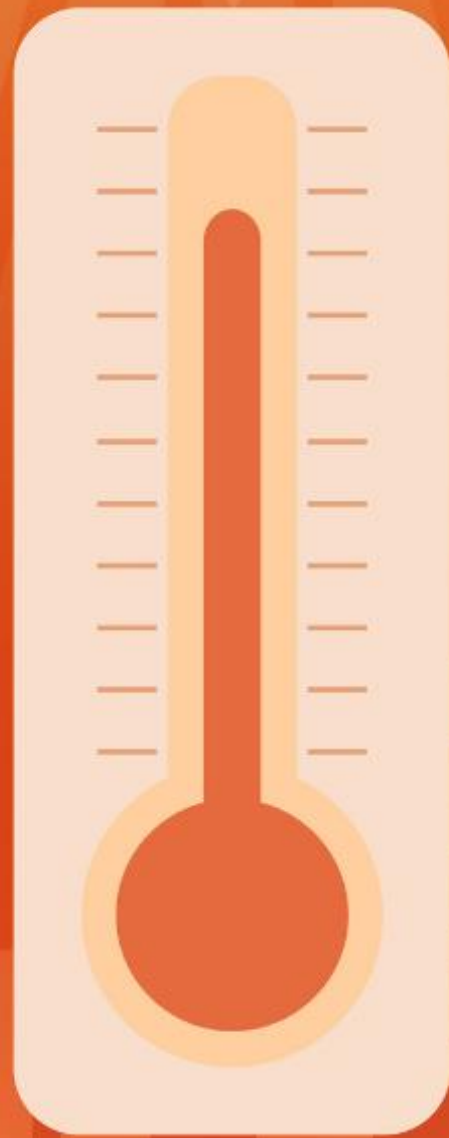


# Fair Observer

Monthly



August 2018

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

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# Fair Observer Monthly



August 2018

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# ABOUT FAIR OBSERVER

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## “Arab NATO” Still Not Ready for Prime Time

Gary Grappo

August 2, 2018

*Since when has a religious security alliance ever achieved peace and understanding in this or any other part of the world?*

The Trump administration has resurrected the notion of forming an “Arab NATO,” the principal missions of which would be to confront a resurgent Iran and to relieve the US of the region’s immense security burdens. But are circumstances now any better than those encountered in previous US attempts to form such an alliance?

This idea was first proposed in 1955 in what became known as the Baghdad Pact, which became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Having spearheaded first NATO and then SEATO (the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), the US sought to expand its efforts to blunt Soviet aggression in the Middle East and Central Asia with formation of another security alliance on Moscow’s southern flank.

Its initial members included the UK, Pakistan, Turkey and — ironically given today’s circumstances — Iran and Iraq. The US was not a formal member but did sign bilateral security agreements with each of the CENTO members. Following Gamal Abdel Nasser’s 1956 seizure of the Suez Canal, the subsequent Egypt-Syria Arab union, the 1958 Lebanese conflict and US military

intervention, along with the loss of British standing in the region, CENTO began to founder.

In 1959, Iraq withdrew, followed by Iran 20 years later. In light of these events and the absence of the security guarantees of NATO — namely Article 5 that stipulates that an attack against one is an attack against all, and especially the security umbrella the US extended to NATO — CENTO’s demise was virtually assured.

Beginning with the administration of George H.W. Bush in 1988 and running through Barak Obama’s time in office, the US sought to strengthen what it viewed as key Arab states through bilateral security agreements or understandings as opposed to some overarching, unwieldy regional alliance.

The efforts of Presidents Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Obama were, like Dwight Eisenhower’s in 1955, intended to confront and staunch an “aggressor” regional state, in this case Iran. The Gulf states, as well as Egypt and Jordan, were all recipients of American security largesse, including myriad military training, equipment and weapons sales, logistics support and intelligence cooperation.

In cases such as Egypt and Jordan, the military assistance was complimented by economic assistance. For the most part, this approach of bilateral accords worked more effectively than a comprehensive, one-alliance method.

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## MORE THAT DIVIDES THAN UNITES

Those US administrations saw many of the inherent flaws of CENTO as well as new challenges that had arisen in the region. None of the recipient states were a democracy and, therefore, shared no predominant political identity. Initial NATO members Turkey and Greece weren't democracies at NATO's founding, but gradually became democratic. Such an evolution in the Middle East does not seem likely at present.

While the US made certain commitments, it was highly unlikely that either an American president or the US Senate would ever provide for what has been the ironclad security guarantee they were willing to extend to NATO. In fact, the establishment of Israel in 1948 and America's increasing ties with the Jewish state ever since made it clear that the US could never offer such a guarantee when the prospect of Arab-Israeli conflict was so real.

Other challenges existed and continue to this day. Internal conflicts among and between the states in the region, including those beyond security, abound. NATO members, especially those of Europe, formed trade and economic ties ultimately ending up with the world's largest and most powerful economic, trade and currency bloc — and democratic, too — the European Union.

Such a progression in the Middle East would seem all but impossible today.

Even the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — formed in 1981 and perhaps the closest to what might be considered a genuine regional alliance today — has not reached anything approaching EU levels, despite repeated efforts, and now faces centrifugal forces that may be beyond its ability to control.

In addition to the GCC's threatening dissolution, more regional demons lurk. Most of the nations in the region face serious internal challenges, which are being met with varying degrees of success, but in many cases with stepped-up repression.

Egypt is the most obvious with terrorist-inspired instability in the Sinai. Major civil wars in Yemen, Syria and Libya show little prospect of peaceful resolution.

The oil-fueled economies of the Gulf are now rethinking their long-term economic plans after the precipitous decline of oil prices in 2014, enormous success of oil producers utilizing advanced hydraulic fracturing, especially the US, and the turn to conservation and increasing use of renewable forms of energy. All the signs are there for an eventual decline of fossil fuels, which is the economic mainstay of the Gulf states.

So what is there to hold these diverse nations together? No shared overarching political ideology (yet), few economic ties, no common currency, no key trading relationships, weak internal security in many of them, uncertain economic futures and rising



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sectarianism between and within many of the states. Does that sound like the makings of another NATO?

Washington's ostensible motivation for this latest alliance initiative — confronting Iran — could end up aggravating many of these factors, most especially sectarianism. Since when has a religious security alliance ever achieved peace and understanding in this or any other part of the world? In all likelihood, a Sunni alliance will only exacerbate already heated Sunni-Shia tensions.

The proposed alliance would include the Gulf states, Egypt and Jordan. The latter two face enormous economic and internal security challenges and the former seems bent on self-destruction of what has been the region's closest approximation to an alliance, the GCC.

Moreover, some GCC members who are characterized by diverse religious populations — like Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman — might balk at joining an alliance that could rile their own citizens. Iraq, not currently envisioned as a member, presents its own set of sectarian challenges to the region, mired as it is in its own sectarian and ethnic divisions between majority Shia and minority Sunni, and majority Arab and minority Kurdish populations.

How would a new and improved Middle East NATO deal with a major Arab state next door that itself presents a potential threat to it, as it's done twice in recent history?

## **MORE LESSONS FROM HISTORY**

There is also the critical ingredient that played a major role in CENTO's expiration — a US security guarantee. Quite bluntly, with America's current pledge to NATO now in some doubt under Donald Trump, is it even remotely conceivable that the US administration, and even less the US Congress, would go along with such a proposal?

The Trump administration will need to stop making comparisons to NATO. It is a one-of-a-kind alliance only possible among nations with shared values, political systems and aspirations. If Washington wishes to blunt what it sees as Iran's encroachment in the Arab world — an unquestionably valid and undeniably disconcerting development considering Tehran's ruling, theocratic dictatorship — it will have to look to some other instrument.

Finally, it is important to recall what ultimately brought down the Soviet Union.

First and most important, the USSR's principal undoing was itself and the corrupting rot it set among its former states, starting with Russia. Communism was unworkable, a fact recognized by many citizens long before the Soviet leadership did.

Second, it should be remembered that diplomatic efforts, like the Helsinki Accords or Helsinki Final Act of 1975, gave renewed hope to all people behind the Iron Curtain and helped to seal the

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ultimate victory of freedom and democracy over oppression. NATO certainly played a role throughout the Cold War in securing the democratic nations of Europe, but NATO never faced off against the Soviet Union in battle.

The Trump administration would be well advised to review recent world and American history before embarking down what seems to be a long and ultimately counterproductive path in alliance building in the world's most fraught and conflict-prone region.



**Gary Grappo** is a former US ambassador and a distinguished fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies at the Korbel School for International Studies, University of Denver. He possesses nearly 40 years of diplomatic and public policy experience in a variety of public, private and nonprofit endeavors. As a career member of the Senior Foreign Service of the US Department of State, he served as Envoy and Head of Mission of the Office of the Quartet Representative, the Honorable Mr. Tony Blair, in Jerusalem. Grappo held a number of senior positions in the US State Department, including Minister Counselor for Political Affairs at the US Embassy in Baghdad; US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman; and Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## The Solution to the Kashmir Conflict

Rohan Bedi

August 2, 2018

*To those who say that peace is never possible in Kashmir, remember that no one could predict the collapse of the Berlin Wall.*

Let's take the example of two landlords, A and B (India and Pakistan), first cousins, both very powerful, with large families who cause confusion because everyone has a different opinion. In between their lands live two farmers, C and D (Kashmir), whose land has been respectively claimed by both A and B. In fact, they have divided C and D's land with a fence. C and D are brothers who are not allowed to cross over this fence or talk to each other and are told that they have no real rights to their land; if they want to stay there, they better shut up and do as they are told.

Both A and B don't really talk to each other because of their oversized egos, and they occasionally put up an act of trying to sort out the problem without any real intention. They sometimes fire their guns at each other to keep the issue alive.

The question to be answered is: If we really want to solve the problem of these two landlords, what do we need to do?

The first solution is for A or B to kill each other and take over the land of C and D completely. This is very difficult to do because both sides have guns and

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bombs, and it is likely that both A and B, along with their families, would be completely annihilated.

The second solution is for A and B to split the territory, telling C and D that the fence running through their land is permanent and to beat them up whenever they open their mouths. But C and D won't accept this solution because they are real brothers.

The third solution is for A and B to allow C and D to live peacefully, giving up their respective rights. But this is unworkable because of the strong views of their families and their own personal egos.

The fourth and only real solution is for A and B to stop firing at each other and let C and D live in peace, meet and talk to each other, while taking some of their farm's produce in taxes. They also help these farmers so their farm yield — and so their taxes — are higher. Everyone benefits. This is the only long-term solution to the Kashmir problem.

## **BACK TO REALITY**

Let's start with acknowledging the truth that most Kashmiris want independence (azadi) from both Pakistan and India, whether openly or secretly, even if they don't admit this to the media. This is the third (and not workable) solution of a Kashmiri plebiscite under United Nations Security Council Resolution 47, which requires Pakistan to first withdraw from Kashmir. India would also never give its consent for this because it would

be politically unacceptable in the country and disastrous for any election, aside from legal issues of secession needing careful management.

At least some Kashmiris acknowledge that this is never going to happen, albeit youngsters cling on to their pipe dream of independence, with many losing their lives in this quest. There is no doubt that the youth of Kashmir hates both India and Pakistan because of the loss of their basic freedoms as human beings. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Indian-administered Kashmir.

The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs states in its annual report for 2017-18 that, since the start of militancy in 1990 and up to December 31, 2017, in India-administered Kashmir 13,976 civilians and 5,123 security personnel were killed in various incidents. Separately, it confirmed that 21,965 militants were killed from 1990 to March 31, 2017. However, human rights groups, such as Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, put the number of civilian deaths from 1990 at a much higher figure of 100,000. According to the UN, the Kashmir conflict "has robbed millions of their basic human rights."

The reality on the ground in Indian-administered Kashmir is that India has deployed one soldier for every 12 Kashmiri (Jammu and Kashmir) civilians — an estimated 700,000 security forces consisting of the army, paramilitary forces, Jammu and Kashmir police and other security agencies — to fight around 250 to 300 freedom fighters.

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Former CIA Director David Petraeus' counterinsurgency field manual says that experts recommend ratios close to 25:1,000 residents, which the US has never met in Afghanistan. Compare this to India's 59:1,000 ratio, bearing in mind that the US Army is better trained and has better weapons and equipment.

Pakistan faces similar charges of human rights abuses in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, ranging from political repression, electoral fraud, forced disappearances, torture and suppression of freedom of speech. Neither country has allowed the UN high commissioner for human rights unconditional access to their respective protectorates.

## **THE "OTHER"**

Both India and Pakistan, first cousins and nuclear states, are currently in a quagmire of the first and second solutions, fluctuating between them depending on which government is in power and, particularly in Pakistan, how much the army chief or the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) exercises power over the civilian government. The genocide of the Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh War, along with other conflicts, have institutionalized hatred toward the "other" within the government.

This is reflected in the armed forces' and intelligence services' approach, even if Indian and Pakistani civilians get along perfectly well and are the best of friends abroad. It may be stated that the

Kashmir issue is an intricate web that serves the interests of all in power and that nobody is actually interested in a permanent negotiated solution in which they compromise on their stated positions. Religious radicalization, nationalism and territorial ambitions have together created a bloodbath in Kashmir.

Pakistan is described by academics as being an "ideological state" that is "persistently revisionist," seeking to acquire territory in Kashmir that it does not need for security reasons, and also to reverse India's emergence as a global power. The army dominates its foreign and domestic policies and projects its conflict with India in civilizational terms in a face-off between "Muslim Pakistan" and a "Hindu" enemy, with itself as Pakistan's savior. It has undermined efforts by civilian governments to normalize relationships with India, including through trade and investment.

Further complications occur because of the considerable hold that Pakistan's army has over the country's economy. The army controls one-third of all heavy manufacturing in the country and up to 7% of private assets. The Pakistan armed forces run over 50 commercial entities worth over \$20 billion. Key appointments and public sector posts normally occupied by civilians are given to senior retired and serving military officers. With this size, scale and power, it needs a constant enemy to define itself in relation to. This complicates problems because India's traditional

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approach is to talk to the civilian government on the issue of Kashmir, whereas the army and the ISI — and even Islamists — run parallel governments in Pakistan. If India does not talk to all the relevant people at the same time, then it is simply not talking to the correct people, and the peace process will ultimately be derailed.

## **STRONG GOVERNMENT**

While India's nationalist ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), supported by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, a right-wing, Hindu nationalist volunteer organization), are driving the country toward "saffronization" — a militant Hinduism — partly with political objectives and partly in genuine fear of Islamic militancy, Pakistan is caught up with the problem of Islamic radicalization. Whatever the historical reasons for the spread of Islamic terrorism across Pakistan, it is certainly clear that this is a long dark path that will ultimately implode Pakistan. It is not in India's interest to have a Pakistan caught up in the throes of militancy because of the risk of it spilling across the border. There is also the risk that Pakistan's nuclear weapons (in an end-game scenario) find their way into the hands of Islamic militants with disastrous consequences.

Yet in India's history there has arguably never been as powerful a government as the RSS-backed BJP that, for all its muscular approaches both in Kashmir and in its 2019 electoral strategy, has the right intentions to make a difference

in India — whether it is on the right track or not is a different question. Currently, its tough policy in Kashmir — through a political alliance with the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and now in the form of governor's rule imposed in June — has not wielded the desired results; it is basically solution two from the above example.

India wrongly perceives the Kashmir conflict as a security issue and not a political one that needs a tripartite agreement that would include Kashmiri leaders and separatists. The BJP being in power is actually a fantastic opportunity for Pakistan to engage in a fruitful manner while bringing multiple stakeholders within its country to the table. It is virtually impossible to achieve a political solution in Kashmir with a weak coalition government at the national level. Assuming the BJP gets a second term in 2019, by 2020 it would have a majority in the upper house of parliament, the Rajya Sabha, making a deal with Pakistan easier to pass in both houses.

## **FROM 1947 TO AK47**

It is also important to look at the demographics in India to understand the overall context for a peaceful coexistence between its Hindu majority (80%) and Muslim minority (14%). In history, Islamic fundamentalists have been driven by an ideology of hatred and the desire to convert the "other." However, India's Hindus have resisted conversion through 800 years of Muslim rule. Moreover, the bulk of conversions

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to Islam in India happened in the hinterlands (and not around the capital cities of the Muslim sultans) as a result of the secular Sufi movement that Islamic fundamentalists denounce.

Kashmir was historically a land of Sufi Islam. Sufism is a good fit with Hindu-majority India because of its focus on love and humanity and the fact that almost all schools (barring the Naqshbandi School) do not require or pursue conversion to Islam actively. Mainstream Islam, on the other hand, will find itself in perpetual conflict with a nationalistic and determined Hindu population, particularly in the hinterlands. This fact needs to be accepted by the institutions in Pakistan (civilian government, army, ISI) and respected in order to have any long-term peaceful solution in Kashmir and also to manage its relations with India.

Historically, the bravest warriors in India were Sikhs who were mostly Hindus inspired by the Sikh beliefs of justice, righteous action and martyrdom for a just cause. The current wave of nationalism gripping India is arming and training Hindus in the hinterland for self-defense against Islamic fundamentalists, creating a new breed akin to the Sikh soldiers of the past. The bloodbath of radical Islamic militants facing these Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, a right-wing Hindu nationalist organization affiliated with the RSS) Dharam Yodhas (religious warriors) head on is left to the reader's imagination.

India has followed the same strategy in Kashmir since 1947 — in the words of a Kashmiri “from 1947 to the AK47” — that fits the definition of insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Pakistan is no different. Its support for cross-border terrorist attacks in India via proxies have effectively labeled the Kashmiri freedom struggle as a terrorist movement and caused them to lose Western support. People on both sides of the border suffer from fatigue with their governments' approach to Kashmir. Ordinary civilians in both countries are sick of powerful politicians and generals talking big on nationalism and painting the other as the enemy.

It's a false narrative, and people are now beginning to understand this, especially those civilians who interact with people across the border. Besides the issue of human rights violations, the amount of money wasted on the armed forces of both countries, the energy expended by its leaders on developing strategy and policy to counter the other, the misuse of the issue to whip up fear and animosity before elections — all these could be avoided if the institutions were more sincere about dealing with the issue through negotiation. They need to focus on growing their respective economies and eradicating poverty both in Kashmir and more broadly within the two countries.

It is important to underscore that India is less of a country and more a subcontinent, where diverse peoples coexist, as do multiple religions. Its

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diversity is both its strength and weakness, because there have been various separatist movements against the union at different points of time. The Khalistan movement of the Sikhs, insurgencies in India's northeast states, the far-left communist Naxalite rebellion and the Kashmir insurgency are four key examples of such movements. Whilst some movements are more under control — the Dravida Nadu movement, for instance, is defunct — than others, the Kashmir issue cannot be seen as being anything special or different from other independence struggles, each of which has its own grievances and logic.

Similarly, Pakistan also has prominent ethnic nationalist movements, including the Bengali nationalist movement (which led to the creation of Bangladesh), Sindhudesh, Pashtunistan and the Free Balochistan movement. Realistically, what the Kashmiri people need to expect as an end-goal is a solution within the status quo and a return of peace and economic prosperity to the two Kashmirs. To ask for more is a denial of both the complexities and realities of the Kashmir issue.

## **TOWARD A SOLUTION**

So let's look at the key components to construct a tripartite agreement implementing the fourth solution in which India and Pakistan stop firing each other and let Kashmir live in peace while both countries add value and levy taxes in their respective administered Kashmirs. This requires letting go of the past and moving forward in a spirit of

cooperation and mutual respect, focusing on the future rather than being held hostage by the past.

First, we need to get the engagement model right. There needs to be time-bound engagement on both sides with multiple stakeholders, including the civilian government, army, intelligence, separatist leaders and civil society. This needs to include the resettlement of Kashmiri Pandits in the valley and a cessation of Islamic fundamentalist activities and disarmament.

Over 100,000 Kashmiri Pandits fled the violence in India-administered Kashmir in the 1990s. Currently, the numbers in India are around 62,000; 40,000 of these live in Jammu, 20,000 live in Delhi and its satellite cities. Kashmir traditionally had a peaceful composite culture called Kashmiriyat, signifying the centuries-old indigenous secularism of Kashmir that demanded religious and social harmony and brotherhood. This needs to be restored to the valley. Interestingly, Muslims in the valley want the Pandits back and not in segregated townships. While ghettos are undesirable in the long term, for reasons of security it is likely that initially a mix of new townships and restoring Pandits to the areas originally inhabited by them is needed.

Second, the powers and constraints placed on the armed forces need review and modification. India needs to address the humanitarian concern around Kashmir by repealing the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in its current form,

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replacing it with a version that recognizes and protects human rights of innocent Kashmiris. This is unlikely to offer protection to known terrorists, putting a brake on enforced disappearances of innocent civilians detained for questioning.

However, it also means that new legislation is likely to bring in stronger military and criminal measures to protect the rights of the Indian security forces who have had to face stone-pelting, to bring the stone throwers in line with the law (the law in countries like the US and Israel is far more stringent). The consequences of stone-pelting should be made clear to the civilian population in advance so that if they indulge in this, it would be at their own risk and responsibility. It is also good to involve parents to control their underage children from inadvertently becoming casualties. This should be part of the civilian outreach and is absolutely essential to the long-term success of any peace agreement.

Pakistan also faces charges from Kashmiris that intelligence agencies trap poor Kashmiri youth into a cycle of terrorism and frequent human rights violations, including enforced disappearances of people who live in villages close to the Line of Control (LOC). Hence, on both sides of the LOC, the armed forces would need to have similar powers and constraints imposed by humanitarian law.

Third, India and Pakistan need to issue a joint person of Kashmiri origin card, a

25-year multiple-entry visa entitling Kashmiris (from Greater Jammu and Kashmir) to travel for up to 180 days and invest anywhere in Jammu and Kashmir, whether in Pakistan or India. Controls can be there initially for periodic reporting to the local police stations every 15 days, but this can be dropped as the plan becomes a success and peace is restored. Moreover, where a Kashmiri is buying and selling goods from another Kashmiri across the border, it can be agreed that there would be zero import duties, but other customs checks on the nature of the goods would continue as normal.

Fourth — focus on autonomy alongside integration. India's Kashmir currently enjoys a high degree of autonomy on paper through Article 370 of the Indian Constitution (except for defense, foreign affairs, finance and communications), and Pakistan-administered Kashmir also has significant autonomy, although actual practice differs in both parts. Specifically, it needs to be examined whether a higher degree of financial autonomy is required for both Kashmiris and how this would work.

It is currently unclear whether Article 370 can be legally dropped altogether or not. Irrespective of that, Indians would want at least limited property rights, such as 99-year leasehold, in India's Kashmir. Pakistan should do the same on its side. This also helps in national integration with mainstream Indians and Pakistanis. Avoiding ghettos of any sort is necessary for long-term peace, particularly in an Indian context.



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Fifth — build focused law and order arrangements. Personal and religious freedom must be protected in both parts of Kashmir. India and Pakistan need to create a joint mechanism that agrees a common minimum plan for the entire Kashmir area including, for example, enhanced monitoring (such as using artificial intelligence) of radical preachers in mosques and madrassas, including publications distributed by them.

A minimum curriculum for madrassa students, including the secular teachings of Sufi Islam on love and humanity, should be introduced, and limitations placed on sharia courts to provide non-binding arbitration/mediation judgments on civil matters related to family disputes such as inheritance or divorce cases, review of fatwas issued on religious matters to ensure that they do not infringe upon the rights of individuals guaranteed under law; training for judges is needed. Websites and chat rooms need to be monitored and/or blocked to curb radicalization, as well as clamp down on the sale and distribution of extremist DVDs. Hawala funding needs to be monitored, including the use of cryptocurrencies on the dark web. Exchange of intelligence information and joint security operations must be undertaken across both sides of the border to flush out any remnant terrorist pockets.

Sixth — eventually, demilitarization is needed. This can be considered on both sides of Kashmir based on a phased

approach once peace is firmly established, leaving sufficient armed forces to maintain law and order (including riot control) and counterterrorism on both sides.

Seventh — make investments and expect returns. India and Pakistan need to come out with a plan to invest in Kashmir's industry, agriculture, services and tourism. There needs to be a budget and a new joint development body to execute these plans through both direct infrastructure investments, building institutions (such as popularizing high-yield agriculture) and lending via existing banks. It should be the same integrated plan with each country's money being spent on their respective areas. Of course, central governments should recover these investments through taxes. The free ride for Kashmir has to stop in order to deal with the resentment that non-Kashmiris have for their tax money being used in molycoddling Kashmiris who enjoy autonomy unlike most other states.

Eighth — establish the international border. Of course, the LOC would need to become a permanent international border in the context of the above (including Kashmir territory under Chinese control) legitimizing the status quo and ideally solving India's other border disputes on its northeastern border with China in the same deal. India would need to make its peace with China on its Belt and Road initiative running through Kashmir, using it to benefit its half of Kashmir and the rest of India economically.

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The full list of disputed territories in the area includes Jammu and Kashmir (also Ladakh), administered by India and claimed by Pakistan; Azad Kashmir — Pakistan-administered Kashmir, claimed by India; Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) part of Kashmir administered by Pakistan and claimed by India; Siachen Glacier, administered by India and claimed by Pakistan; Aksai Chin administered by China and claimed by India (India's 1962 war with China was fought here); and the Shaksam Valley administered by China and claimed by India.

Ninth — create a role for the UN. In the context of an agreement between India, Pakistan and Kashmiri leaders and separatists, unconditional access needs to be given to the office of the UN high commissioner for human rights on both sides of the new international border. Both countries need to agree to act on any recommendations from the UN commissioner, wherever possible. Jammu and Kashmir has hitherto been treated as a “bilateral issue” under the Simla Agreement of 1972, albeit this only referred to the process of building a political solution.

Tenth — focus on building other bridges. Within Kashmir, engaging with the civilian population to get their buy-in for the peace agreement and to help them alleviate grievances is absolutely essential. A sustained campaign is needed, not a one-off effort, and to work it needs to be well thought through (involving social psychologists) and well managed. Beyond Kashmir, an

economically resurgent India also has a role to help eradicate poverty in South Asia. Hence, a similar 25-year multiple-entry visa needs to be issued to prominent businessmen and other prominent persons (artists, writers, musicians) in both countries to cover travel, investment, trade (part of, but not a solution in itself) and working anywhere in India and Pakistan. Automated immigration services could be set up in key cities.

Eleventh — recognize that friends don't fight. It obviously follows that Pakistan would need to give up its “bleed India with a thousand cuts” policy using proxies, and India would need to stop interfering in Baluchistan altogether. Both would need to release all Kashmiri political prisoners from their respective jails. Pakistan would need to remove extreme messages inciting religious hatred against Hindus from all school textbooks and cease all training camps for Kashmiri freedom fighters.

Twelfth — lead the transition with professional project management. Both India and Pakistan are notorious for their shoddy implementation of otherwise good ideas. What is needed is a systemic approach with a jointly appointed team consisting of professional managers, members of the civilian government, army and intelligence, with proper authorities responsible for information and transparent discussion of policies, identifying all the changes needed and rolling them out systematically. It also needs a high-level project governance

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committee consisting of the respective prime ministers, heads of the two parts of Kashmir, key central government ministers and army and intelligence chiefs meeting once a month via video conferencing to monitor progress.

The solution is as simple as we want it to be or as complex as we want it to be. It can take six months to agree or 60 years. But certainly without recognizing the existence of multiple stakeholders and having a time-bound negotiation, we can never expect to see peace in Kashmir or in the region as a whole. India's approach of closing its porous border and treating Kashmir as a security problem is a short-term stop-gap solution that does not recognize the humanitarian cost, nor does it treat Kashmir as the unfinished business of Partition.

Pakistan's approach of funding cross-border fighters is ultimately a piecemeal and failing strategy that achieves nothing long-term other than trouble for the local Kashmiri population. It remains to be seen whether both countries have the political will, wisdom and compassion needed for an actual solution. Thoughts, words and deeds have to come together for this. We cannot say one thing and do something else. To those who say that peace is never possible, please remember that no one could predict the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Ultimately, the land being fought over in Kashmir is not as important as the people and their right to peace, security

and to enjoy the fruits of development — to lead a normal life that we take for granted.

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## Climate Change: Are We There Yet?

Arek Sinanian  
August 8, 2018

*Is the current heat wave caused by climate change?*

In early 2017, Fair Observer published my article just ahead of President Donald Trump's inauguration discussing the possible course the new administration may take in response to climate change. Since then, the Trump administration's views on global

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warming haven't changed. If anything, actions and words expressed by the US government have become even more entrenched in the determination to deny the science and defy international efforts to act and mitigate the global impacts of climate change.

While leaving more to be desired, the 2015 Paris Agreement at least provided a new and better-defined direction for renewables and decarbonization of global economies.

But the Trump administration has walked away from the agreement, while the rest of the world tries desperately to make something of it and move toward some level of coordinated action. The agreement is limited in its force, and only time will tell whether it will be enough to avert the global warming that it has set its target on. But for some, including myself, it's still an agreement and, hopefully, a platform for improvement and recalibration.

In the meantime, what about global warming and climate change? How is it tracking? On a daily basis, I am asked: Is the globe getting warmer? Are we at a point of no return, and are the dire predictions inevitable now? Is the current heat wave caused by climate change? Are we going to experience more frequent severe weather events?

## **NO SIMPLE ANSWERS**

Unfortunately, while these are simple and valid questions, there are no simple answers. But what we can reasonably

do is to make observations and presents facts. Having said that, I also recognize that observations and even facts are prone to cherry-picking and confirmation bias, as I explain in my book, *A Climate for Denial*. But here goes.

First, let's look at some statistics. According to available data for the G20 countries and published by Enerdata in its May 2018 *Global Energy Trends*, 2017 continued the previous 2 to 3-year trend in global economic growth (+3.7%), stable energy demand (+2.1%) and consequently stable energy-related growth in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (+2%); economic growth in the European Union and the US was higher, at around +2.5%; CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) countries fell slightly; and energy efficiency improved marginally, while consumption of energy increased by 3% in non-OECD countries, particularly in China and India.

China continued decarbonization of its economy, shifting toward a less energy intensive economy and a decrease in the share of coal in the energy mix. But CO<sub>2</sub> emissions increased by 2.6% in non-OECD countries and by 1.3% in OECD countries (they are supposed to be decreasing). Global energy intensity (energy consumption/GDP) is decreased at a slower rate, but heading in the right direction. Economic growth in non-OECD countries will require new breakthroughs to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement (2°C target).

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According to the Global Trends in Renewable Energy Investment 2018 report, published by Bloomberg New Energy Finance and UN Environment Programme, a record 157 GW of renewable power (excluding large hydro) were commissioned in 2017, up from 143 GW in 2016 and far outstripping the 70 GW of net fossil fuel generating capacity added in the same period. The proportion of world electricity generated by wind, solar, biomass and waste to energy, geothermal, marine and small hydro rose from 11% in 2016 to 12.1% in 2017. This corresponds to around 1.8 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions avoided.

Global investment in renewable energy edged up 2% in 2017 to \$279.8 billion, taking cumulative investment since 2010 to \$2.2 trillion or to \$2.9 trillion since 2004. The leading country by far for renewable energy investment in 2017 was China, which accounted for 45% of the global total. And renewable energy investment in the US was \$40.5 billion, down 6%. This was relatively resilient in the face of policy uncertainty.

The simplistic conclusion from these figures is that the world knows what must be done and is slowly moving in the right direction by investing in renewables and improving energy intensity while maintaining economic growth.

The most encouraging trend in recent years has been the decline in the capital costs of renewable energy installation, particularly solar power. But global

decarbonization is moving far too slowly and certainly slower than it must to avoid and ensure that we stay well below the predicted 2°C increase in global temperature rise.

And in the meantime, global temperatures keep rising, with many regions already experiencing noticeable changes in the climate, including the current heat waves in the Northern Hemisphere, record-high temperatures in Australia and increased droughts and floods around the world.

Are these events entirely attributable to global warming? No, of course not. But there appear to be trends that are worrying the scientific community, and these trends are exceeding the climate change impacts as predicted by very sophisticated models.

## **WHAT'S MISSING?**

So, what's missing? What do we need to push global action further and faster? Again, these are simple questions, but the answers are extremely complex. So, let's break it down to these four aspects that need to be addressed: global agreements and initiatives, regional initiatives, national commitments and individual actions. I discuss these in more detail in my book, but here is a brief summary.

First, global agreements can only at best provide a map of where we are and where we need to be, but unless they are binding and enforceable, that's all they are — a map. But in their defense,

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that's all they can be, mainly due to the huge discrepancy and disparity in the economic, technical and social landscapes countries.

The gap is so large that the required policies and actions by each country are as diverse as the task is enormous. Basically, the developed industrialized world has to make huge steps forward to decarbonize quickly, while the developing world has to achieve its economic development using renewables and energy efficient technologies — there is no other way. The developed countries can significantly increase the assistance provided to developing countries by offering finance and technology.

Second, regional initiatives will be useful to optimize opportunities that are available in regions, states and areas with synergistic means of decarbonizing through sharing resources, aligning policies and providing assistance.

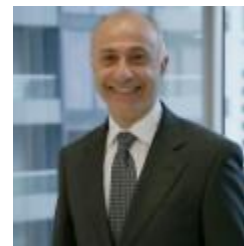
Third, national commitments are required by the Paris Agreement, but they must be enforceable and ambitious.

Finally, as individuals we can do a lot by encouraging our respective governments at all levels to commit and implement policies and regulations that achieve the required decarbonization outcomes.

Such measures include subsidies and other punitive measures, including a price on carbon that encourages

development of low carbon energy supply and technologies. Individually, we can also make purchasing decisions and also invest in energy efficient and low carbon living, including installation of solar power.

So, are we there yet? No, not even close. Unfortunately, the slower we move, the longer the distance will become.



**Arek Sinanian** is the author of “A Climate for Denial” and an international expert on climate change, greenhouse gas abatement and carbon accounting, and he has extensive experience in resource efficiency, waste minimization and sustainable development. He is a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) expert panels of the clean development mechanism (CDM) Methodology Panel and the Accreditation Panel, providing advice on new methodologies and projects for CDMs submitted for registration under the Kyoto Protocol. He was also voted onto the prestigious six-member Joint Implementation Accreditation Panel of the UNFCCC. As a qualified engineer and consultant with over 30 years of experience, Sinanian has conducted numerous national and international projects involving responses to climate change, sustainability and resource efficiency.

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# How Will Ivan Duque Navigate Colombia's Latest Political Storm?

Glenn Ojeda Vega

August 9, 2018

*The new president must choose between respecting the independence of Colombia's judiciary and standing by the innocence of his political mentor.*

The inauguration of Ivan Duque as Colombia's new president took place on August 7, on what was an extremely windy afternoon in the capital city of Bogotá. The inclement weather seemed fitting given the current political climate. Duque's swearing in ceremony marks the rise to power of the Democratic Center — until now a major opposition party. During the ceremony, the head of Colombia's senate and one of the most radical members of the Democratic Center, Ernesto Macias, delivered a fiery speech that lauded the party's founder, former President Alvaro Uribe, and accused the outgoing president, Juan Manuel Santos, of leaving behind a country overrun by criminal groups.

This polarizing episode, which featured chants of "Uribe, Uribe!" and a standing ovation to the former president, comes on the heels of a quickly unraveling political saga. On Friday, July 20, new members of congress took their seats, including, for the first time in the country's history, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the form of five senators and five representatives under the newly created

Common Alternative Revolutionary Force (also FARC).

However, the new president's troubles do not stem from his political archenemies. Rather, pressure comes from within his own party ranks, whose members are openly attacking the independence and legitimacy of the country's judicial branch.

## **BOMBSHELL ACCUSATIONS**

On July 24, Colombia's political scene was shaken by the announcement that former president and current senator, Alvaro Uribe, was being summoned by the country's supreme court to answer questions on witness tampering and bribery charges. Specifically, Uribe and fellow congressman Alvaro Hernan Prada are being accused of bribing several individuals, particularly a current inmate in Colombia's prison system, in order to extract exculpatory statements before a court. The main witness in question is Juan Guillermo Monsalve, who had previously testified alongside one of Uribe's main political enemies, Senator Ivan Cepeda, against the former president and his brother, Santiago Uribe, on charges of paramilitary activity.

For years, Uribe's inner circle has been entangled in a web of judicial proceedings, focused mostly around his brother, who is currently in the middle of trial for his alleged leadership role in a paramilitary death squad known as the Twelve Apostles. However, before July 24, Alvaro Uribe himself had never

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personally been targeted in such a serious and damning way.

The bombshell accusations against Colombia's most powerful man who has ushered his anointed protégé, Ivan Duque, to the country's presidency, even led Uribe to initially submit a resignation letter from his post in the senate (which he subsequently withdrew on August 1) — a dramatic step given that he won more votes than any other senate candidate in the country.

Simultaneously, over the last two weeks, Uribe and his lawyers have led an all-out media offensive claiming that the charges against him are part of a political hit job orchestrated by political enemies. The gravity of the accusations against Uribe put President Duque in a serious bind. The new president, who tried to strike a conciliatory tone during his inaugural speech, must choose between respecting the independence of Colombia's judiciary and standing by the innocence of his political mentor (whom Duque has defended for years). Thus, Duque's actions over the coming weeks could drive a wedge between himself and his long-time political mentor.

If Duque were to break with Uribe, the former president's allies like Ernest Macias would take this as an unforgivable political betrayal. This was already the case with President Santos, after his election under the Uribe banner in 2010. Santos, who broke with Uribe over the peace talks with the FARC rebels, was able to survive this political

breakup with his predecessor and the country's right-wing political base.

But he paid dearly for this rift during the 2016 referendum on the FARC peace deal, which was narrowly defeated thanks in large part to right-wing opposition. Moreover, as Macias' speech on August 7 demonstrated, Democratic Center loyalists will never forgive Santos and will always stand by Uribe. Walking away from Uribe would present similar challenges for Duque because he would lose the support of Uribe's Democratic Center, which was founded in 2013 by the former president as an opposition to Santos. Even if all the other parties within Duque's congressional coalition remained loyal to him, his majority would be substantially slimmer without the Democratic Center, making it much more difficult to enact his domestic agenda. Most importantly, by turning his back on Uribe, Duque would draw ire from the base that elected him under the banner of the Democratic Center.

## **A DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE**

Conversely, walking away from Uribe could also give Duque a degree of independence that he has never before enjoyed as a politician. President Duque could distance himself from his warmongering mentor and announce that he will not seek to alter the Havana peace accord that the Democratic Center had previously threatened to tear to shreds. Duque could pursue a moderate political agenda that would be welcomed by many, maybe even some



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skeptics within the political ranks of the FARC.

The new president's first step in demonstrating his independence could be to ask congress to stop limiting the power of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which was set up as a key mechanism of the FARC peace deal to process criminal charges against former combatants using a reduced sentencing scheme. Such a position would certainly face pushback from some major parties within Duque's congressional coalition, especially among Uribe allies, while it would likely be supported by a large number of center-left parties.

If President Santos was able to win over the minds and hearts of moderate Colombians by sliding toward the center and pursuing an uphill battle for peace, President Duque could also win over a centrist base by protecting the FARC peace deal at the expense of his more right-wing political base.

Over the coming weeks, Duque will have to choose a path, and his choice will send a clear signal on whether Uribe will survive this latest political storm. Meanwhile, if Uribe overcomes the judicial and political challenge before him, he will likely remain the most powerful figure in Colombia for years to come. However, if he is found guilty and has to serve any type of sentence, it would mark a new era for Colombian politics and for the country's social fabric.

Duque will need to prepare for both eventualities and faces a difficult

decision. In the meantime, the leaders of the Colombian opposition would be wise to maintain open dialogue with the incoming president, making it clear that there is an alternative to Uribe, should the new president decide to turn his back on him. Duque, much like his country, finds himself at an important crossroads and must seriously ponder a future without Alvaro Uribe.



**Glenn Ojeda Vega** was a 2017 Latin America Fellow at Young Professionals in Foreign Policy. He is also an emerging markets

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## It's Getting Difficult for Humanitarians

Hideaki Nakajima  
August 10, 2018

*More and more people flee conflicts all over the globe, but the hands of aid workers are being tied more firmly.*

It was a warm sunny day that made it hard to believe that it had happened. In a village in Afghanistan, Abdul Wali\* was shot and killed, alongside others, in a crossfire between government forces and an anti-government armed group.

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A series of conflicts that followed the invasion by the former Soviet Union led Wali and his family to decades-long exile in neighboring Pakistan. After he established a base there, supporting himself through small trade, content to send his children to school, he and his family were forced to return as part of “voluntary repatriation” due to political tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. At “home,” which he yearned for, but had no worldly attachment to, he found he had to start from scratch.

Our NGO constructed water wells in communities including his and provided people with well maintenance training that Wali participated in. He was motivated and encouraged to take the lead in maintaining the water supply for his people, building a new life for him and his family.

According to the United Nations, some 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide; of these, 40 million are internally displaced persons (IDPs), 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million are asylum seekers. The top three countries from which the biggest numbers of people are displaced are Syria (6.3 million people), Afghanistan (2.6 million) and South Sudan (2.4 million). Many people are forced to leave their home due to conflict, which is now the main driver of refugees. Just as in Afghanistan, conflicts involving non-state actors have been increasing all over the globe: There were almost none in 1989, and in 2017 there were more than 80.

In these conflicts, governments fight armed opposition groups, or what they call “terrorists.” On the other hand, humanitarian and development actors like NGOs reach people at the grassroots level to offer emergency support during and immediately after the conflict, helping them alleviate grievances that might move them to sympathize or side with the militants.

Some governments may find it hard to “distinguish” ordinary people from those supporting armed opposition groups or those actively involved with them. For this reason, governments in some cases are cautious about and want to control NGOs’ activities. Some countries I worked in were suspicious about NGOs’ links with militias and support for militants in their financial sources and supply, and this implemented scrupulous procedures for granting visas and work permits to aid organizations.

While our work is being put under tougher control, our vulnerability as being a target for armed groups is still high. The number of attacks on aid workers reached its peak in 2013 with 265 incidents and 156 fatalities, but these still occur regularly across Afghanistan.

## **NARROWING SPACE**

More and more people flee conflicts all over the globe, but the hands of aid workers are being tied more firmly. We have to not only be accountable and transparent, but also be more strategic,

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skillful and tactical in order to respond to people's dire needs.

So can we do everything to a high enough standard? Unfortunately, the prospect is not a bright one. Humanitarian needs are expected to grow in the coming years. Factors such as population growth (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa), climate change (resulting in water scarcity and reduced crop yields) as well as consequent widening inequality and protracted fragility in volatile states contribute to increased conflicts, according to The Future of Aid INGOs in 2030 report.

As for political implications on aid, the report predicts the following trends. First, governments of affected states will be more inclined to resist external intervention and will prefer more localized approaches. Second, humanitarian crises will become increasingly political — in an increasingly interconnected world, crises can have severe and widespread implications. With increased media attention, humanitarian issues are taken much more seriously today than in the past decades, and governments are under greater pressure to address them. Mishandling humanitarian crises, or even the perception of mishandling can result in administrations losing power. Where aid comes from, and to whom it goes, are increasingly political issues. Donor and recipient nations are also held accountable by their constituents for their perceived complicity in dealing with unpopular states. Third, humanitarian assistance is going to

continue being used as a geopolitical instrument, with complex emergencies and humanitarian crises gaining political centrality. Finally, rising impediments to NGO interventions are being witnessed, and a resurgence of state sovereignty is making NGO interventions more difficult.

These trends are not all bad in terms of capacity building of aid recipient governments. But it will be worrying if any political arbitration is inserted into responses based on inequality, disparity and discrimination among people and geographical areas.

### **EFFORTS IN VAIN?**

So, is responding to growing needs with limited means a useless effort? As someone who has worked in the aid sector for nearly 20 years, I believe not. Each individual life is unique and precious, and requires to be treated with dignity. No one must feel left behind — otherwise this world would be nothing but hell. Even though circumstances around those who suffer may resemble a strong stream that casts them adrift, our work should be to gently catch them with open arms as an unbroken net against the current.

One of the biggest manmade tragedies is the global displacement of people and accompanying violence due to conflict. The best way to minimize human suffering is the prevention of conflict. It is recommended to include national actors to address risks and grievances and form coalitions among national and

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international actors when dealing with conflict resolution.

In the aftermath of a conflict, the nexus of going from humanitarian assistance to recovery aid to development aid is necessary to help the survivors and returnees retrieve their livelihood and rebuild their societies.

But in reality, these scenarios are elusive in many cases due to deep-rooted corruption. In cases like Afghanistan, where there is a complexity of conflict, geopolitics are hard to tackle. Global citizens' advocacy must be raised and kept up. But it should never be a "white savior" kind. Aid workers must be sincere in seeking ideas and advice from collaboration with locals in order to plan and implement meaningful and effective assistance, to lessen the governments' suspicions and effectively partner with them.

Abdul was one of the victims in the toughest of situations. It's hard to imagine being in his place, and hard to fathom his family's loss and deep sorrow. I can never wish him anything but a simple thing — to rest in peace. Others must keep surviving and the number of people asking, "Why me?" must be diminished. We must keep walking along with them with strong compassion and solidarity in difficult times.

*\*["Abdul Wali" is a pseudonym and details have been slightly distorted to avoid identification of the people*

*concerned in order to protect their safety.]*

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**Hideaki Nakajima** is a Japanese national with nearly 20 years of experience in humanitarian and development aid,

especially in post-conflict countries and territories. He has worked in 10 countries with nongovernmental organizations and as a consultant in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, including Sri Lanka, Aceh, Indonesia, Liberia and South Sudan. He specializes in project/program management, with ample experience and expertise in health.

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## **Why the Heat Wave Should Worry Us**

S. Suresh

August 10, 2018

*It is time to acknowledge that climate change is real and to start healing our planet.*

The entire Northern Hemisphere has been in the grips of an unprecedented heat wave this year. Asia, Europe, Africa and North America saw several countries reeling under record-breaking temperatures. In 1977, Athens recorded the highest ever temperature in continental Europe at 48°C. That record may very well be broken by the

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extraordinary heat wave currently sweeping the Iberian Peninsula.

In Japan, the deadly heat wave killed 96 people in July alone — a number that is likely to increase 170% by 2080. Kumagaya, near Tokyo, has seen temperatures rise above 41°C (106°F) for the first time in the country's history, with more than 22,000 people, predominantly elderly, seeking medical attention across Japan. Heat stroke from sustained high temperatures has claimed the lives of 29 people in South Korea, where temperatures reached the highest point in 111 years in the capital Seoul.

In Quebec province alone, more than 34 people have lost their lives on account of the heat wave, with an estimated 70 deaths attributed to the scorching temperature and high humidity across Canada. The United States celebrated its Independence Day with blistering temperatures across the Northeast and 80 million people in 14 states under a heat advisory warning. The Death Valley in the Mojave Desert in California holds the record for the highest ever temperature measured on planet Earth at 56.7°C (134°F). While that record set in 1913 still holds, Death Valley has seen the hottest July to date, with the monthly average temperatures above 42°C (107°F), with the mercury topping 52.7°C (127°F) four days in a row.

## **WHAT IS A HEAT WAVE?**

This is not the first heat wave the world has seen. However, what ought to be

concerning everyone is the increased frequency and deadliness of these occurrences. Europe saw its worst heat wave in 500 years in 2003, which claimed the lives of more than 70,000 people. In just 15 years, Europe is reeling from another heat wave with record-setting temperatures. Even Russia, known for its frigid temperatures, saw one of a kind heat wave in 2010 that covered an exceptionally large area of 400,000 square miles.

In Asia, barely 13 years after over 1,000 people died from extreme heat in 2002, India saw another killer heat wave in 2015. Since the US Environmental Protection Agency started recording heat waves, America has seen several instances, with the deadliest ones occurring in 1896, 1934, 1936, 1954, 1980, 1988, 1995, 2006, 2012, 2017 and 2018.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) defines a heat wave as a “marked unusual hot weather (Max, Min and daily average) over a region persisting at least two consecutive days during the hot period of the year based on local climatological conditions, with thermal conditions recorded above given thresholds.”

There are currently 34 countries that have a formal definition for a heat wave. Interestingly, the official definition of what constitutes a heat wave varies from country to country, though not differing in principle from WMO's definition. Exceeding 25°C would be

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considered a heat wave in countries that usually enjoy mild weather, whereas the threshold is much higher in tropical countries. This is why WMO's definition is broad allowing individual countries adopt it to their local climatological conditions.

Denmark defines a heat wave as a period of three consecutive days where the average maximum temperature across 50% of the country exceeds 28°C (82.4°F). Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands share the definition of a heat wave as five consecutive days where the temperature exceeds 25°C (77°F), including three where the temperature tops 30°C (86°F). India, which consistently sees heat waves year after year, defines it as one when the temperature exceeds 40°C (104°F) in the plains and 30°C (86°F) in the mountainous regions. When the temperature reaches 46°C (114.8 °F), the Indian Meteorological Department classifies the event as an extreme heat wave.

Scientific studies have found that man-made climate change has raised the probability of natural disasters like hurricanes, heat waves and wildfires. Analyzing the data from seven stations in Europe, researchers have determined that the probability of heat waves occurring across the continent as a consequence of human activity has increased twofold.

“Climate change is making itself felt in terms of day-to-day weather in the United States,” says Gerald Meehl, a

senior scientist at National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), adding that “the ways these records are being broken show how our climate is already shifting.” NCAR's research and analysis shows that since the turn of the century, the number of record hot days have outpaced record cold days by two to one.

If humankind does not curb greenhouse gas emissions, NCAR's model predicts 20 record hot days for each record cold day by the middle of this century.

Human activity since mid-20th century has resulted in unprecedented amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Indisputable evidence of climate change can be seen in the steady increase of sea levels, warming oceans, shrinking ice sheets, extreme hurricanes and other weather events including a global rise in temperature. A group of 1,300 independent scientific experts has concluded that human activity in the last five decades has warmed our planet, with devastating effects. The consensus from 18 reputed scientific associations is unambiguous: Our planet is warming as a direct consequence of human activity.

## **IT'S TIME TO HEAL OUR PLANET**

In December 2015, 195 nations came together in Paris to sign an accord to combat climate change. They agreed to keep the temperature rise this century well below 2°C from pre-industrial levels in an effort to save humanity from the devastating effects of global warming. The historic accord signed by almost all

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the nations of the world is a crucial first step in arresting the harsh effects of climate change, including the likes of the current heat wave.

Sadly, defying scientific consensus, an incompetent and short-sighted Trump administration pulled America out of the Paris Climate Agreement — an act this author views as a crime against humanity. However, this was before the heat wave of 2018 affected the entire Northern Hemisphere, including America. In a survey conducted by University of Michigan and Muhlenberg College in May 2018, 73% of Americans accept the evidence of global warming, with 60% of them also accepting that human activity plays a part.

The world needs America's full participation in the fight against climate change. As the largest consumer of world's resources and second largest greenhouse gas emitter, America has a responsibility to humankind to do more than its fair share in combatting climate change.

The earth cannot survive sustained increase in temperatures of more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Studies show that we are at serious risk of reaching a threshold that would cause an irreversible chain reaction resulting in our planet becoming a hothouse if we do not stick to the decisions outlined in Paris.

For all the climate change skeptics out there, one can only hope that the 2018

heat wave becomes a tipping point and puts an end to their denial.

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

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## Welcome to the New World of Erdogan and Trump

Nathaniel Handy  
August 14, 2018

*Recent ruptures in US-Turkish relations are part of a new populist presidential politics, not a major geopolitical realignment.*

“We are for every kind of cooperation to eat the grapes. But we will never give the opportunity to those whose aim is to beat the grape grower.” So said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in response to the latest spat with the US, in his paternal role as provider of low hanging fruit to the people of the world.

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The president's language is key to understanding what is at work here. While the world's media pores over yet another crisis in Turkey-US relations and agonizes once more about what it will mean for the future of such ties, Erdogan is talking about grape growers in relation to a little known American pastor.

An American pastor? You can almost hear the response echoing around the world. Does one American pastor really matter enough to risk a key strategic relationship in the world's most volatile region? Well of course the pastor matters, in so much as he is representative — for both presidents — of how the little man matters.

## **MORE TIT-FOR-TAT**

The Pastor Andrew Brunson stand-off is the latest in a series of apparently minor issues that Erdogan and Donald Trump have allowed to blow up into big issues. In January, I wrote in Fair Observer about reciprocal travel bans, a summoned chargé d'affaires and the arrest of other individuals.

It all looks very ominous, not least with the Turkish lira diving to new lows against the dollar in response to US sanctions against Turkish officials and the doubling of tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum.

Many analysts are raising the dark specter of Erdogan abandoning the US and, in his nationalist zeal, embracing other strongmen in Asia. It is all part of

the recurring liberal Western fear of a pivot to the East. While Erdogan is evidently no deeply committed admirer of the US, such analysis doesn't take enough account of the broader picture in which Turkey operates.

What we have here is posturing — and not merely from the Turkish side. This is not President Erdogan engaging Barack Obama in battle, but President Trump. The world has shifted. What both leaders are engaged in is a new kind of populist presidential politics, one that Vladimir Putin and others would recognize. It is a politics that enjoys and often aims to rile and whip up the media into frenzies of speculation.

Remember what these presidents think of the free (i.e. critical) press. Not much. Such media concern over the geopolitics of these spats serves to confirm everything they tell their supporters. That the media is waiting for Armageddon, for the big crash, for the implosion. They are willing it. But all the while, this new presidential politics is also reminding its supporters that "we" (the presidents) are the ones with the power. They have the people, and therefore the real power.

This modus operandi is all about being consciously deaf to the mainstream media. If we want to stand tough for things that matter to our supporters — the little people — we'll stand tough. If we want to shake hands later and make a deal, we'll do so. We don't need to be consistent. For whose sake? The mainstream media's?



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This feeds into a larger narrative. The mainstream media and the broader “self-serving elites” of global institutions, including the United Nations, NATO, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, want consistency. But we are real men. Real leaders. We don’t need to be consistent for anyone. We do things our own way. Our people respect that. They trust us.

## **BUSINESS AS USUAL**

Viewed from the perspective of this new populist presidential politics, the real threat becomes one of miscalculation. It involves the fear that, in their pursuit of point scoring at home, these leaders will overstep the mark abroad. But this fear also misses a wider reality. For all their grandstanding, these are lone leaders who cannot rule without their wider entourage and apparatus of government.

While both sides have their tub-thumpers who will continue to drum out the beat of their respective president’s themes, being tough on the outside and inside and making threats to the ordinary people, both sides also have a host of figures doing the less glamorous task of keeping the diplomatic show on the road. The noises from these people point to a far more measured and humdrum outcome.

Both Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and new Finance Minister Berat Albayrak (son-in-law of the president) have downplayed the spat as simply the usual arguments you get in

any “family.” US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a far more pragmatic figure than Trump, has been in “constructive” talks with Cavusoglu that both sides want to work.

Expect more grandstanding over seemingly minor issues in the months ahead. For both sides — and this is increasingly the tenor of global politics more broadly — such grandstanding for a domestic audience is viewed as more valuable than the traditional cordial diplomacy between friends and allies that we have been used to throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Welcome to the multipolar world.



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## Scandal, Exposure and Sex: Madonna Turns 60

Ellis Cashmore

August 15, 2018

*Madonna never stopped provoking, surprising, aggravating and upsetting as many people as she could and in full view of as many people as possible.*

One way to decide whether someone hastens a cultural shift rather than just provides great art and entertainment is to try to recall what life was like before them.

Can you remember a world in which celebrities kept their private lives to themselves and audiences respected their privacy? Or stars avoided scandals that could derail their careers? And sex? Can you recollect any entertainer ever refusing to write, talk or sing about it, for fear of upsetting not just audiences, but sponsors and TV companies?

On August 16, Madonna (néé Madonna Louise Ciccone) will reach her 60th year. For 35 of them, she has been challenging us to ignore her. We've never been able to.

She's asked for and received the attention of the world and taken the opportunity to elbow, nudge and shove audiences into places they found uncomfortable — for a while. Madonna stands with Germaine Greer, Rosa Parks, Oprah Winfrey, Gloria Steinem, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Mother Theresa, the Pankhursts and even the Kardashians as one of the most

influential women of the past 100 years because we can feel the effect of the changes she triggered in our everyday life.

Around the time of the release of her album *Like a Prayer* in 1989, Madonna, then 31, seems to have had one of those “Eureka!” moments. “I have seen the future,” she might have whispered to herself. “Audiences will demand more from stars and receive more; and those who are prepared to give them what they want — or even more — will prevail.”

The world didn't so much demand details of Madonna's private life — it was inescapably surrounded by a life, which might have been “private” in one sense, but was opened up for full public inspection. Before Madonna, stars had tried to section off parts of their lives, presenting only a Hollywoodized persona to the public. After, they either gave up trying, or gave up trying to be a star.

### ORGANIZING THEMES

The organizing themes of Madonna's career were finely judged scandal, continuous media exposure, a cycle of dramatic makeovers and sex. Its momentum was such that it carried her through over three decades as a leading show business performer. She sold more records than any other female in history (300 million and counting, and she's currently working on her 14th studio album) and amassed personal wealth of \$560 million, according to

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Forbes. Even in her fifties, she sold out world tours and still managed to stir controversy. Madonna earned paeans, prizes and plaudits and drew censure, condemnation and jeers.

Her first album, *Madonna*, released in 1983, sprung three successful singles, all of them heavily featured on MTV, then in its ascendancy. The music channel could legitimately be credited with making many artists (Duran Duran included) and stymieing the progress of others.

Numerous African-American artists had their videos turned down by MTV, and it took pressure from CBS to ensure a place for Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" on the playlist in 1983. Madonna, however, was perfectly congruent with MTV's preferred profile: white, twenty-something, tons of junk jewelry and a wardrobe that might have been put together from a flea market. Anyone could look like Madonna; millions actually did.

Then the "Material Girl" assumed a new image: a bottle-blond Marilyn Monroe manqué dripping with diamonds for her "Like a Virgin" video, Madonna kept changing, keeping her fans guessing as to what she looked like. Two movies, an appearance in a Broadway play, a tempestuous marriage to Sean Penn, publication of nude photo spreads (against her wishes; the shots were taken in the late 1970s) and multi-million record sales turned Madonna into a major performer. She could have opted to stick with the formula: more albums,

more chameleon-like changes of image and occasional ventures into drama, in which case she would have been remembered in the same way as her contemporaries like Gloria Estefan or Pat Benatar.

In the golden age of Hollywood, adultery, under-age sex, abortion, alcoholism, venereal disease and suicide were rife. But journalists in the main refrained from gossiping about the hedonistic excesses of the stars — controversy and scandal were unwelcome detours on the professional highway. Often they were roads to oblivion.

The media respected this and limited their criticisms to on-screen performances. In 1989, Madonna deviated with what might have been suicidal recklessness. She all but dared the media not to get involved as she jumped repeatedly from the frying pan into the fire, then back into the frying pan. When she heard people cry "excessive," "tasteless" "offensive" and "vulgar," she knew she was onto something.

## **ORDINARY GIRL**

But, eventually, there were signs of, for want of a better word, ordinariness. Madonna's appearance in a 2003 TV commercial for Gap may not have surprised many, but those who had followed her career over the long term would have divined a symbolic meaning. This was a fashionista of the first order swapping her Gaultier bras and Versace

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gowns for sensible T-shirts and khakis from one of the world's most generic brands.

Over the next decade, Madonna morphed from *grande amoureuse* to *grande dame*. She wrote and directed her own movie *W.E.* in 2011 (presumably emboldened by winning a Golden Globe award for *Evita* in 1996). She converted to the Judaic sect known as the Kabbala (changing her name to Esther in the process), wrote children's books, had children, married British film director Guy Ritchie and moved to London. "I have earned a reputation for being many things," Madonna reflected in 2008 in an interview for *Dazed & Confused*. "For being a provocateur, for never taking no for an answer, for endlessly reinventing myself, for being a cult member, a kidnapper, for being ambitious, outrageous, irreverent, and for never settling for second best."

She luxuriated in the notoriety, making her decision to sue the British newspaper *Mail on Sunday* in 2009 seem paradoxical. Madonna claimed successfully that the publication had breached her privacy and copyright by publishing photos of her 2000 wedding to Ritchie. Breaching Madonna's privacy must have been close to a contradiction in terms. She later divorced him, agreeing to a £76-million (\$93m) settlement, of which Ritchie took just £10 million.

In 2012, Madonna, then 53, but still *la maîtresse des surprises*, exposed her breast during a concert in Istanbul, with

55,000 watching. It came nine years after she had kissed Britney Spears in full view of a concert audience. Her capacity to upstage practically anyone seemed undiminished. When interviewed by Cynthia McFadden, of ABC News, she proudly stated: "I've spent my life pushing the envelope. I'm not gonna stop just because I've got children." But the transition was complete and the breast flash was a tiny reminder of Madonna's once mighty potential to shock rather than a return to old values.

It doesn't lessen the overall impact she made on culture. Commemorating two decades of her influence, Harper's *Bazaar* in September 2003 held that "the ultimate pop-culture icon('s) ... influence is endless." Even allowing for exaggeration, the point is that Madonna changed "how the game works," as Gwen Stefani put it to Nick Duerdan of *The Independent* — the principles that bind the actions of parties involved either cooperatively or competitively with the media. Madonna never stopped provoking, surprising, aggravating and upsetting as many people as she could and in full view of as many people as possible.

The *quid pro quo* was simple: Madonna disclosed her body, her sexuality, her fantasies more than any other entertainer in history and, in return, got more saturation media coverage than anyone, present or past (Kim Kardashian is catching up, mind). She was operating in an age of global media when entertainment was becoming

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television's hard currency and when having a video vetoed by the likes of MTV made international news.

## **COMPELLINGLY NEWSWORTHY**

Compellingly newsworthy in everything she did or said, Madonna was ubiquitous for at least the first half of the 1990s. Thereafter, her presence might have faded, but her influence remained. After her, no one could aspire to becoming a celebrity if they wanted anything resembling a private life. And scandal, far from being the death knell of yore, became a valuable resource. Just ask Paris Hilton or Kim Kardashian about sex tapes.

Writing for *Rolling Stone* in 2004, Britney Spears offered the view that "Madonna was the first female pop star to take control of every aspect of her career and to take responsibility for creating her image, no matter how much flak she might get."

It's a common observation, though one that misses the more important point that, in taking control of her own career, she needed the assistance of a media that had, by the end of the 1980s, become potent makers and breakers of careers. Hers could have finished prematurely in a comic shambles if her 1986 tale of a teen pregnancy "Papa Don't Preach" had been dismissed as a contrived attempt to inflame conservative moralists and prompt further outrage. Instead it was hailed by the media as a daring and inventive

attempt to break away from the insubstantialities of pop music.

She did risk the flak, as Spears points out, but as with all Madonna's gambles, it was a carefully calculated one. Emboldened by her success, she deepened her liaisons with the media until confident she had won them over. She provided great copy; they provided great coverage. The rules changed.

From the vantage point of the 21st century, Madonna is a middle-aged diva who reigned long and made good music. Some might suspect that I exaggerate the extent of her influence. I'm not arguing that she singlehandedly introduced celebrity culture. But she, more than anyone else, effected a change in style and the manner in which stars engaged with the media. And, in this sense, she both epitomized and helped usher in an age in which the epithets "shocking," "disgusting" or "filthy" didn't presage the end of a career. On the contrary, when treated appropriately by the media, they occasion the popping of champagne corks in celebration.

Our culture today is characterized by a prying, ravenous media hungry for every morsel, a digital network with little else to fill its channels apart from entertainment and a class of figures of world renown who have been changed as if by sorcery into what we now call icons. Audiences are not content to watch: They insist on engaging with their favored celebs — today through social media. Whether you blame or

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credit her, Madonna has been instrumental in landscaping this.

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## **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Paved the Way for Narendra Modi**

Atul Singh & Manu Sharma  
August 20, 2018

*The late Indian prime minister's full term gave the BJP legitimacy, and his surprise loss at the 2004 elections created conditions for Narendra Modi to rise.*

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a three-term prime minister of India, died on August 16. Even Pranab Mukherjee, his long-term political foe, paid tribute to Vajpayee, saying "India had lost a great son and an era had come to an end."

Vajpayee's death has triggered an outpouring of emotion. An avalanche of obituaries has appeared that recount his charm, wit, oratory, warmth and statesmanship. Sadly, most commentary has been hagiographical.

Most people have forgotten the reason Vajpayee is most significant for independent India. Like the African National Congress, the Indian National Congress assumed power on August 15, 1947. It retained power for decades even when it declined into a dynastic fiefdom of the family of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister.

Eventually, the Congress party lost power after Indira Gandhi locked up her opponents, muzzled the press and damaged democracy. When that happened in 1977, a former Congress member took the helm. Before Vajpayee first took charge in 1996, the big boss of every single non-Congress government was a former party member.

In contrast, Vajpayee began his career in the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the predecessor of the current ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). When Vajpayee kicked off his career in the early 1950s, Nehru was at his best. These were times when the first Indian prime minister was dazzling both the masses at home and audiences abroad.

Like Nehru, Vajpayee was a Brahmin, a Hindu caste. Unlike Nehru, Vajpayee was a poor Hindi-speaking Brahmin, not a rich English-spouting one with cadences polished at Harrow. While Nehru's writings and speeches are almost exclusively in English, Vajpayee was the finest Hindi orator in Indian politics for decades who managed to make his name as a fine poet as well.

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Like Nehru, Vajpayee's time in office was historic. He conducted nuclear tests, formally declaring India as a nuclear power. He rolled back the inefficient and asphyxiating Indian state, boosting economic growth to over 8%. He invested in infrastructure, launching the Golden Quadrilateral highway network project to connect major industrial, agricultural and cultural centers of India. To his credit, Vajpayee also launched a national literacy mission to reduce India's infamous illiteracy.

Not all went hunky dory for this legendary orator though. He suffered the ignominy of releasing hostages to the Taliban when a plane was hijacked from India and taken to Kandahar in Afghanistan. The border conflict over Kargil cost many Indian lives as Vajpayee's government recovered territory taken over by Pakistan.

Yet Vajpayee lasted a full term in office, becoming the first non-Congress prime minister to do so. Even the historic 1977 government had lasted merely three years before collapsing due to ideological differences and petty personal squabbles. Most people regarded Vajpayee as a decent prime minister with a strong cabinet, and many were surprised when his BJP government lost power in the 2004 election.

It turned out that the key reason Vajpayee lost was because voter participation by the middle classes, the BJP's historic base, fell significantly. It is

a fear that haunts the BJP even today as it prepares for the 2019 election.

## **VAJPAYEE'S LOSS LED TO RISE OF MODI**

When the Congress party returned to power in 2004, it was nominally led by Manmohan Singh. The real power behind the throne was wielded by Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi who was now the matriarch of the Nehru family. Her loyalists were ferociously opposed to the policies of the Vajpayee government. Arjun Singh, a key vassal of the Nehru family, went so far as to argue for a "detoxification" of the administration.

Even though the Congress-led government enjoyed the fruits of Vajpayee's policies in the form of strong economic growth, it proceeded to dismantle the orator's legacy swiftly and surgically.

The Nehru loyalists increased government expenditure through populist handouts, gave fresh powers to India's famously corrupt bureaucrats, and created a bad-loan crisis by directing banks to lend money to cronies. Corruption reached astronomical levels and a famous headline in India Today, "nine years, nine scams," deservedly stuck.

Not content with dismantling Vajpayee's legacy, the Congress-led government treated him like an untouchable. He was deemed to be a "mukhauta," the Hindi

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word of mask for hardline elements of his party.

To be fair, Nehru loyalists confined Narasimha Rao, a Congress prime minister who liberalized the economy in 1991, into the dustbin of history too. Their overriding goal was to create a mythology around the Nehru family and prepare the path for Rahul Gandhi to take over the family throne.

This triggered a reaction within the BJP. After all, Vajpayee has been a member of parliament for decades. He was friends with many of the denizens of Lutyens' Delhi, as the ruling elite of India who live in palatial colonial buildings are popularly known.

In light of the strength of his relationships, hardliners in the BJP accused Vajpayee of pandering to the Lutyens' cabal.

Yet the BJP stalwart's friendship with the Lutyens' cabal proved fickle and, once he lost power, Vajpayee was treated as a mere Hindi-speaking upstart. Lutyens' Delhi painted the poet as a feckless tool of the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organization of the BJP. The RSS decided it was time for a true blue ideologue's ascension who was resolutely opposed to the Lutyens cabal, paving the path for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It is important to remember that Modi was a pariah, nationally and internationally, after the Gujarat riots of

2002. If Vajpayee had not been in power then, Modi would have most certainly have been dismissed from office that year.

For decades, the Congress had stymied the growth of opposition parties in India's numerous states by dismissing their governments, using Article 356 of the Constitution of India. A Congress-led government would have most certainly relieved Modi of his duties in 2002. Having a BJP government in Delhi proved to be Modi's life insurance.

Yet the loss of the BJP in the national elections of 2004 worked in Modi's favor. Even as his party lost control of the country, the Gujarat strongman retained control of his state. There was also an interpersonal equation that worked in his favor.

Reportedly, Vajpayee was not terribly fond of Modi. Therefore, many analysts surmise that Modi would not have gone very far in a Vajpayee-led BJP. With the poet statesman out of the way, Modi had more room to grow.

More importantly, Vajpayee's loss led the RSS to conclude that centrist politics did not pay and the BJP had to move further to the right. Also, out went the age of amiable statesmanship, in came the era of street-smart guile.

It was now time to replace a Brahmin poet with a subaltern trader, a consensus builder with a populist strongman and a bon vivant with a stern



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puritan. It was time for Vajpayee's political demise and the rise of Modi.

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## In Egypt, This Woman Said No to Sexual Harassment

Nahed Eltantawy  
August 30, 2018

*Having faced unwanted advances on the streets of Cairo, Egyptians should hail Menna Gubran for fighting sexual harassment.*

Menna Gubran is an Egyptian woman who was waiting for a bus in a suburban Cairo street, when she noticed a man stalking her with his car. He drove around her bus stop several times, making her nervous, to the extent that she entered a nearby supermarket to escape. When Gubran came out of the store, she saw that the man, Mahmoud Soliman, had parked his car and was walking toward her.

Gubran is among the 99.3% of Egyptian women and girls who have been subjected to harassment, according to a 2013 UN Women report. Scared from the strange man approaching her, Gubran started filming Soliman on her phone. He told Gubran that he didn't want her to be standing alone in a public street and invited her to join him for a coffee. Gubran declined. When Soliman realized he was being filmed, he apologized and walked away.

The woman later posted the video online, not expecting that, overnight, it would become one of the most widely watched and shared videos in Egypt, and that it would result in a wave of social media backlash against her.

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## REACTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

While many social media users supported Gubran, and even applauded her for exposing Soliman, others, including women, brutally attacked her. Some users questioned if Soliman's actions were even considered sexual harassment, since there was nothing "sexual" in their encounter.

The United Nations identifies a number of actions that fall under sexual harassment, including Soliman's. The UN list includes: unwanted following, staring at a person, pressure for dates, unwanted remarks and unwanted questions. Soliman stalked Gubran when he circled around her with his car multiple times, and his entire conversation with her was clearly unwanted.

Yet many social media users did not see it that way. Numerous men came to Soliman's defense. Posts ranged from those saying that Gubran overreacted and that Soliman was very polite, to saying it was OK for a guy to walk up to a girl he did not know and ask her out.

Male reactions also included humiliating posts that invaded Gubran's privacy, sharing photos from her Facebook page. One user posted a photo of Gubran in a short evening dress and wrote, "Thank God I didn't see her, or I would have told her, 'let me invite you for one on the bed.'" In another extremely offensive post, one man said, "Treat them [women] like nothing more than a sex object... look down upon

them as long as they are asking for this... making them aware that they are nothing more than a butt, a vagina and breasts."

Some women's reactions were also negative. One Twitter user said, "On what basis is this called sexual harassment? From the video I watched, he was simply asking her to have coffee with him." Another user went further, saying, "She's a person with free time on her hand, she filmed a guy asking her for coffee and another guy asking her for an address; they were teasing, but that's normal. Any girl is used to that. But I did not see any harassment; she just wants to become famous, and she is indeed famous now, but with a horrible reputation with her lingerie-like clothes!"

Now, I can understand the reactions of men to Gubran's video, given that what she poses a threat to men. These are privileged men, whom, for years, have gotten away with harassing women and are now realizing that this will no longer be the case. But what is the excuse of women who are defending Soliman and turning the victim in this case into the culprit? It baffles me how these women did not for a second stop to think how scary and creepy this encounter was for Gubran and have instead chosen to shame and accuse her of seeking attention.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EGYPT

For decades, Egyptian women have experienced various forms of sexual

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harassment on Egyptian streets, everything from catcalling, to stalking, to groping and worse. Women endured these harassments silently, and even with shame. Yet in recent years — and thanks to various initiatives, including Harass Map and I Saw Harassment, among others — women are slowly finding the courage to stand up to harassers. We are finally beginning to see women expose these men and show them that their actions will not be tolerated.

Thanks to such women, and many male activists, sexual harassment went from a taboo topic that was never vocalized to a public issue that is widely debated. And so, with this gradual progress, it is especially problematic when it is women who are blaming other women. Women who accept harassment and view it as normal behavior that all women and girls have to put up with. Women who blame the victim and accuse her of encouraging a man's advances by wearing revealing clothes.

It is remarks by such women that led Somali activist Hiba Shookari to post, "Some of us women were taught by their mothers to take off their shoes and throw it at the harasser, and some of us were taught to walk away hurriedly to escape, but girls around the world, irrelevant of their looks, religion or clothes, were taught the silence mechanism, and in our Eastern [culture] we went as far as to view reporting a harasser as a crime of which the girl has to bear the consequences." But it is not

a crime, and society should be hailing Gubran and other women like her who bravely stand up to these harassers, who are the real criminals.

As a society, we need to spread awareness on what sexual harassment entails. We need men and women to understand that unwanted advances are unwelcome, and that a woman's clothes are never a justification for a man's sick behavior.

Women, especially, need to understand that it is on us to fight this battle. It is women who endure the catcalling, the stalking, the dirty looks and the groping on a daily basis. It is women who have to walk hurriedly on the street, looking down or straight ahead, so as not to invite any unwanted advances. And so, it should be women who encourage and support other women in the battle to end this epidemic.

## **ANOTHER MENNA GUBRAN**

Thankfully, for every woman who attacked Gubran, there were numerous others who came to her defense. Gubran's supporters, including many men, even created the Arabic hashtag #ISupportMennaGubran, which was widely circulated on Facebook and Twitter. Using this hashtag, supporters expressed their reasons for backing Gubran. Female supporters posted messages such as, "Pregnancy, periods, breast cancer, being walked on, rape, sexual harassment, abuse... females go through a lot... WE ARE STRONG," and "ISupportMennaGubran

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because when women support other women... magical things happen.”

There is no doubt that Gubran’s actions have impacted her harasser, Soliman, and possibly other men, who will now think twice before approaching women in the street. With any luck, Gubran’s actions will also impact the thousands of other Egyptian women who face daily harassment, including women who are less privileged, with no means of voicing their anger or exposing their harassers.

As a mother of a little girl, I want my daughter to grow up strong. I want her to have courage and strength in the face of such harassers. I want her to be another Menna Gubran.



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