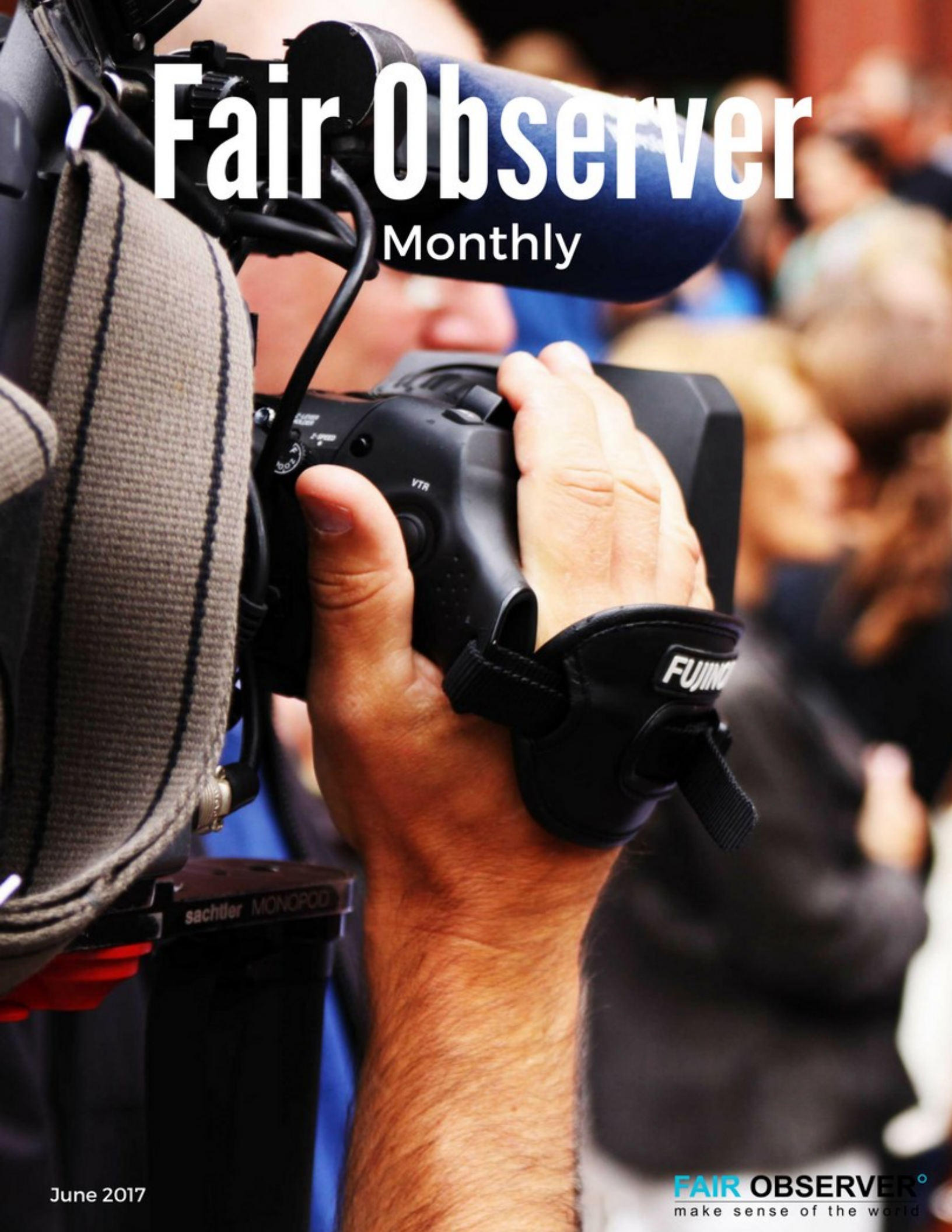


# Fair Observer

Monthly



June 2017

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

# Fair Observer Monthly



June 2017

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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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# Fair Observer Monthly

Atul Singh

June 30, 2017

In parts of the world, June turned out to be a ridiculously hot month. In the Middle East, it is not just the weather that turned white hot. Saudi Arabia and its allies decided to banish Qatar into the doghouse. They severed diplomatic relations with Qatar and suspended land, sea and air traffic. This has forced Doha to import its food largely from Iran and a bit from Turkey. Its hitherto busy airport is lying idle and the country's destiny is now in question.

Naturally, tensions are running high in a region known for its volatility. Saudi Arabia & Co. have put forth a list of 13 demands to Qatar. To say that these are unreasonable and non-actionable would be an understatement. To come back to the fold, Qatar must crawl on its knees, cough up cash and shut down Al Jazeera. Saudi Arabia is bullying its tiny neighbor and curbing free speech at a time when violence against journalists and state repression is on the rise.

Even in the land of the free and the home of the brave, the press is not doing too well. US President Donald Trump mocked a talk show host for "bleeding badly from a face-lift," taking American political parlance to new edifying heights. Trump provoked more howls of outrage for this comment than for pulling out of the 2015 Paris Climate Accord. Reneging on an international deal when the Antarctic is turning green is not quite such a big deal in the land of cheap gas.

This gas guzzling land is seeing an unprecedented weakening of the fourth estate. Smartphones, internet and social media have shortened people's attention spans. Few read and even fewer pay for content. This means subscriptions no longer bring in revenues. Advertising only works if huge numbers visit a website. Even then, Google and Facebook now have a virtual duopoly on online advertising. Therefore, there are five jobs in public relations for every job in journalism in the country created by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

June not only highlighted the threat to free speech, but it also put the burning issue of deepening inequality center stage. In the aftermath of British Prime Minister Theresa May's pyrrhic election victory, a tower block in London's North Kensington caught fire.

At least 80 people died or were reported missing and 10 ended up in critical condition. As the UK negotiates Brexit, the world discovered that there are two Kensingtons, one rich and the other poor. In the 19th century, none other than the great Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli made a similar observation, bemoaning that Great Britain was “a country of two nations,” the rich and the poor.

Today, inequality is not confined to the US or the UK. It has increased even in Sweden and Germany. In parts of Asia and Africa, income and wealth inequality has shot through the roof. So, have inequalities in the access to food, education and health care. The Roman historian Sallust warned against private splendor and public squalor, which “generally lead to decadence, decline and death of civilizations apart from rebellions, revolts and revolutions.” In June 2017, his words have renewed resonance.

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



# London's Calm Response to Violence

Stephen Chan

June 5, 2017

*The long and destructive campaign by the IRA not only hardened the citizens of London and Manchester, but increased their open-mindedness about how to deal with terrorism.*

In the wake of the [June 3 terror attacks in London](#), Mayor Sadiq Khan assured Londoners of their safety. He said this as part of a statement about the readiness of the police. He also tried to put this into the context of such attacks now being an unavoidable part of life in the world's biggest cities.

Indeed, the response of the London police — and medical services — was superb. From the first emergency phone call to the shooting dead of the three attackers by special police units, there was a gap of eight minutes. The entire area London Bridge and Borough Market was flooded with police and ambulances immediately. Everything was part of an immensely-prepared plan, which is also part of life in urban cities.

Yet Mayor Khan had to endure not one, but two [tweets of criticism](#) from US President Donald Trump. It was as if Trump thought that a Muslim mayor would be an easy target. The response of Londoners was very much on the side of Khan, and there were huge displays of solidarity across the religious spectrum — as there were after the [May 22 attack in Manchester](#).

Three terror attacks in three months, all perpetrated by insurgents with fundamentalist Islamic motives, and yet Londoners and Mancunians refused to enter a response by hysterics. Much like the French refused after suffering their own attacks in 2015 and 2016.

## THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

Part of this is a long history of being attacked. In France, there were many post-war attacks by insurgents on both sides of the Algerian question. Carlos the Jackal tried to assassinate President Charles de Gaulle. In the United Kingdom, the long and very bloody and destructive campaign by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) not only

hardened the citizens of London and Manchester, but arguably increased their open-mindedness about how to deal with terrorism.

Apart from a long list of atrocities in Northern Ireland, the attack of the IRA against the British mainland claimed a huge list of “successes” and near successes. Discounting the “minor” acts of violence, some of which took place within a block of where I lived or worked — at the level of bus bombs — the more spectacular attacks included the assassination of [Lord Louis Mountbatten](#) (1979); the assassination of [Cabinet Minister Airey Neave](#), outside Parliament itself (1979); the attempted assassination of [Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher](#) by bombing her hotel in Brighton (1984); the mortar attack on [Heathrow Airport](#) (1994); the audacious [mortar attack on 10 Downing Street](#) while Prime Minister John Major was conducting a Cabinet meeting (1991); the rocket attack against the headquarters of the [MI6 intelligence agency](#) (2000); the city attacks using truck bombs against [Manchester](#) (1996) and [London's Canary Wharf](#) financial district (1996), both causing damage of several hundred million pounds; these followed earlier city [attacks against Manchester](#) (1992) and the [City of London's Baltic Exchange](#) in the financial district (1992); and these were in addition to the 1982 [bomb attacks against military personnel](#) in London's Hyde Park and Regent's Park.

This was despite a ferocious, sometimes literally no-prisoners-taken campaign in Northern Ireland by the British Army and Northern Irish Garda (police force). But no one in Manchester or London called for the imprisoning or deportation of the Irish. No one shunned Irish pubs. No one recoiled from sharing a bus seat with someone called Paddy.

In the end, the Northern Irish “problem” was “settled” as much by long and patient negotiation as by the use of force. The process was helped by foreign negotiators who were regarded as “honest brokers” on both sides: people like US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. What became the Good Friday Agreement was the culmination of a torturous process in which neither Mitchell nor Ahtisaari lost patience, nor resorted to name-calling or cheap shots in any media. US conflict settlement diplomacy in Western Europe probably achieved its highest post-war regard under Mitchell, and we long for his like again. Of course, there is no single Islamic organization with which to negotiate. Those that are engaged in war and violence seem to have no agenda but destruction and death. There seem to be huge qualitative differences between the Irish and the Islamic questions.

## AN IRON GLOVE

There are two points here. The first is key to creating a climate for possible, even if distant negotiation. No one in England thought it was helpful or desirable to deport or imprison anyone called Patrick Fitzgerald. The second is that there are Muslim communities, civic and religious leaders, role models, and even pop idols and actors who can be mobilized in a way that they enter dialogue and, yes, negotiation, with the radical elements that dwell — often hidden, though also often suspected — in European communities.

Here is where a US president addicted to tweeting starts being marginally useful. The one thing that political and community leaders can't do, but must learn to do, is master modern communications in the way the Islamic State and other groups can. The drama and persuasiveness — dare I say it, the moral message — of the videos, podcasts, sermons, websites and the black net all speak to a mastery not only of instruments of communication, but a mastery of how to pitch a message of rebellion against all odds and against an enemy in all its manifestations, and against an enemy at its weakest points.

The narrative that competes against this will not come from blanket condemnation, and not come from calls to expel Muslims or imprison them or ostracize them. Interning US Japanese did not help the war effort against Japan. You cannot kill or imprison ideas, but you can make them grow stronger by trying to kill and imprison them. Mancunians and Londoners at least have reached the point not of turning the cheek — there was deep approval of the ruthless police response on the evening of June 3 — but of extending one hand while cloaking the other in an iron glove. The two go together but, in the true difficulties of a vexed and complex world, not both at once and not the iron glove alone.

In international terms, it means completing the defeat of the Islamic State, but it also means, although it seems it will not be led by the current US president, some long and unpleasant negotiations — with an iron glove nearby — in Saudi Arabia. That may be the missing piece in the terrible jigsaw of today's violent world.

*\*Stephen Chan is a professor of international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.*

# The Not So Cooperative Gulf Cooperation Council

Gary Grappo

June 6, 2017

*The situation for Qatar is precarious, says former US Ambassador Gary Grappo. Its best bet may be diplomatic intervention by a friendly neutral state.*

Barely two weeks after Saudi Arabia provided the dazzling stage for the great gathering of Arab and Muslim nations to come together for a [new American president](#) to announce a re-centering of US policy in the Middle East, the core group of Gulf nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is unravelling. [Fake news](#) may be the proximate culprit, but real divisions run deep.

On [June 5](#), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Yemen and even the Indian Ocean state of the Maldives took [drastic measures](#) to sever ties with Qatar, the mega-gas-exporting Gulf mini-state. The ostensible reason is allegedly untoward remarks attributed to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, including asserting support for Saudi arch-enemy Iran, for Hamas (and bizarrely Israel — go figure) and for Hezbollah, and claiming US President Donald Trump may not last a full four-year term.

For its part, [Doha has denied the statements](#), declaring its website was hacked. Nevertheless, the claimed remarks served as more than adequate justification for the Saudis and Emiratis, emboldened by re-invigorated American support, to go after the Qataris for a laundry list of long-outstanding claims, especially closeness to Tehran and support for the reviled Muslim Brotherhood.

While not the first time the GCC states have experienced a falling out — the [last was in 2014](#) but was patched up after quiet talks — this may prove to be longer lasting unless the Qataris knuckle under. Moreover, this dispute has received much wider public attention, with respective governments appealing to a broad range of regional and Western media to make their grievances known. Such a public display of the quarrel is uncharacteristic for the subdued Gulf state monarchies and suggests backing down is not an option for them, least of all Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Moreover, the Saudis, Emiratis and Egyptians doubtlessly feel that with American backing, they can act forcefully to bring Qatar under Riyadh's control. That seems clear by the media splash, and it places the ruling al-Thani family in an impossible situation. Resignation would impact Doha's decades-long strategy of staking out an independent foreign policy that allowed for close ties with the Taliban, Tehran, Hamas and Hezbollah but also with America, including host to a large US military presence. In addition, the contrarian Doha-based Al Jazeera news channel has taken an editorial line often at odds with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Arab states. All that may now be on the line if Qatar expects to resolve this row.

The situation for Doha is indeed precarious. Its best bet may be intervention by a friendly neutral state such as [Oman](#). But one has to wonder whether Muscat — itself often accused of being too cozy with its cross-Strait neighbor Iran and insufficiently supportive of the Saudi war effort against the Houthis in Yemen — is up to the task. It may be a bit much for the Omanis to take on without jeopardizing their own delicate relations within the GCC.

The next candidate would have been Egypt, but President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has thrown in his lot with the Saudis, et al. The incident probably offered the Egyptians an opportunity for payback for Qatar's support of the Muslim Brotherhood. And one wonders whether even the Pakistanis, known for their close ties to Riyadh, would be willing to stick their hand in this latest GCC wood chipper.

## **DOES THAT LEAVE US MEDIATION?**

It may be left for the Americans to try to patch this breach. Washington has its own issues with Doha, but it cannot afford to see President Trump's triumphant visit, which seemingly brought together the Arab world in the fight against violent extremism and Iran, marred and the new alliance unravel in a family feud.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, traveling in Australia, [urged dialog among the parties](#), suggesting he may not yet be fully briefed on the depth of this fallout. The parties appear much too far apart for dialog to happen without an influential, friendly and trusted state stepping in.

Cue the US. But this is an untried and very inexperienced administration. With all but two of its senior appointed posts in the State Department still vacant, it lacks the diplomatic skills to massage this problem toward resolution. It might be referred to an equally untried National Security Council, where diplomatic experience and Gulf Arab rapport are also sadly lacking.

And then there is Donald Trump. One has to wonder if family counselling is anywhere in his repertoire of deal-doing talents. Or would he even want to? Unless someone close can persuade him of the importance of keeping the GCC alliance intact, he might opt to stand down on this one. And anyone seeking his intervention should be prepared for offer a quid pro quo. It's how America does business now. It's called "America First."

Even if Qatar's assertion that it was hacked and made a victim of fake news is proven, the damage has been done. The Saudis and Emiratis mean to see their Qatari brethren brought to heel.

*\*Gary Grappo is a former US ambassador and the chairman of the Board of Directors at Fair Observer.*

## **Red Margins in Public Education Debate**

Peter Isackson

June 8, 2017

*Education is pushed to the margins in the modern economy's sophisticated models.*

No political candidate, pundit or social scientist will talk about the future of our civilization without emphasizing the vital importance of education. A vast industry of research and reporting has grown up focused on the opportunities for education to serve what everyone recognizes as the radically revised needs of a society transformed by digital technology and a globalized economy.

In a recent article for *Fair Observer*, [New Thinking on Education Needed to Compete in the World](#), venture capitalist [Steve Westly](#) summed up the problem facing society in

these terms: “[W]e need to recruit the next generation of great teachers, update school curricula and empower teachers and students with tools fitting the 21st century.”

Few would disagree with this suggestion. But such a pious wish begs more questions than our thinkers and politicians have answers to and skirts the real issues, which one would expect any venture capitalist to be immediately aware of. How much would this cost and who will pay for it? And politicians, who will unanimously affirm their approval of the idea, will then add: “But do we really need to think about these issues now, when there are so many other priorities, such as reducing taxes for the rich and protecting the population from Islamic terrorism?” In recent months, the one initiative concerning education that governments in the [United States](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) have taken action on is the elimination of free school lunches. This presumably brings home the essential lesson dear to neoliberal economists that “[there’s no such thing as a free lunch](#).”

Although they are unlikely to admit it in public, politicians understand that long-term processes such as educational reform and investment in infrastructure cannot compete with short-term issues, such as homeland security or military operations abroad, especially when reducing taxes is the key to getting re-elected. There’s never enough money to go around, so let’s deal with the issues that panic us today.

Total spending for homeland security since September 11, 2001, has been calculated at [\\$635.9 billion](#), without taking into account the trillions spent on wars ostensibly justified by the same political objective. US President Donald Trump has now proposed to cut \$9.2 billion from the already modest federal budget for education in 2018, [reducing it to \\$59 billion](#) while boosting investment in charter schools and vouchers for private education, which amounts to a transfer of both funds and responsibility to the private sector. On the subject of renewal and adapting to new conditions, the key issues cited by Westly, [The Atlantic reports](#) that “Trump’s budget plan would remove \$2.4 billion in grants for teacher training.”

One could reasonably conclude after studying these figures that nothing serious will be done in the United States, at least in the next four years, to implement the measures all the experts and visionaries have identified as a necessity for the economy and the future of the country. But Trump is hardly innovating when he further marginalizes education. Former British Prime Minister [Tony Blair claimed in 2001](#) that “our top priority was, is and always will be education, education, education.” History tells us

where he ended up focusing his government's attention, and it wasn't on education. To the extent that Blair's government did invest in education, [it turned out to be a failure](#), replacing teaching with "little more than exam indoctrination," a trend that both George W. Bush and Barack Obama followed in the US, with their respective programs No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.

No Child Left Behind instituted a policy of competition for budgets between school districts based on test results — a policy that educational historian Diane Ravitch, one of its early promoters and a collaborator with the Bush administration, has [called a disaster](#).

*"We've had 10 years of it, we've seen our schools transformed into test-prep factories. There's a kind of a robotic view of children, that they can be primed to take the test, and that the test is the way to determine if they're good or [they're] bad, and if their teacher's good or bad, and if their school should be closed ... we've never seen anything like it in the history of American education. It is a wave of destruction, for the most part."*

President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan, in the eight years of their administration, had an opportunity to limit the damage and start anew. Instead they [followed in the same path](#), this time implementing [programs designed by corporate thinkers](#), while deliberately neglecting to consult actual educational professionals, including Ravitch.

## **THE RISE OF STEM**

Corporate input may account for the fact that the new reigning wisdom, repeated by Westly, responds specifically to the needs of a technology-oriented corporate culture. The new Shangri-La of education is STEM, meaning science, technology, engineering and mathematics, defined as the [key to our children's future](#).

*"STEM is their future—the technological age in which they live, their best career options, and their key to wise decisions. In 2009, the United States Department of Labor listed the ten most wanted employees. Eight of those employees were ones with degrees in the STEM fields: accounting, computer science, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, information sciences and systems, computer engineering, civil engineering, and economics and finance."*



Some see it as a new Renaissance. To put it in perspective, let's compare it with the previous Renaissance, some 500 years ago, a time when Europe began establishing its ineluctable dominance of global trade and, subsequently, the global economy. Governments and both public and private institutions depended on an intellectual class and an expanding workforce educated, according to the standards of the late Middle Ages, in the seven liberal *arts*. These arts, which should not be thought of as sciences or bodies of knowledge, were divided into two groups: the Trivium (grammar, dialectic or logic and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music).

Pre-industrial education, with its notion of becoming competent in the “arts” rather than the “disciplines,” implicitly acknowledged a fact of human culture that escapes us today. Science itself is a form of discourse mobilizing logic (ordered reasoning) and rhetoric (the art of persuasion). At the same time, mathematics and music were understood to be intimately related.

What we currently call the humanities — history, literature, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, etc. — were subsumed under the study of language within the Trivium. For learners, this inevitably led to a real flexibility of perception, challenging the intellectual class to engage creatively through a broad awareness of growing bodies of knowledge, often in what would now be considered disparate fields, as well as contributing to their creative exploitation. This intellectual culture permitted the emergence of intellects such as Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus, Thomas More, Copernicus and Pascal, as well as Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes and Shakespeare.

The industrial age that emerged in the late 18th century redesigned education along more pragmatic lines and increasingly identified the “arts” as entertainment for the elite. Capitalism rewards hard work, not creative thought or cultural awareness. Education evolved toward an appropriately industrial model that remained the standard throughout the 20th century.

Today's post-industrial wisdom would replace the meagre remains of the seven liberal arts, represented largely by optional courses in most school systems, by STEM, seen as the four economically useful disciplines: science, technology, engineering and mathematics, to which Westly curiously adds “computer science and coding,” as if they were not already a subcategory of technology.

Historians with a long view of education, who take into account the trends of the past 500 years right up to the STEM movement, may notice in this evolution a gradual impoverishment of the curricula and more particularly of the result of education within the culture of the community, a consequence of an increasing concentration on what is, immediately, economically useful. Are we wrong to suppose that this reflects the late-capitalist corporate world's increasingly successful attempt to confine all human culture within the limits of its own framework of values? Standardization has become a common theme within recent reforms: standardized programs (the common core) and standardized testing, justified by the ideal of "equality." Should we also be thinking about "standardized culture" or, worse, homogenized culture?

The emerging backlash against STEM has led to an attempt to attenuate its effects by introducing another letter into the acronym: "A" for art or possibly the Arts, producing a new acronym, STEAM. This appears to be a timid effort to make the concept of STEM appear less intimidating and will be the object of a separate article by this author focusing on the ideological underpinnings of both STEM and STEAM.

## **HOW BAD IS THE DAMAGE ALREADY DONE?**

No reasonable analyst today would affirm that our current education system is beyond criticism. On the contrary, the evidence shows it has failed in multiple ways and is in desperate need of renovation. That's precisely why so many public figures are promoting STEM to ride to its rescue.

The university study, [Left Behind in America](#), documenting the pandemic of dropout affecting public schools focuses on just one of the symptoms of failure. We could cite other symptoms, such as drug addiction, bullying, abuse of social media, depression, suicide and vandalism. The pressure to achieve and conform destroys or adversely affects the personalities, lives and future careers of countless learners, particularly teenagers. In some ways, even many of the successful have failed. Among those who didn't drop out and indeed went on to college, [ignorance of contemporary history](#) appears to be rampant. Ignorance of everything one is not being tested on may have become the norm at all levels of education. One thing is certain: Pride in the efficacy of the US education system seems to be seriously on the wane.

By the end of the 19th century, the culture of the industrial revolution had established a new organization for a redefined notion of curriculum: A standardized but also slightly modular catalogue of courses based on recognized areas of knowledge that could be hermetically compartmented into discreet subject areas, but which nevertheless allowed for a wide degree of personal variation in teaching strategies and styles, at the discretion of the teacher. The language skills related to logic and rhetoric that had been central to the liberal arts disappeared, whereas grammar, formalized as a set of rules for writing, remained. Mathematics and science (not just astronomy) both became prominent, alongside English (native language) and history. Optional courses abounded, giving learners in many schools the possibility to explore a variety of arts (painting, music, dance and theater) and even sports.

Post-industrial culture in the digital age has intensified the pressure to focus on the sciences and mathematics. In the political sphere and the media, STEM has become the staple of a new orthodoxy, promoted notably by celebrity scientists such as [Neil de Grasse Tyson](#). “If you don’t want to die poor you should invest in STEM,” he tells us, making sure we understand what the ambient economic culture supposes — that the true and unique motivational logic behind education is hardly different from that of a personal get-rich scheme.

## **THE POLITICIZATION OF EDUCATION**

Modern democracies have placed the responsibility for decision-making, at least with regard to the social purpose of education, in the hands of politicians, largely replacing the inherited authority of literary, scientific and artistic traditions that played such an important role in the past. Economic reasoning has thus replaced any other form of cultural input in the definition of education’s content and goals.

As many observers have noticed, late-phase capitalism has broken down the boundaries between corporate interests and public governance, formerly seen as a necessary form of separation of powers, essential to the health of democracy. What is true for the economy in general applies equally to education. This economic orientation, dictated by the culture of business and the free market, induces the electorate to consider traditional public services and even infrastructure — in short, the *res publica* (“the public thing” in Latin) — to represent unnecessary costs, pretexts for taxation and expanding big government. Libertarians and “small government” politicians invite the public to regard education as essentially the problem of individual

families. Public money, in their view, should ideally be channeled to the support of the private companies that hire the moms and dads who send their kids to school. And why shouldn't schools themselves be companies? That brings us straight to the logic behind the charter school movement.

It should, therefore, come as no surprise to learn — as a windfall from the WikiLeaks publication of John Podesta's emails — that just over eight years ago the newly elected president, Barack Obama, who came into office because he embodied the electorate's wish for hope and change, obediently followed the specific recommendation of Wall Street when he appointed Arne Duncan as secretary of education. On October 6, 2008, a mere month before the election, Michael Froman, an executive at Citigroup, [addressed an email](#) with the subject "Lists" to Podesta, at the time director of the Obama campaign. As [New Republic](#) reported:

*"The cabinet list ended up being almost entirely on the money. It correctly identified Eric Holder for the Justice Department, Janet Napolitano for Homeland Security, Robert Gates for Defense, Rahm Emanuel for chief of staff, Peter Orszag for the Office of Management and Budget, Arne Duncan for Education, Eric Shinseki for Veterans Affairs, Kathleen Sebelius for Health and Human Services, Melody Barnes for the Domestic Policy Council, and more. For the Treasury, three possibilities were on the list: Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner."*

During his seven years as secretary of education, Duncan launched a pair of programs, the Common Core and Race to the Top. According to [Wikipedia](#), the funding for these programs came from the private sector: "The Common Core State Standards, one set of standards adopted by states for Race to the Top, were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers with funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and others."

Logically enough, at the heart of these programs aiming to define the future of public education, we find the principles of corporate management. Bill Gates deftly used his truly exceptional capacity for philanthropy — funded through both his own fortune and that of his friend, [Warren Buffett](#) — to impose what he considers modern management standards in the interest of improving the efficiency, if not the efficacy of education. Showing a profound indifference to what experts (like Ravitch) and researchers in the field have discovered about the process of learning and the importance of learner

autonomy — research that stretches back at least a century to prestigious thinkers such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky — Gates, true to his vocation as a high-tech entrepreneur, instead analyzed the crisis of education as a simple HR management problem. He viewed teachers as hired managers, accountable to shareholders (ideally in charter schools) and responsible for optimizing the students’ capacity to process and assimilate knowledge. In a Ted talk, Gates publicly promised to improve the efficiency of the entire school system by defining what he calls “[measures of effective teaching](#)” that can be used for recruitment and training.

In other words, Gates is generously offering the world of education a solution for rationalizing the workforce. The values and techniques he pushes are well known in the corporate world, but not necessarily compatible with the culture and goals of education. It starts with competition, the fundamental motivational factor. And it includes familiar approaches or guidelines such as performance evaluation, operational metrics, standardized processes, notions of personal excellence, key performance indicators, and implied but unstated criteria of productivity. These can only be metaphoric since the “profit” of education is never immediate. On the other hand, turning schools into businesses in the form of charter schools directly introduces the profit motive.

Alongside this highly managerial approach to the evolution of what can now be thought of as the industry of education, the nation has been subjected to two other notable political and economic trends.

## **TREND 1: CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE**

The first is the charter school movement, which promotes an idea of market-driven, for-profit education. Obama’s Department of Education wasn’t alone in promoting it. Prominent business personalities, notably super billionaires Bill Gates and [Mark Zuckerberg](#), without forgetting the [Koch Brothers](#), but also numerous lesser known investors, speculators and entrepreneurs, such as real estate investor David Brain, head of [Entertainment Properties Trust](#). As [Altnet reported](#), the aptly named Mr. Brain explained what it was all about in an interview with CNBC: “Well I think it’s a very stable business, very recession-resistant. It’s a very high-demand product.” He even deemed the charter school business “the most profitable sector in real estate investment.”

Industrialists and financiers find charter schools attractive precisely because they are aware of the failure of traditional education. They see the charter school remedy, supported by the taxpayer, as a business opportunity and little else. They have little concern for reforms that might call the principles of traditional education into question. Apart from Gates' attempt at raising the bar on quality for teachers, they lack the curiosity to examine the true stakes of education. Instead, they are content to appeal to the population's ingrained faith in the ability of profit-oriented free enterprise to improve the efficiency of a system that manifestly doesn't work. And that efficiency is designed for a unique finality: providing a competent workforce for their businesses. Which explains why they also see STEM as the key to curriculum reform.

It didn't occur to the architects of this new orientation to consult engaged experts such as [Alfie Kohn](#), [Anthony Cody](#) or Diane Ravitch, who manifestly lack the business sense they are counting on to drive the program forward. Actual teachers who are also original thinkers might have helped them notice what writer and filmmaker [Carol Black](#), author of the film [Schooling the World](#), has observed in countless classrooms: "[T]he children won't do what the authorities say they should do, they won't learn what the experts say they must learn, and for every diligent STEM-trained worker-bee we create there are ten bored, resistant, apathetic young people who are alienated from both nature and their own chained hearts."

If these appalling proportions are true, we might just conclude that the education system, enhanced by STEM, is doing its job admirably. Our prestigious technology sector can, in fact, comfortably prosper if a mere 10% of the graduates become what Carol Black calls STEM-trained worker bees, since the other 90% will then be available to work in the service industries that have become the new foundation of a non-elite economy. Conscious of their failure to qualify for the elite, the great majority will be all that more willing to accept precarious, ill-paying jobs that will at least temporarily ensure their survival, along with a lifestyle that allows them to feel "normal."

The failure of the system to educate doesn't stop there. It goes beyond the essential question of motivation indicated in the above quote. It includes the stranglehold the [pharmaceutical industry](#) has taken over education in the form of prescription drugs for non-optimally performing children, aided and abetted by the media, educational authorities and the entire health industry. "All sorts of children, simply those that daydream and don't pay attention, could now be diagnosed with ADHD and placed on

medication,” according to Matthew Smith, author of *Hyperactive: The Controversial History of ADHD*.

Once again, rather than addressing causes, which a lot of bright minds have pertinently analyzed, the system — including most children’s own parents — accepts and endorses the treatment of symptoms, without reflecting that the treatment in many ways aggravates the cause itself.

As we have seen, the current educational system was built to service a culture that, in the 21st century, is rapidly fading, that of an industrial manufacturing economy. In comparison to the ideals of education in the more distant past, education as it evolved through the 19th and 20th was designed to be less than human — to restrict rather than expand the culture and civilization it was intended to serve.

There was no dark conspiracy. It wasn’t a secret. It could even be chalked up to a new form of “enlightenment.” In 1898, Ellwood P. Cubberley, dean of the Stanford University School of Education, accurately described [the system he patently admired](#): “Our schools are, in a sense, factories, in which the raw materials — children — are to be shaped and fashioned into products ... The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of 20th century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down.”

Seen in that light, Gates is hardly innovating, except to impose the more modern culture of high-tech industries on an institution that was initially designed to serve the needs of manufacturing.

## **TREND 2: STUDENT-LOAN DEBT**

The second trend that has recently emerged for media attention is the generational crisis linked to student-loan debt. To make their way into the “real” job market, where they hope to secure stable and reasonably well-paid employment, the lucky learners who have made it through to graduation find themselves facing a new quandary: that of choosing to become virtual indentured servants to a system controlled by financial institutions.

According to *The Atlantic*, the accumulation of debt often has a long-term debilitating [psychological impact](#) on the families and the learners themselves as they

launch their careers. *The Atlantic* article paradoxically points out that poorer students fare better because “higher student-loan debt reflects an improving social standing.” But this only serves to highlight the hopelessness of those of the same social group who were left behind, either because they couldn’t make the grade or take the risk to support future debt.

The system is competitive from top to bottom: competition for grades, competition for social standing, competition for jobs. And for many, the reward for success in navigating the system and making their mark is massive debt as they assume adult responsibilities in a competitive economy. Westly adds, for our reflection and as a factor of motivation for the politicians who will ultimately decide how the system evolves, the consideration that the nation itself is competing with other nations for preeminence.

It’s a win-lose model. But myriad studies — and some authentic experiments, such as Ricardo Semler’s [Lumiar school](#) in Brazil — show that it isn’t the only model. Education works best when collaboration is prioritized over competition. An even more appropriate model for a nation is [Finland](#), which has effectively redesigned its education system around the principles of collaboration, creativity and learner autonomy.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

In the guise of summary and conclusion, here are five things to think about.

First, if education is seen only as a means of “getting ahead and getting a job,” random individuals will succeed but society will be that much the poorer.

Second, if we don’t address the true causes of the degradation of education and simply seek technical and organizational remedies — whether it’s focusing on STEM or prescribing Ritalin to inattentive students — we risk sliding even further backward.

Third, we need to beware of the siren song of technocratic discourse, with their digital solutions, from MOOCs to AI: Modern technology-oriented educational reformers tend to present themselves as disruptive innovators, but mostly produce solutions that duplicate rather than transform or replace current failed practices.



Fourth, we need to reconsider the role of the “liberal arts.” Joseph Pieper, in his book [\*Leisure: The Basis of Culture\*](#), originally published in 1948, reminds us that the notion of liberal arts (free exploration) contrasts with that of the servile arts (focus on usefulness) and that the Greek word *schola* actually means “leisure” or “rest.”

Fifth, Pieper notably reminds us that “Education concerns the whole man; an educated man is a man with a point of view from which he takes in the whole world” and is “capable of grasping the totality of existing things.”

The model of education we’ve inherited from the industrial revolution reflects the idea that education is exclusively about preparing [\*homo economicus\*](#), a producer and consumer, a woman or man who has been prepared by schooling for a job that ultimately will create profit for employers, who in turn will use their profits to create more jobs, providing ever renewed guidelines for educational curricula. It’s very much the house that Jack built, possibly [\*Jack Welsh\*](#). Whether that seamless economic logic holds up in reality is another question, to which most economists are unlikely to give a positive response, especially when they are unanimously predicting that today’s jobs will quickly disappear as they are replaced by technology.

One thing is clear: Education, with or without STEM, is mired in a crisis to which there are no easy answers. A deeper analysis indicates that education is like the canary in the mineshaft: The indicator of a more serious problem at the heart of the civilization it is designed to serve. Every society needs to formulate its ideal of education and motivate people to believe in it. It may include purely economic objectives, but it must also embrace human aspirations — consolidating and developing knowledge, spreading enlightenment, creating the basis for understanding and harmony, expanding horizons, making sense of the universe. As Pieper suggests, it should promise to build “the whole man ... capable of grasping the totality of existing things.” Can any society prosper if education is reduced to a mere expedient for the millions of individuals who pass through the system with no other goal than to memorize their part in the play? Does education contribute to defining the purpose and ambition of human society, or simply provide a tool for the reproduction and minimal adaptation of what already exists?

Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, we have placed education entirely in the hands of politicians and business leaders. Do they have the vision and courage to turn it into the ferment of renewal and the answer to an existential crisis?

Institutional inertia and elementary “business logic” seems to indicate otherwise, but as the crisis of civilization itself deepens, new initiatives are certain to emerge.

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# Merkel’s Journey to Global Leadership Crosses Latin America

Emmanuel Gomez Farías Mata and Iván Farías Pelcastre

June 10, 2017

*For Germany, the greatest gains to be made from Angela Merkel’s trips to Argentina and Mexico are political.*

The election of US President Donald Trump in November 2016 brought political and economic uncertainty to the world. Upon being elected, Trump announced radical changes to US domestic and foreign policies, aimed at delivering a government that puts “[America First](#).”

This populist and isolationist approach led political commentators on both sides of the Atlantic to argue that the United States had abandoned its position at the forefront of global politics. Those same commentators quickly turned their heads to Germany as the country that can — and seems willing to — lead the industrialized, liberal democracies into the 21st century, and pronounced German Chancellor Angela Merkel as the new “leader of the free world.”

Germany and Merkel have taken upon their new roles enthusiastically. On May 28, at an election rally in Munich, [Merkel stated](#): “The times in which we could completely depend on others are, to a certain extent, over.” Amid Trump’s election in the US and Brexit in Britain, she said: “We Europeans truly have to take our fate into our own hands.” In her view, Europe and the rest of the world can no longer count on the US or the UK as they used to in the pre-Trump and pre-Brexit era. For Merkel, the transatlantic alliances are no longer reliable relationships upon which to build common prosperity and security.

This assessment, however, does not come as a surprise to anyone who has been following the events unfolding in the US and Britain. What is worth noting instead is that Merkel's vision for Germany and the European Union is not constrained to the continent.

## TRIPS TO ARGENTINA AND MEXICO

Having regained its position as the political and economic power of Europe following the devastation of two world wars, Germany is no stranger to economic and political uncertainty. To address it, ever since the end of World War II, the German government has been busy advocating for the creation of free-trade zones, pushing for the opening of domestic and global markets, and promoting trust among countries both inside and outside Europe. Hence, in the face of uncertainty caused by a US retreat from global affairs, Germany has been using its experience and stronger global leadership to fill the empty seat that Washington left behind in Latin America, where it had traditionally held its strongest influence.

From June 7, Merkel has visited [Argentina](#) and [Mexico](#) to foster Germany's links with Latin America. Officially, [as per Deutsche Welle](#), "Merkel's stops in Argentina and then Mexico were simply [because they are] the last countries left on the list to visit prior to the G20 summit," which is set to be held on July 7-8 in Hamburg. Unofficially, Merkel's visit to Latin America was partly aimed at exploring and establishing new global alliances that are not built around the US.

In Argentina, [Merkel met with President Mauricio Macri](#) to discuss trade and climate change issues, including the expected completion of a free-trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur, and the social and cultural links between Germany and the Jewish community in Argentina — the largest of its kind in Latin America. In Mexico, Merkel talked about trade and cultural issues, including the upgrading of the EU-Mexico free-trade agreement, and the closure of the Year of Germany in Mexico and the start of the Year of Mexico in Germany, which is a two-year bilateral initiative aimed at promoting better mutual knowledge and understanding between their peoples and cultures.

As German Ambassador to Mexico Viktor Eibling [suggested](#), however, "the visit is in part meant to demonstrate his nation's leadership on the world stage." Argentina and

Mexico are not just important trading partners for Germany, but also important political players in Latin America that have been long dissatisfied with US leadership in the region, and who would likely welcome and support power shifts in the global arena — away from the Trump administration’s protectionism and toward a more open global marketplace centered in Germany and the EU. As German Secretary of State for Tourism Iris Gleicke recently stated in her meeting with her Mexican counterpart, Enrique de la Madrid Cordero, Berlin is [convinced](#) that “open markets and reliable trade conditions rather than protectionism are the right approach.” Over the past few months, similar statements have been made repeatedly at meetings between high-level German and Mexican government officials, including Merkel herself.

## **WHY MEXICO?**

Germany and Mexico have links that go beyond their common criticism of Trump’s protectionist policies. Both countries have expressed their commitment to strengthening and diversifying their bilateral economic, cultural and social links, and according to Gleicke, German-Mexican relations have developed “very positively [and already] offer companies in both countries enormous potential” and opportunities. Mexico’s appeal to Germany seems then to be momentous, not momentary.

Governments and firms in Germany and the rest of the EU consider that Mexico is on track to become an even more attractive country for foreign investment. In their view, Mexico has a privileged geographical position and a strong development model, which makes it a key player in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the nascent Pacific Alliance — even at a time when the former has been heavily criticized by the Trump administration.

Mexico has also grown steadily as a market and country for investment. Numerous domestic policies and programs, including the liberalization of the Mexican energy sector, have increased both German and European interest in conducting or expanding business in the country. Likewise, sustained growth in Mexico’s manufacturing industry has made it a remarkable base for operations and a destination for producing and buying German products produced by and for Latin America. According to officials at the German Ministry of Economy and Energy, these conditions have made Mexico more attractive to German and European investors — even over other large Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina.

German investors have insisted, however, that Mexico must take further steps to continue, expand and enhance its trade initiatives and development programs. These notably include those related to the improvement of infrastructure, the further opening of its domestic market, and the provision of conditions of full transparency for foreign investors. These remarks strengthen previous calls, such as those made in 2016, for a swift and successful conclusion to ongoing negotiations for an updated free-trade agreement between the EU and Mexico.

Currently, around 80% of Mexico's foreign trade is conducted with other NAFTA countries. Merkel and other German high-level government officials consider that a new EU-Mexico agreement might open up opportunities [“to get the country involved in the global industrial scene,”](#) not just the North American one. The economic opportunities for Mexico from a closer relationship with Germany are clear and evident.

## **MERKEL IS ON THE ROAD**

To Germany, however, the greatest gains to be made are political. Merkel's visit to Argentina and Mexico has been described as a [“display of Germany's political muscle right in the face of Donald Trump,”](#) just weeks before he attends the G20 summit. The timing of the visit — and the expressions of solidarity and understanding with Latin America, especially Mexico — also appears to be aimed at expressing the serious disagreements that exist between Germany and the EU with the Trump administration. Germany's offer of a helping hand to Mexico and Argentina signals the emergence of a closer economic relationship between Europe and Latin America that has the potential of replacing the not-so-benign influence of the US over the region. In exchange, it is likely that Latin American states will be expected to offer their support to Germany and the EU to make changes to the formerly US-led international political system.

So, should Latin America applaud or be suspicious of the actions and intentions of the great European power? While only time will tell, it is clear that Angela Merkel is on the road to becoming “the new leader of the free world.” Clearly, Mexico and Argentina are two worthy stops to make.

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# The Key to Kashmir: Public Diplomacy and Secret Talks

Ameya Kilara

June 14, 2017

*In Kashmir, engaging the public is as important as secret negotiations.*

Indian and Pakistani diplomats tend to agree on one thing: A peace deal with their quarrelsome neighbor will need to be worked out under the cover of darkness through a so-called “back-channel.” Away from the blinding glare of public attention, suited men (and it is invariably men) in smoky parlors and hotels abroad will secretly hash out the finer details of complex territorial and national security issues, which ordinary plebian-citizens can barely begin to comprehend.

The hope is that once these selfless heroes shake hands on a deal, their political masters will sign an agreement with shaky hands, before announcing to the world that peace has been delivered (Nobel Peace prize awaited). Faced with a valley brimming with [tensions](#) and a never-ending [stalemate in India-Pakistan relations](#), it may be time for a long overdue reality check. Secret deals among political elites are necessary but certainly not sufficient to make peace in Kashmir.

The benefits of backroom diplomacy are well known. Keeping negotiation processes outside the public gaze allows parties to make concessions and explore creative proposals that could otherwise mean political suicide for their leaders. Confidentiality gives parties the time to strategically out-manuever those who have vested interests in derailing the peace process. Moreover, technical expertise is often needed to negotiate specific issues — whether water distribution or ceasefire lines — another reason to keep negotiations within the purview of experts.

So, while recognizing that a lot happens through discreet tête-à-têtes in the corridors of power, we should be wary of allowing the comfortable fog of backroom banter to blind us to the important complementary role of public diplomacy.

**LOOKING BACK ON KASHMIR**

Kashmir is no stranger to stealth negotiations, which still grate on people's nerves. The infamous [Indira-Sheikh accord](#) of 1975 was negotiated almost entirely in secret for three years by political middlemen shuttling between Delhi and Srinagar. It installed the legendary National Conference leader, Sheikh Abdullah, as chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir with great pomp and show.

However, contrary to public expectations, it did little to restore Kashmir's autonomy under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. For many in the valley, this agreement came to symbolize the broken relationship between India and Kashmir, besides deepening their [mistrust](#) of politicians all around.

In 2015, former Indian intelligence chief A.S Dulat's [exposé](#) confirmed what people had long suspected: Both cash and political currency have been covertly exchanged between Indian and Pakistani intelligence agencies and Kashmiri leaders, ostensibly to keep the conflict within "manageable" bounds. It is hardly surprising that such policies, marked by cynical realpolitik, have failed to open doors to the promised land.

During a rare productive spell in India-Pakistan relations between 2004 and 2008, a special [back-channel](#) appointed by General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh hashed out the practical details of a non-territorial Kashmir proposal based on the idea of "making borders irrelevant." Wisely, the leaders reportedly went a step further to consult with political parties and separatist leaders in Kashmir, and Indian and Pakistani civil society. This was an attempt to create wider support for the peace process and signaled to people that their views mattered to their leaders.

Still, crucial stakeholders, including Pakistani political leaders in exile and a dominant Hurriyat faction in Kashmir, remained [opposed](#) to this proposal. Former Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri [claims](#) this is the closest the governments have come to a framework that Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris can all live with. But it seems unlikely that any agreement, however ideal, could have been practically implemented so long as the views of resistant constituencies were disregarded.

Other attempts since then have proved to be even less encouraging. After a mass uprising in the Kashmir Valley in 2010, Singh's government appointed three interlocutors to speak to a range of stakeholders and propose a way forward. Unfortunately, the committee's report, [A New Compact with the People of Jammu and Kashmir](#), was disowned by the very same government and languishes unattended on

the Home Ministry's website. In July 2016, another crisis engulfed the Kashmir Valley, triggered by the death of a young Kashmiri militant commander, Burhan Wani. A high-profile Committee of Concerned Citizens, led by former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha, was constituted to consult people across the state on their grievances and priorities.

However, the committee's fervent [pleas](#) to address political grievances and initiate dialogue between New Delhi and Kashmir seem to be falling on deaf ears once again. In April, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a [speech](#) in Jammu exhorting Kashmiri youth to choose "tourism over terrorism," "stone-cutting instead of stone-pelting."

More recently, Home Minister Rajnath Singh [announced](#) that the government had found a "permanent solution" to the Kashmir issue, the details of which remain a mystery. Conspicuously absent in these unilateral declarations is an acknowledgment of political aspirations, human rights violations or governance failures that people have consistently articulated as their primary concerns.

## **WEIGHT OF THE PUBLIC**

Despite its obvious merits, why do governments remain reluctant to put their weight behind public consultation and dialogue?

Perhaps there are understandable anxieties about the chaos and lack of control that could arise from opening up to the public's concerns and grievances, especially on an issue as volatile as Kashmir. Maybe governments fear that "giving in" to public sentiment will make them appear weak or threaten key strategic and security interests in Kashmir.

It is important for these assumptions to be scrutinized under a factual spotlight. For instance, there is a strong [correlation](#) between periods of consistent public engagement and lower levels of violence in Kashmir. It is also worth examining if top-down interventions — beefing up security, introducing relief packages or constructing roads and tunnels — have actually made people in Kashmir more secure, while tensions remain high within the population at large.



On the other hand, expending some political capital on a serious public dialogue initiative may well bring disproportionate security, economic and political pay-offs.

The latest resurgence of violent tensions in the Kashmir Valley is a reminder that even the most sophisticated agreements can eventually crumble under the weight of a public's veto.

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## Trump's Extreme Vetting Charade

Samuel Guzman

June 20, 2017

*The scant new vetting measures the administration has imposed have all the flavor of the extreme vetting Trump has promised, without any of the punch.*

Donald Trump keeps trying to tout the need for a travel ban on visitors from six Muslim-majority nations, despite the latest [legal setback](#) to his crusade. A second federal appeals court slapped down his revised travel ban, following a similar [decision](#) in May by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Earlier this month, seemingly increasingly [exasperated](#) over his apparent inability to impose the ban, the president [tweeted](#): “In any event we are EXTREME VETTING people coming into the U.S. in order to help keep our country safe. The courts are slow and political!”

Yet as Anthony Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), [puts it](#), “The manner in which they have been pursuing the legal case undercuts the argument for the urgency of the executive order.” After the first ban was shut down and an appeals court declined to reinstate it, Trump's attorneys requested more than a month to write the second version of the ban instead of fighting over the original one. When federal judges blocked the second version of the ban, the Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to review the case — not in an expedited process, but as part of its normal proceedings next fall.

Such a meandering approach by Trump’s lawyers — combined with the slow manner in which the administration has been reviewing existing measures — raises the question of whether the rhetoric is nothing more than a ploy to appeal to the president’s base.

After all, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the State Department, the two main agencies that deal with border control and visa approvals, have always had a vast mandate to evaluate potential threats and to tightly scrutinize visa applicants. DHS alone has roughly 2,000 staff spread across 80 countries running programs targeting high-risk travelers, making Trump’s insistence on the need for more extreme-vetting measures all the more ludicrous. His disingenuous and myopic obsession with border control will only succeed in destroying the global reputation of the United States while doing little to protect its people.

Indeed, the scant new vetting measures the administration has imposed have all the flavor of the extreme vetting Trump has promised, without any of the punch. For instance, Trump’s promise in August 2016 to impose tests to discover hostile ideologies in potential immigrants and to select only those who “[we expect to flourish in our country](#)” are still unrealized. Expert groups, such as the American Immigration Lawyers Association, have so far seen very few concrete changes to the screening process.

The only new vetting measure that has been publicly acknowledged will, it seems, add a new hurdle to the visa application process while doing little to actually tighten security. For example, in late May, the administration approved a [new questionnaire](#) that asks US visa applicants to divulge all the social media handles and email addresses they have used in the previous five years. The new step is likely to produce a great deal more paperwork, but it is doubtful that it will do much to stop aspiring terrorists.

[Tashfeen Malik](#), for instance, a US permanent resident from Pakistan who committed the [San Bernardino](#) terrorist attack with her husband in 2015, had made her extremist sympathies clear on Facebook, but mainly in the form of private messages or posts, raising the question of just how useful the new questionnaire would be.

The policies Trump is pursuing stand in stark contrast to the European Union, which has a much more pragmatic approach to border control and visa processing. The EU’s

26-nation Schengen area already allows passport- and visa-free travel within its borders. And even though more terrorist activity has occurred in Europe recently, the EU continues to strategically lift visa restrictions for certain countries, part of a drive to boost trade, tourism, exchange and, therefore, economic growth. This policy is founded on the fact that most terrorist incidents in Europe — as is also true in the US — are carried out by long-term legal residents, not recent immigrants or temporary visitors.

Most recently, for instance, the EU approved visa-free travel for [Ukrainian citizens](#) holding biometric passports, a fulfillment of a longstanding commitment, part of a drive to undercut Russian influence in the country following its annexation of Crimea. Several months earlier, in February, the EU approved a proposal on visa liberalization for [Georgia](#).

Both sides view visa-free travel to Europe as part of a geopolitical dispute with Russia over Georgia's Western inclinations, which Moscow opposes. In 2016, Brussels [signed](#) a short-stay visa waiver agreement with Peru. Peruvians' newfound access to Europe was bolstered by their new biometric passports, made by a consortium led by France's Imprimerie Nationale. The measure is expected to boost travel from Peru by 15% in the first year.

Europe's continued drive to streamline border entry systems, in contrast with US policies, are both supporting some of Brussels' geopolitical goals and making the continent a far more welcoming destination for tourists, academic talent and businesspeople. Meanwhile, last month, more than 50 US academic and educational groups sent a letter to the State Department [warning](#) that "unacceptably long delays in processing" could hurt the ability of American higher education institutions to recruit top international students.

There has also been a significant drop in US tourism, known as the "[Trump slump](#)," which is predicted to result in 4.3 million fewer visitors this year, adding up to a loss of \$7.4 billion in revenue. If Trump really wants to "make America great again," he should give up his "extreme vetting" charade and make the country more, not less, welcoming to travelers.

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# Brexit Gets Underway in Divided Britain

Polina Popova

June 23, 2017

*Despite the tough talk in the Queen's Speech, the UK's position at the Brexit negotiating table has been weakened.*

If the results of the [British general election](#) revived hope of mitigating Brexit, the long-awaited Queen's Speech in Parliament has seemingly put [all that to bed](#). In the speech her government penned for the queen, Prime Minister Theresa May decided to stick to her hard Brexit guns: a Great Repeal Bill, an independent customs regime and trade policy, and an end to freedom of movement for the European Union.

The content of the speech will only feed Brussels' view that the United Kingdom has been behaving like the worst of the boozy holidaymakers it sends to European shores each summer: [confused](#) yet increasingly aggressive. That hasn't changed, even after May's decision to call a general election that cost the "Brexit Department" [two of its four ministers](#).

The timing to take this strong of a stance could have been better, to say the least. Just a few days before, British and EU negotiators David Davis and Michel Barnier finally sat down to determine a [timetable and structure for negotiations](#).

The Queen's Speech may have been heavy on tough talk, but it does not change the fact that the UK's position at the negotiating table has been weakened. As talks get underway, though, that slightly humbled position might actually be an opportunity for both sides. A hard Brexit is no more [feasible politically](#) now than it was before the speech. With her leadership in doubt, May needs to drop the combative approach and focus on finding mutually beneficial compromises on critical issues.

Fortunately, the speech still left some windows open for a better Brexit strategy.

## ACCEPTING A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

The remarks prepared for the queen clearly rule out permanent membership in the European customs union, but they do not rule out Chancellor Philip Hammond's

proposition that Britain hold off dismantling its customs arrangement with Europe until the UK has reached a [new trade agreement](#) with Brussels — a process that could take several years. This is an option favored by British businesses and the EU itself. Maintaining the customs union for longer than currently anticipated would confer several benefits, such as allowing the UK to court potential trade partners while giving trade negotiators the time they desperately need to work out particulars.

As Hammond said himself: “If we’re restricted on being able to enter into new free-trade deals with third countries during an interim period that won’t stop us negotiating and preparing. Normally these deals take quite a long time to negotiate.”

It would also preserve the headway Whitehall has already made, with members of the [Gulf Cooperation Council](#) (GCC) in particular. Deepening trade and investment relations with GCC countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has been a major focus for the government, with a series of high-level visits by Hammond, International Trade Secretary Liam Fox and May herself in the past six months. Tellingly, the prime minister’s first overseas trip after invoking Article 50 was to Saudi Arabia, Britain’s biggest trade partner in the Middle East.

Arab regional leaders are [equally keen](#) to boost foreign trade ties with the UK in the midst of their own economic reform programs, and a transitional period prior wouldn’t hurt these envisaged deals, but it would take much of the chaos out of Brexit.

## **COMPROMISE ON FREE MOVEMENT**

As the issue that most drives anti-EU sentiment in Britain, freedom of movement is one of the thorniest subjects the negotiators will have to tackle. In the words of James McGrory, executive director of Open Britain, the UK needs to [be careful](#) “not to pursue a Brexit deal that we know will make people worse off and sacrifice our economic prosperity on the altar of immigration control.”

A report by two think tanks, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, has [recommended](#) any deal ensure employers retain access to both skilled and unskilled workers from the EU. This is hardly a grudging concession to the union. If the UK doesn’t soften its stance, businesses could quickly run into a lack of skilled personnel but also people willing to fill low-skill positions.

The Queen's Speech made quite clear that the government would be establishing "new national policies on immigration," but it did not say what those policies would be.

## **REJECT THE "NO DEAL" SCENARIO**

"No deal is better than a bad deal" makes for a good sound bite, but it would be terrible policy. This holds its own strong interest in ensuring an orderly withdrawal. The reality of the situation was best summed up by European Council President [Donald Tusk](#): "There is nothing to win in this process, and I am talking about both sides. In essence, this is about damage control."

There will be no controlling of the damage if either side flounces away from the negotiating table with nothing resolved. Instead, it will take sensibly and fairly unpicking the myriad issues that the UK's exit brings in its wake to prevent harmful destabilization at the precise time Europe gets its feet [back under it](#).

## **WIDEN THE DEBATE IN BRITAIN**

If "the will of the people" is truly at the heart of Brexit, the people made their preferences abundantly clear in the general election. In both the election and in recent polling, the British public has rejected the idea of cutting all ties with the EU. The majority of Britons — 69% — [disagree](#) with the idea of a hard Brexit, while another 53% think there should be another referendum.

Theresa May would do well to remember that the fierce divisions within her own party over the referendum and the negotiations do not necessarily reflect the public as a whole.

*\*Polina Popova is a Russian-British writer and journalist.*

# Will History Repeat Itself for the Conservatives?

Adam de Courcy Ling

June 27, 2017

*Might 2017 see a repetition of the historical splits in the Conservative Party?*

As the many consequences of the June 8 election work through, the United Kingdom is edging closer to a rare historical occurrence already celebrated twice before: a formal split in the (still just about) ruling Conservative Party.

Just as on the two previous divisions, in 1906 and 1846, it seems a split in 2017, inspired by Brexit, may be brought about by irreconcilable differences among Conservatives on free trade.

For centuries, free trade has defined the UK's mercantilist identity and place in the world. Disputes over it, like disputes over liturgical interpretations at earlier periods of our history, have long defined Conservative politics. In 2017, the party is once again hopelessly split on it. To what degree does the UK's reasonably successful self-reinvention since the 1980s — replacing lost market share in physical trade by becoming a regional and global *entrépot* of innovative, lightly regulated service industries — need cooperation with European Union neighbors? The UK has more limited mercantilist objectives than the often more political aspirations of continental EU members. Is the political price of cooperation worth the candle for the UK? The Remainers among the Conservatives (generally on the left of the party) say “yes.” Leavers (generally on the right) say “no.”

In 1906, the issue was whether the British Empire, like today's EU, should grant trading preferences to its members (imperial preference) to give a commercial rationale to the treasured empire. But these would usher in higher prices and lower innovation, always part and parcel of protectionism. The Conservative Party's deep resulting split led to its landslide defeat in the 1906 election.

In 1846, in a simpler world, the topic was the price of bread. Should high grain prices, benefiting the rural economy and rural landlords, be perpetuated in the protectionist

Corn Laws, or should the UK food market be opened to lower-cost grain imports to reduce prices for the benefit of rapidly rising urban populations? Here too, the Conservative Party split.

When contemplating the impressive determination of the Conservative Party to remain together, we should not forget that the forces at work in 1846 and 1906 were very similar, and largely on the same issues, to those which exist in 2017. It happened before, and there is no reason for the party not to split again.

## **DIVIDED AND CONFUSED**

The June 2017 election, spectacularly not won — but also not lost — by the Conservatives, sought to kick the Brexit can, over which battles have raged within the party ever since the 1970s, once more two more years down the road. Repeated efforts have been made to paper over this party split, without surrendering power, by delegating adjudication to the electorate. These fudges have not only failed in any way to lessen the split in the party, but have now opened up splits in wider British society — between generations, between educated and less educated, between London and the rest of the country — which mirror and amplify those in the party. We have an unhappy, divided and confused country.

Following the 2016 referendum, the newest vehicle for this ever more creative can-kicking by the bitterly divided Conservatives was the concept of a “negotiation” with the EU. The apparently uncertain outcome of this “negotiation” has allowed the party leadership to tell both sides of the Conservatives’ fragile consortium of opponents and supporters of the EU to “wait and see.” In delivering this message to the party’s factions, the enticement of office, made possible by staying in government, has provided much glue.

Transparently, this “negotiation” is very largely a fiction. A bespoke UK deal is, for both sides, too complicated to attempt. Myriad interdependencies have evolved over nearly half a century, which go far beyond trade. They cannot be individually recast, especially not on the fly.

There is no rationale for the 440 million people in the remaining EU, with their \$13.8 trillion of GDP, to give advantages, not granted to others, to a local competitor with 64 million people and \$2.7 trillion of GDP. Having also so emphatically been told by the



UK (and the US) that “us first” is the new mantra for international relations, the 440 million will surely no longer hesitate to make count their much greater economic and political weight. Furthermore, the approval process for a bespoke deal for 27 remaining EU countries would be so technically complex as to be fundamentally unfeasible.

The “negotiation” with the EU will, therefore, be a straightforward invitation to the UK, however politically dressed up, to choose between two existing relationship models. First, the Norway model: Retain all obligations of EU membership in return for keeping all benefits, but with no formal influence or voice in the EU. Variations of this model are discussed in the UK as “soft Brexit.” Political discussion of why the UK might give up such a large part of its voice and influence in the world, in return for no material change in its EU obligations, has not yet begun, but is inevitable. While better than a “hard Brexit,” a soft Brexit similar to the Norway model would be far worse than the status quo — an extraordinary and historic penalty for the country to pay for the Conservative Party’s activities since 2015.

Second, there is the “hard Brexit”: exit with no deal. After 44 years of partnership in many areas of national life — unlike any other trade partner — this process carries with it enormous risks especially, but not only, for the economy. In the long term even more than the short term.

## **BACK TO 1846**

Since neither an electoral mandate nor a parliamentary majority exists for either of these alternatives, no UK government, especially not during a hung Parliament, can make this decision without another election.

At this next election, likely at the very latest in 2019, no blame game — “the EU has been unreasonable” — will avoid the necessary decision. The relationship with the EU — hard Brexit, soft Brexit or forget Brexit — will be the overwhelming issue. Instead of, as in the 2016 referendum, comparing Remain with all the other options in aggregate, executable options at this election will need to be compared directly with each other.

At this coming election, the wings of today’s Conservative Party will have to take a clear position and will no longer be able to campaign on the same side. The fudges of 2015 and 2017, in which the party used elaborate fudges to preserve itself and its hold

on power, putting its own interests ahead of those of the country, will no longer be available.

We will, surely, be back to 1846 and 1906.

*\*Adam de Courcy Ling is a London-based investor in European software companies.*

# It's Time to Put the "Trump is a Tyrant" Obsession to Rest

Etan Blass

June 28, 2017

*The US government is not a cult or a totalitarian regime.*

As we watch the government put our president through a very public inquiry into the nature of his connections with Russia and his possible obstruction of justice, we can, hopefully, finally, put to rest the nonsensical notion that our government is being run by a totalitarian regime.

Since the day Donald J. Trump announced his candidacy for president, some experts on cults and totalitarian regimes have repeatedly (and I mean *repeatedly*) warned everyone around them that he is a cult leader and a tyrant and that his rise to power is reminiscent of Adolf Hitler's.

Renowned totalitarianism expert Robert Jay Lifton [has warned](#): "Military powers entrusted to [President Trump] endanger us all." Steven Hassan, founder of the Freedom of Mind Resource Center, [agreed that](#) "Trump shares important characteristics with your average cult leader" and that there was "a real danger of his campaign becoming a full-blown political cult," and has continued regularly to use his Freedom of Mind website and his public Facebook posts to raise awareness about the president's cultic and tyrannical ways. Even British social psychologist Alexandra Stein [has cautioned](#): "There are too many warning signs to ignore. I'd call it totalitarianism. ... Be scared!" She devotes a great deal of energy and much of her

class on cults and totalitarian regimes (which I attended) to the subject of why President Trump is a tyrant and why we should all “be scared!”

That the president of the United States is not, and cannot possibly be, a tyrant is obvious to any objective observer with a middle-school understanding of the US government. Our government has three branches, not one, and each can override another’s demands. A response to British monarchical rule, the US government is a tyrant-proof system. Thus, calling the president of the United States a cult leader or a tyrant is as incoherent as the idea of kosher pork.

## **DISSENT IN THE RANKS**

But even if we ignore what we Americans learned in elementary school and it were somehow possible for a US president to run the country as a tyrant, we do not see the typical signs of a cult leader or tyrant in Donald J. Trump. Quite the contrary: Cult leaders appoint to their inner circle loyal followers who will not contradict them. President Trump, however, appointed to his cabinet some of his most outspoken opponents, such as Governors Nikki Haley and Rick Perry, and almost appointed another one in Mitt Romney.

Ambassador Haley has since publicly contradicted the president several times, and, unlike a tyrant, President Trump has not disposed of her for doing so. The president’s Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, openly criticized Trump for questioning the legitimacy of the court’s decision on the temporary travel ban, and the president did not withdraw his support for Gorsuch’s nomination.

When the president appointed H.R. McMaster as his national security advisor, [The New York Times reported that](#) “General McMaster is considered one of the military’s most independent-minded officers,” that he “had the aura of disruption that Mr. Trump has valued in several cabinet secretaries, said a senior administration official,” and McMaster had “made a name for himself as a young officer with a searing critique of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their performance during the Vietnam War and later criticized the way President George W. Bush’s administration went to war in Iraq.” Independent-minded officer? An aura of disruption? Not exactly what any good tyrant would want in his inner circle.

While tyrannical regimes and cults maintain tight limits and filters on the amount and types of information disseminated to anyone outside the inner circle, [Jeff Mason, president of the White House Correspondents' Association](#), acknowledged in an otherwise critical speech at the association's dinner in April: "Press access under President Trump has been very good. ... We have had several press conferences [by the President], repeated opportunities to see and report on the President's meetings, and, with at least one notable and lamentable exception, good access to briefings with press staff and senior administration officials."

Finally, the president's repeated failures in having his "decrees" obeyed demonstrate just how absurd the tyrant notion is. One of the president's first [executive orders](#), the temporary travel ban, has been struck down at least three times. His attempt to cut off funding for sanctuary cities also has been shot down by a court. His first attempt at a health care plan was vetoed by his own party. Shortly after he pulled out of the Paris Agreement, Hawaii defied the president by adopting the terms of the agreement. So how's the tyrant thing working out?

## **A CULT, YOU SAY?**

We also do not see the signs of cultic behavior on the part of President Trump's followers. Unlike in cults, we do not generally find an elitist mentality among Trump supporters, as if they are "better" than Hillary Clinton supporters. On the contrary, it is from many on the far left from whom we have heard elitist boasts such as Trump supporters being uneducated and a bunch of unenlightened racists — unlike us, the progressive and enlightened.

While cult members often shun and isolate themselves from the outside group, we do not generally find an us versus them mentality among Trump supporters versus those who do not support Trump. On the contrary, a survey found that [liberals were 3.5 times more likely to have unfriended someone on social media shortly after the election](#) than conservatives were, and by all accounts this trend has only continued.

Unlike in cults, average Trump supporters do not see their leader as infallible. Upon the revelation Trump had bragged about grabbing women by the private parts, even his staunchest supporters, indeed even his own [running mate](#), openly criticized Trump for this behavior. Many Trump supporters already have openly criticized one or more of his acts since taking office, whether it be his initial handling of the travel ban,

his waffling on having Mexico pay for the wall or the delay in its construction, his about face on moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, his firing of FBI Director James Comey, and so on.

Our government did not transform into a totalitarian regime over the last eight years, despite many examples of control and persuasion from the top that some may judge as cult-like. The Obama administration [subpoenaed the phone records of 20 Associated Press journalists](#) and [tracked a Fox News reporter's visits](#) to the US State Department, his phone calls and his personal emails; [threatened to exclude Fox News from press briefings](#) until Fox News's *competitors* spoke up and said, "enough;" was [called out by the editorial board of The New York Times](#) as having "moved beyond protecting government secrets to threatening fundamental freedoms of the press to gather news;" was described by his CIA director and later Department of Defense head Leon Panetta as ["limiting decision-making to his inner circle;"](#) was arguably our most persuasive and charismatic president since President John F. Kennedy; and enjoyed a level of unquestioning devotion among many of his supporters, many of whom saw him as infallible or even messianic, that would make the most successful cult leader jealous.

And yet even President Obama was incapable of getting the country to run strictly according to his wishes over the last eight years, as a tyrant would. There would therefore seem to be no concern that a president with a 58% disapproval rating will have better success even if he tried to become our first ever tyrant.

Perhaps the [International Cultic Studies Association](#) (ICSA) needs to adopt a Trump Rule, the way the American Psychiatric Association instituted the [Goldwater Rule](#), which instructs its members that "it is unethical to offer a professional opinion about an individual without conducting an examination," as this fear-mongering on the part of these far-left cult experts does nothing but create fear.

Even if it were possible for a US president to lead as a dictator, and even if President Trump fit the job description of a dictator, the election is over. Donald Trump is the 45th US president. So what do these cult experts accomplish by telling everyone, at every opportunity, that Trump is a dictator? By abusing their authority in this way and telling everyone who will listen that "Trump is a tyrant," "Trump is like Hitler," "Trump is a dictator," "Be afraid!" it would seem the only thing these cult experts are accomplishing is, in fact, making people afraid.

[The US alone is home to up to 10,000 cults](#), according to Steve Eichel, the president of the ICOSA. And so all the time and effort cult experts expend on raising awareness and creating fear about a cult that does not exist is time and effort not spent on raising awareness about and helping victims leave and recover from the many cults that do exist and attempting to alleviate the tremendous harm these very real cults inflict. We, therefore, respectfully urge these experts to get back to focusing their time and energy on this vital cause.

*\*Etan Blass is an American who founded a network for those supporting cult victims and their families.*

## **DRC: Once Again Africa's Next Tinderbox?**

Hugo Norton

June 30, 2017

*Just how much can the country take before unravelling?*

Congolese security forces and a militia battling them have killed more than 3,000 people in the central province of Kasai since October 2016, according to a staggering new report from [Congo's Catholic Church](#) released on June 20. The report is the most detailed account of the violence in Kasai, painting a picture of near complete devastation: 20 villages have been "completely destroyed," nearly 4,000 houses razed, and 34 houses of worship damaged or shut down.

At the same time, a [report by UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein](#) details the Democratic Republic of Congo's harrowing human rights situation that was discussed at a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva.

The only bright side is that the reports seem to have finally spurred the international community to take more decisive action on Congo. Three days after Al Hussein's speech, the [HRC adopted a resolution](#) to send a team of experts to investigate human rights abuses in Kasai. The Congolese government agreed to cooperate, though under the condition that the UN experts limit themselves to technical assistance, leaving the

investigation under Congolese command. While far from ideal, it's a first step. The deadly mix of localized violence combined with a brewing national political crisis means the DRC is on track to becoming once again Africa's tinderbox, steadily imploding and drawing neighboring countries with it — that is, unless the international community takes more drastic action.

While the Syrian refugee crisis dominates international headlines, more than [922,000 Congolese citizens fled their homes in 2016](#) — the highest number of internally displaced resulting from conflict around the world. According to the latest report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, political insecurity has exacerbated long-simmering tensions and armed conflicts, especially in the North and South Kivu provinces in eastern DRC.

These regions have long been hotbeds of unrest due to high population density, resource-driven conflict and intermittent interference by actors from neighboring [Rwanda](#) and [Uganda](#). And now, the outbreak of violence in Kasai has only made matters worse. Between 1997 and 2016, the region accounted for only 3.6% of all violent incidents rocking the country — in the last five months of 2016 that figure grew threefold. It's no surprise that out of the 3.7 million people who have been displaced in total, [1.3 million](#) are from Kasai.

If at first sight the crises in the Kivu and Kasai provinces seem containable on their own, in reality they are actually much more severe than they appear. [Violence first erupted in 2016](#), when a local tribal leader rising up against Congolese President Joseph Kabila was killed during clashes with government troops. The uprising followed an [agreement signed between Kabila and the opposition](#), allowing the president to stay in office beyond the end of his term in December 2016, provided he called elections by the end of 2017. This, however, seems increasingly unlikely. Losing his position would mean that it's not only Kabila's vast, ill-gotten fortune that's at stake, but quite possibly his liberty too. Unsurprisingly, Kabila is engaging in [glissement](#) — delaying elections to give himself a chance to achieve a constitutional coup or at least find a compliant successor. Some even suggest that [Kabila is deliberately inflaming the situation in Kasai](#), the stronghold of the opposition movement, in order to delay elections.

## UNHOLY MIX

Faced with such an [unholy mix](#) of localized violence and political instability, what more can the international community do? To begin with, the HRC's resolution to send investigators to Kasai was an important first step. But given the terms Kabila successfully forced onto the investigation, the United Nations has to ask itself the question of how it can engage the DRC in earnest. To have any impact, the UN should crack down on the mismanagement that led to the [deaths of two experts](#) who were sent to perform an investigation in Kasai.

Furthermore, the UN would be well advised to arduously enforce its accusations that the army killed the UN experts and that Kabila is blatantly [covering it up](#). Instead, it took nearly two months before the United Nations assembled a panel to investigate what went wrong, and the Security Council has yet to order a formal investigation.

In the meantime, there are other tactics the international community could use to force a political solution in the DRC. The European Union and the United States have already launched sanctions against several senior officials in Kabila's government for "[planning, directing or committing](#)" serious human rights violations. However, there's little hope for elections as long as the opposition is ailing without credible leadership. The EU and the US need to up the pressure on DRC by finding new areas for sanctions to coerce Kabila into letting the only credible opposition politician, [Moïse Katumbi](#), back on Congolese soil.

Earlier this month, [Katumbi filed a legal complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee](#), appealing for international protection when he returns from exile to run for president. The international community would be obliged to provide that protection upon his "[imminent](#)" return. Katumbi already possesses nationwide recognition and a solid record as former governor of Katanga province. He was forced into exile after facing politically motivated allegations of [recruiting mercenaries](#), while he's already been convicted on false accusations of [real estate fraud](#). In the latest example of the government's ludicrous efforts to disqualify him, the minister of justice [claimed](#) that Katumbi had Italian nationality and could not recover his Congolese citizenship.

Faced with this onslaught, Kabila has doubled down and started dishing out millions to Washington lobbying firms hoping to get the Trump administration on his side. According to recent [reports](#), the country signed a \$5.6 million contract with Mer Security and Communication Systems, as well as a separate \$45,000/month retainer with the Livingston Group. The purpose? Organizing events with Washington insiders



and vaguely-worded “advisory services.” At the same time, Kabila is still claiming with a straight face that the DRC doesn’t have money to host elections.

The fact that Kabila has thus far been able to walk away relatively unscathed from the international response highlights the need for new avenues for targeted action. For Congo to find peace, Europe, the US and the UN need to do everything in their power to show Kabila that he won’t get away with his crimes.

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