

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



THE RETREAT OF WESTERN LIBERALISM

FALL ISSUE 2018

Letter from the Editor-in-chiefs

Thank you for taking the time to read Global Conversation's Fall Issue, 2018, which takes on the timely theme of the Retreat of Western Liberalism. As the Editors-in-Chief for Global Conversations for 2018-2019, we are excited to launch our first issue and give a voice to the diverse set of perspectives of this year's passionate student journalists from the Masters of Global Affairs from the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto.

As a web-based, student publication, Global Conversations has grown over the years to provide a variety of formats, including our tri-annual issues, Newswatch outlet, and our expanding podcast initiative. In addition to providing critical analysis on important issues around the globe, Global Conversations supports its team's development in journalistic writing, podcasting, researching, and editing.

We are very proud of the time and effort that our dedicated team has put into this issue. Our team of Feature Contributors, Associate Editors, the Director of Written Content, Director of Social Media, and Director of Digital Design, have worked tirelessly to bring you this year's fall issue. We would also like to give a special thanks to Gilda Monreal for her creative contribution in designing the cover for this issue.

Lastly, we would like extend our gratitude to the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy for supporting Global Conversations in producing globally-focused student journalism.

*Editor-in-chiefs,
Tim Robinson & Alexandre Parrott-Mautner*

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COVER DESIGN BY

Gilda Monreal

The cover of this issue is intended to present symbols pertaining to the theme of The Retreat of Western Liberalism. Art and creative expression have always been inextricably linked to liberal thought and freedom of expression. It is suiting then that art should continue to be a lens through which we engage with current challenges to Western Liberalism. This issue's cover design features several symbols from antiquity, meant to harken back to the histories and myths that lie at the root of Western thought. U.S. President Donald Trump is projected onto the image of the Roman emperor Nero, who led Rome into one of its darkest periods and is said to have 'fiddled away while Rome burned' during the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD. Above, the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, is bracing herself against some imminent danger; this is in reference to growing hate, as well as to the three articles about women in this issue. Justitia, or Lady Justice, can also be seen trying to balance the scales, while simultaneously balancing on a precarious edge. The politicization of the judiciaries arguably represents one of the main threats to Western liberalism today. Lastly, the Acropolis crumbling is a reference to ancient Athens, as the birthplace of democracy and Western values. Together, these images are intended to provoke the reader to consider both past and the present and reflect on the period of momentous change we are all living through.

Introduction

Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, political scientist Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that the seminal event represented the “End of History”. With the collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the triumph of liberalism, capitalism, and democracy appeared complete. A new era of unipolarity was dawning, one where the United States and its allies could champion the extension of these values and systems to the rest of the world.

However, as recent experience has made abundantly clear, history is far from over. The West has been shaken by a series of crises during the 2000s and 2010s, ranging from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to the 2008 Financial Collapse and the European migration crisis. Stagnant and unequal economic growth has disillusioned many citizens, while rapid social changes have rent deep chasms within society, opening a vacuum for unprecedented political polarization to take root. Fringe political parties and opinions have gained traction in mainstream politics, bringing with them a deep skepticism of the established order.

In Europe, populist parties on the far-right (AFD, Lega Nord) and far-left (Syriza, Five Star Movement) have mustered anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic sentiments to gain significant electoral success. In 2016, the United Kingdom narrowly voted to leave the European Union, altogether, and other members appear to be moving in a similar direction. In the United States, the election of Donald Trump set off a turbulent presidency which has challenged domestic and international norms at every turn. At home, social conservatism has gained support in all levels of government, curtailing the immigration and abortion rights. Globally, the Trump presidency has also called into question the very underpinnings of American hegemony: free trade, military alliances, and multilateralism.

As the United States abdicates its global responsibility, the developing world slides further towards authoritarianism. In South America, Brazilians voted emphatically for an unapologetic fascist and supporter of military dictatorship, while Venezuela and Nicaragua head towards national collapse. In the Middle East, civil war or retrenchment of despotism have replaced the early hopes of the liberal Arab Spring uprisings. Meanwhile, endemic political, economic, environmental, and health issues continue to hold back the potential of the African continent, which increasingly feels the pressures of a demographic bubble.

Amidst the political backsliding, a gargantuan change in the economic order has also taken place. Chinese growth has continued at an unprecedented pace for decades, catapulting the most world’s most populous country to economic parity with the United States and the European Union. The Trump administration has utilized trade sanctions to halt Chinese economic progress, but at the risk of provoking a global economic downturn.

Under the combined pressures of internal political divides and external economic competition, the Western liberal order appears to be at an ebb not seen since the 1930s. Populist and anti-establishment politics have forced Western countries to focus inwards and fight for their future identities. In the meantime, the post-Cold War international order is rapidly changing, as the developing world looks towards their own authoritarian strong-men to bring order and stability, mimicking the examples set out by Xi’s China and Putin’s Russia. As history resumes in earnest, the question remains: who will shape the newly-forming international order?

The Fall issue of Global Conversations, titled “The Retreat of the Liberal Order” features numerous articles examining aspects of this changing global system.

- Geordie Jeakins, Director of Written Content

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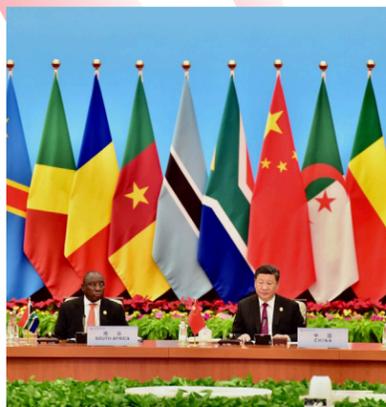


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The Paris Agreement and the Liberal World Order: What Does U.S. Withdrawal Mean for the Future?

BY ALI CANNON



ON June 1, 2017, United States President Donald Trump announced the country's intention to withdraw from the Paris Accord on Climate Change. This marked yet another American repudiation of the U.S.-led liberal world order (LWO), which is a set of norms and agreements supporting an open global society intended to promote free trade, multilateral institutions, security cooperation, and democratic solidarity. Since the conception of the LWO, the U.S. has been the order's hegemonic leader, anchoring its partners through alliances, economic support, and the championship of "free world values".

However, the Trump administration has adopted an "America First" brand of nationalism that stands in direct contrast to America's historical prominence in the LWO. In addition to the Paris Agreement, Trump has withdrawn from a number of international agreements and institutions that once promoted international cooperation and stability. Thus far, those agreements

and institutions include the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the UN Human Rights Council, the Iran Nuclear Agreement, and decreased involvement in a number of other UN bodies. These actions are symptomatic of Trump's aversion to the LWO that America has upheld for so long.

Given the historic centrality of the U.S. in the LWO, the question remains: what does its retreat from liberalism, specifically from the Paris climate agreement, mean for the international community's ability to achieve climate targets and for the future of liberalism, in general?

In light of America's recent move away from the LWO, international environmental efforts will be constrained. How will international agreements, like the Paris Agreement, fare in a world order largely absent of the U.S.? And more broadly, what does this ongoing course of conduct by the Trump administration mean for liberalism and global environmentalism in general?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE U.S. LEAVING THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Per the terms of the Agreement and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the U.S. is targeting a reduction in net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 26-28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025. However, a recent study found that the U.S. is only on track to reduce emissions by 11-13 per cent. As the world's second largest contributor to GHG emissions, failing to hit the targeted reduction will result in a significant setback to the global goal of containing warming levels below 2° Celsius.

Undeterred by the likelihood of missing NDC targets at the federal level, the U.S. is continuing to dismantle

domestic climate policies. Moreover, since Trump's election, there have been greater tariffs placed on imports of clean energy solutions, such as solar cells and modules. On October 4th of last year, the EPA announced that it was planning to repeal Obama's Clean Power Plan. Additionally, the EPA is now planning to relax the standards for vehicle fuel efficiency, while the Department of the Interior has proposed a plan for increased offshore oil and gas exploration.

Despite the apparent federal rejection of clean energy measures, individual American businesses, cities, and states are taking it upon themselves to reduce emissions. For example, in response to Trump's announcement, 16 states formed the United States Climate Alliance, committing to uphold the objectives of the Agreement. This sends a strong signal to the international community that not all hope is lost for American action on climate change.

THE FUTURE OF THE LIBERAL WORLD ORDER

As America distances itself from the Agreement, a vacuum has opened for other countries to fill. China, due to the size of its population and potential for growth, is in a unique position to challenge America's status as the leading global power. What will this challenge look like? Some academics argue that China, a revisionist power, will act as a "spoiler" of the system aiming to overthrow the liberal order. Others have pointed to China's adoption of the liberal rules, exemplified by their adherence to the Paris Agreement, as proof that China will support the LWO and potentially challenge the U.S. as the hegemon within it.

While doubt remains over the impact China's rise would have in other facets of the LWO, it gives hope to environmentalist efforts. Indeed, global leaders, such as China and India, are insisting that they will continue to honour their pledges to the Paris Agreement despite the U.S. withdrawal. China, the largest GHG emitter, is poised to assume a more dominant role in future talks on climate change. As it stands, China is investing heavily in solar energy and other clean energy sources including wind and nuclear power.

Although all other parties to the Agreement are continuing to comply with the terms, no country has increased its commitments to the Agreement to compensate for the U.S. withdrawal. It remains unclear whether China will be able to pressure other leaders into cutting their emissions further. Even prior to the U.S. retreat, the pledges made by all the countries would not limit warming below 2°Celsius. Now, without the U.S. on board, the prospect of meeting the temperature target is even more remote.

Adding fuel to the fire, on October 8th, 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°Celsius. The report, written by 91 authors from 40 different countries, found that the planet will reach the threshold of 1.5°Celsius warming as early as 2030. In order to maintain that level of warming, total global greenhouse emissions will need to fall by 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050. Limiting warming to 1.5°Celsius is technically possible, but would require "rapid and far-reaching transition in land, energy, industry, and building transport and cities".

The future of the LWO remains uncertain. At the moment the U.S. seems to be making every effort to repudiate its international responsibilities, but there is uncertainty as to whether this behaviour will persist in future administrations. Meanwhile, China is taking on a larger role in international leadership. In the midst of all of this, the efficacy of environmental efforts remains in question.

The 2020 elections have the potential to change direction on climate policy and present the opportunity for the U.S. to rejoin the Paris Agreement and its revered place in the LWO. In the meantime, the rest of the world cannot afford to sit around and wait.



Ali Cannon graduated in 2018 from Western University with a Bachelor of Science Honours in Environmental Science, with an area of emphasis in genetics and the environmental determinants of population health.

PHOTO SOURCE: NOT PROPERTY OF THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION

Moving from Populism to Inclusive Nationalism

BY RACHEL BRYCE



IN recent years, rising tides of populism have meant heightened animosity toward migrant populations throughout Europe. However, in many cases, the very same nations that are closing their doors to immigrants are the very ones that would benefit the most from a new, motivated labour force. The citizens of industrialized democratic nations who are supporting populist parties are fearful and feel forgotten. Combine their anger with domestic economic struggles and deep-rooted cultural prejudice, and you get anti-migrant politicians like Matteo Salvini in Italy or and Viktor Orban in Hungary being elected to positions of power. Nevertheless, the same nationalistic mentality could be transformed into one that welcomes rather than shuns. In his recent book, “The People vs. Democracy”, political scientist Yascha Mounk introduces the concept of inclusive nationalism. To combat the wave of fearful populism, states could apply Mounk’s concept to

encourage a regular, safe, and orderly flow of migrants to countries that are despite for new sources of labour as their own population growths begin to plateau or shrink.

INCLUSIVE NATIONALISM

Inclusive nationalism reimagines patriotism for one’s country and acknowledges the benefits of welcoming new ideas and new talent to better the country. The economic arguments for migration are empirically supported. A one percentage point increase in the adult share of migrants in advanced economies increases GDP per capita by at least two percent in the long term. In Canada, migrants are found to be more entrepreneurial than their Canadian-born counterparts. Moreover, influxes of migration into Canada has not meant reduced

wages – in fact, wages are more likely to increase overall due to migration. Zoe Williams of The Guardian argues that “good nationalism is inclusive not because it constantly thumps on about how inclusive it is, but because it includes by definition, every man, woman and child who contributed to the achievement.”

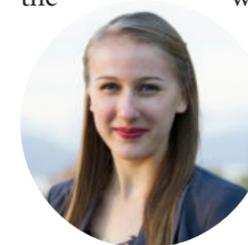
Rational economic arguments that encourage and welcome migrants can only go so far to convince those most opposed. The long-term benefits of migration are accompanied by short-term concerns around cultural and linguistic integration and over the costs associated with this integration. Serious attention must be given to those positing that these costs are too high. However, part of establishing inclusive nationalism is shifting the narrative from one which spreads fear to one which applauds the achievements of immigrants. There are shining examples of sharing positive stories about newcomers, such as through state media outlets like Canada’s own CBC. There must be continued efforts from more liberal-minded politicians to provide evidence-based answers in response to fears of multiculturalism, in addition to combating the pattern of distrust in media. Further, more funds and energy should be invested to facilitate the short-term implementation of inclusive nationalism.

BARRIERS AND LESSONS

The United States, Great Britain, Australia, and other advanced democracies currently confronted with an upsurge of anti-liberal populism can learn a great deal from Canada and Spain. Although both Canada and Spain also find themselves caught up in the tide of populist anger, both have been able to foster a national narrative that includes their migrant populations and combats populism by banding together to welcome refugees. Increasingly, powerful segments of populations from countries with populist-right governments are speaking out against these political attacks against diversity and international rights-violating laws. These leaders, activist groups, and Sanctuary Cities in the United States need to patiently and repeatedly extend their hand to those who disagree with them. They must appeal to both their humanity and their sense of national pride, citing the clear need and benefit of welcoming newcomers. An additional barrier to the successful implementa-

tion of inclusive nationalism in liberal democracies lies in outdated and unequal migration agreements. The Dublin Regulation was adopted in 2003 by the E.U., but was not drafted to account for mass migration, especially mass migration funneled to specific countries. In 2008, the European Parliament evaluated the ‘Dublin system’ and found that “in the absence of harmonization, ‘the Dublin system will continue to be unfair to both asylum seekers and to certain Member States.’” It is this tension in Europe – which is also increasingly found in Canada – that exacerbates divisions between migrant communities and nationalist forces. In addition to changing media narratives to persuade individuals swayed by populism, states need to continue their international efforts to create cohesive migration governance frameworks. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) exemplify this international collaboration and signal institutional progress toward more inclusive nationalism.

The GCM acknowledges the beneficial role that migrants can play in liberal democracies when there are concerted efforts to establish more uniform and coherent migration laws and systems of governance. If jointly implemented, nations will be able to overcome the challenges of integrating newcomers and leverage the economic benefits of expanding their dwindling labour forces. However, to enable this implementation there must be sufficient popular support to further incentivize government action. This requires bridging the social divide as well as the political divide. Thus, by recognizing the rational need for a stronger labour force, trusting the checks and balances in global institutions, and integrating migrants into societies, both individual nations and the wider global community will benefit.



Rachel is in the second year of the combined JD/MGA program at the University of Toronto. She earned her Bachelor of International Economics at the University of British Columbia. In 2016, Rachel volunteered with refugees and migrants in the Calais Refugee Camp, clarifying her path towards international migration law and policy. She since helped sponsor a family of ten through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program with UBC Refugee Relief.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS.

The Fight is Over: America is Rolling Back Access to Contraceptives and Abortions

BY NATASHA COMEAU



AMERICA'S liberal freedoms are becoming increasingly limited for certain segments of the population, particularly low-income individuals seeking safe and affordable reproductive healthcare. The current political landscape has begun to severely limit abortion and contraceptive access across the country, contributing to increased unintended pregnancies, spikes in life-threatening self-induced abortions, and the growing phenomenon of 'contraceptive deserts.' President Trump is outspoken about his support for pro-life advocates and is now fulfilling his promise to get a pro-life judge into the U.S. Supreme Court with Judge Brett Kavanaugh's nomination, a decision the pro-life movement is calling the "beginning of the end for Roe v. Wade."

SHRINKING PATHWAYS TO ABORTION

The landmark Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision from 1973 allows Americans the freedom to decide to end a pregnancy safely and legally across the country.

This freedom is becoming increasingly infringed upon, with over 1,100 restrictions to the law enacted by states since its implementation; nearly 30 per cent of which have been passed since 2010. Twenty-five states are enforcing Targeted Restrictions on Abortion Providers (TRAP), which are laws imposing strict requirements on abortion clinics.

Ohio enacted a number of such restrictions on May 1, 2018, including the requirement that individuals receive state-directed counselling with information discouraging abortion before opting for the procedure; state health insurance under the Affordable Care Act can now only cover abortion when a patient's life is in danger or in cases of rape or incest; and the parent of a minor must consent before an abortion is provided. Iowa has a restriction in place that forbids abortion after a doctor can detect a fetal heartbeat at about six weeks, before when the majority of people know they are pregnant. This requirement has been called a "de facto ban on abortion." Not only do such laws make abortion more complicated to access, but also have proven to make the process more traumatic.

The Guttmacher Institute, a primary source for research and policy analysis on abortion in the U.S., says TRAP laws "go beyond what is necessary to ensure patients' safety" and have referred to such restrictions as "clinic shutdown laws." In Texas, expensive licensing regulations for providers have resulted in over half of abortion clinics in the state closing down. Five states, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming are down to only one remaining clinic where abortions are available.

Moreover, for the first time since 1973, Americans are seriously considering what American healthcare would look like if Roe v. Wade was overturned and the reality appears grim. With two cases currently at the appellate

court, one level down from the Supreme Court, there is the real possibility the Supreme Court could overturn Roe v. Wade as early as June 2019. An estimated 24 states would be expected to move to ban, or severely limit, abortion; four states with "trigger laws" currently in place that would automatically ban abortion.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN DANGER

As states become more hostile to abortion rights, the future of abortion access becomes increasingly ambiguous under Trump's presidency, and overall health outcomes suffer. Studies have shown that when access to abortion becomes limited, more people attempt to terminate their own pregnancies or seek abortions from unskilled practitioners. Such unsafe procedures are likely to lead to adverse health outcomes, including severe bleeding, infections, infertility, and death. Additionally, the U.S. has increasingly begun criminalizing the practice of self-induced abortion; seven states have made it explicitly illegal for someone to attempt their own abortion. In 2015, Purvi Patel was sentenced to 20 years in prison for attempting to end her pregnancy in Indiana.

The modes for avoiding unwanted pregnancy are also declining in America, as contraceptives are becoming increasingly inaccessible and unaffordable for many people, particularly low-income and immigrant populations. Most recently, the Trump administration is targeting Title X, America's only federal program dedicated to affordable birth control and reproductive healthcare access. Implemented in 1970, the programme supports more than four million people, more than half of whom are women of colour. Title X is often the only source of reproductive healthcare for young, immigrant, and low-income people in medically underserved areas. Trump aims to severely limit this program, leaving the country's most vulnerable individuals unable to access services they are legally and constitutionally entitled to.

This move follows similar policies Trump has rolled out since taking office, including carving out exceptions to the Affordable Care Act's guarantee of no-cost contraceptive coverage. Employers are now able to deny birth control coverage to their employees on the basis of religious or moral objections. Speaker Paul Ryan applauded this exemption by calling it "a landmark day for

religious liberty." New York Representative Nita Lowery compared the policy to Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, in which an authoritarian state begins controlling how women conceive and bear children.

ECONOMIC COSTS OF ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

The U.S. already experiences one of the highest rates of unintended pregnancies in the developed world at 49 per cent. The human cost of pregnancy is significant, especially for low-income individuals who experience disproportionately high rates of unintended pregnancy. However, the government also bears the cost burden; in 2008, U.S. births from unintended pregnancies resulted in 12.5 billion USD in government expenditures. Diverting government spending towards affordable access to contraceptives would significantly reduce healthcare costs as an estimated 6 dollars is saved for every dollar spent on publicly funded birth control.

As Trump continues to put up hurdles to obtaining contraceptives and reproductive healthcare, health outcomes are impacted. The number of people on the most effective forms of birth control is declining, while births by low-income individuals are increasing. "Contraceptive deserts" are expanding across the country and abortion access is becoming increasingly complicated and expensive.

Americans have fought long and hard to have their reproductive freedoms expanded and the fight is far from over. While many are struggling to hold on to these rights, activists have taken to the streets to demand individuals' autonomy over reproductive healthcare. Further, a "new wave" of female political activism is developing across the country that has the potential to halt the retreat of reproductive freedoms.



Natasha is a second year Master of Global Affairs student and holds a BA Joint Honours degree in International Development and Political Science with a minor in Gender Studies from McGill University.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, TED EYTAN

Shifting Dynamics: Questioning NATO in 2018

BY RACHEL WEBB



THE North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has gone through a period of diminished importance following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Questions regarding funding and capacities have plagued the organization, most notably from the President of the United States earlier this year. Furthermore, American volatility and the looming threat of Russia have raised questions about the role of NATO in the international community in the twenty first century. A review of these different elements of NATO is essential to understanding the changes the organization is undergoing in order to adapt to new and changing threats in international security.

A QUESTION OF FOCUS

NATO was established in 1949 to counter the rising power of the Soviet Union, encourage political integration throughout Europe, and protect against the rise of violent nationalism in European countries still healing from two painful wars. As a support to the United States throughout the Cold War, NATO's main drive was to promote inter-organizational collaboration to counter the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, NATO's role shifted away from nuclear deterrence. The decline of the Soviet Union meant an end to the Cold War dichotomy in which NATO was a key player, and the organization's focus became fractured. Non-European threats became central to

the organization, as did the prevention of violent nationalism in Eastern Europe, a task that led to the eventual integration of a number of former-Soviet states into the Alliance. NATO also became a more active military organization, with physical interventions in several civil wars in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Article V of the Washington Treaty was invoked, and NATO troops were deployed to Afghanistan with the goal to counter al-Qaida. Although an important institution, the end of the Cold War meant that NATO was not explicitly defined against a single threat and had the potential to become just another collective security pact. This has changed, however, with the return of Russia to the world stage.

A QUESTION OF BALANCE

Vladimir Putin's reestablishment of Russia as a major world power has strengthened NATO's importance in Europe. The 2014 annexation of Crimea demonstrated that Russia was willing to use military strength to take back countries it considered part of their sphere of influence. Although NATO considered the annexation a breach of international law, the organization's strong condemnations did little to hinder Russia's expansionist eye. What did make an impact, however, was increased deterrence measures in Eastern European and Nordic states, which saw themselves as the next potential

victims. Several thousand troops from a range of NATO members are stationed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to demonstrate to Russia that similar actions to that of Crimea will not be tolerated by Europe, collectively. Despite this, as recently as October of 2018, officials from Bucharest have raised concerns of increased Russian military activity close to Romanian borders.

Traditional military threats are not the sole concern surrounding Russia. Accusations of election interference in the American Presidential elections show that Russia is willing to use new technologies and old divisions to solidify their position internationally. The March 2018 poisoning of a Russian ex-double agent in the U.K. by suspected Russian intelligence officers shows that Putin is willing to trade peace for power in Europe. As Russia continues to make bold offensive moves, NATO's focus becomes more pointed, and collaboration within the organization is increasingly necessary.

A QUESTION OF FUNDING

The increasing possibility that the use of force might again be needed to counter a Russian offensive highlights a key problem that NATO faces: the question of funding. U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed strong opinions about the division of payments among NATO members, telling supporters in July: "Folks, NATO is better for [Europe] than it is for us. Believe me...look, it is very simple. You got to pay out. You got to pay your bill."

President Trump expresses the common critique of NATO that the United States pays more than their fair share of NATO's expenses. Non-Americans also express concern that the dominance of American financial support could mean that NATO is nothing more than a tool for American imperialism. NATO has set a guideline for member spending in which two per cent of each country's GDP should be dedicated to national defense. While it is true that several countries do not reach this guideline (with the average NATO member defense spending at only 1.3 per cent as of 2017), the increasing shadows of Russia and non-state threats have led to significant increases in the contributions of many states, particularly those in Eastern Europe. As

part of his 'America First' policy, President Trump has threatened that the United States might leave NATO; however, this empty threat would not be in the best interest of either party. The Alliance is, and will continue to be, a crucial point of collaboration for European and North American countries.

A QUESTION OF NEXT STEPS

It is clear that NATO will not disappear in the near future. The building tensions between Russia and Europe have given NATO new life as the guarantor of stability for Eastern European member states. The work the organization has done regarding non-European threats is equally important. In an increasingly globalized world, NATO cannot remain focused on one region without ignoring potential future issues. By collaborating on intelligence, military development, technology, and education, NATO provides a supportive framework for both member and partner nations. While the Alliance is adequate for the threats it currently faces, modernization is needed to pave the way for future protection. Although NATO has pledged to strengthen its capacities in the realm of cyber defence, the current system relies almost completely on domestic cyber protection and lacks cross-border policies. NATO established the Cyberspace Operations Centre in 2018, and is committed to working with industry partners to enhance cyber protection, but there is much more to be done. Prioritizing defensive and offensive strategies surrounding this new form of warfare, in which both Russia and many militant groups have proven themselves proficient, could be a deciding factor in what is to come in the future. In countering new threats, both traditionally and with new technologies, NATO can continue to work towards European stability and collaboration.



Rachael is a first year Master of Global Affairs student at the University of Toronto's Munk School. She holds a Bachelor of Social Science in International Studies and Modern Languages from the University of Ottawa, and has also studied at the Université Libre de Bruxelles in Belgium.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, GÜNTER HENTSCHEL

Germany's Shifting Political Landscape

BY ISAAC CRAWFORD-RITCHIE



JUST over a year after the 2017 German federal election, Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition is weakening as the Alternative for Germany Party (AfD) makes significant gains in national polls. In response to AfD's surge and her dwindling public support, Merkel announced her intention to step down as the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) on October 30, casting much uncertainty onto the future of German politics.

THE RESURGENT RIGHT

The AfD has experienced a steady rise in prominence over the past five years. Founded in 2013 in response to the Eurozone crisis, the AfD has morphed from a Eurosceptic conservative movement into a far-right populist party with migration at the core of its platform. In May 2015, Merkel's CDU introduced the policy of Willkom-

menskultur or Welcome Culture which allowed roughly one million refugees into the country. Since then, the AfD has capitalized on German anxiety over the influx of refugees through its radical opposition to ethnic and religious diversity and its portrayal of Islam as the gravest threat to German identity. The AfD's stance on migration has mobilized significant support from the German population, especially those residing in the former German Democratic Republic or East Germany. However, the party has also been the subject of much controversy due to its ultra-nationalist tendencies and its rapport with racist far-right groups within Germany and the rest of Europe.

The rise in support for AfD's migration policies resulted in the party's first national victory in September 2017 when it secured 12.6 per cent of the national vote, making AfD the third largest party in the Bundestag. It drew most of its support from mainstream German

parties including CDU and its sister party, the Conservative Social Union (CSU), as well as CDU's coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party (SPD). These results prompted concern for Merkel as SPD claimed to be willing to end the "grand coalition" between CDU, CSU, and SPD and thereby depriving Merkel of a governing coalition. After five months of political deadlock, SPD finally agreed to join the coalition in March 2018. However, this internal debacle left SPD severely weakened as party members were split in their support for the coalition. Public confidence in the coalition was also severely undermined as Germans witnessed a five-month impasse at the Bundestag.

A COALITION DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CANNOT STAND

The situation deteriorated even further for Merkel in June when her Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer of CSU, threatened to resign due to disagreements over Merkel's migration policies. Seehofer supported tighter migration control on the German-Austrian border – the main corridor into Germany for asylum seekers. Seehofer had also routinely criticized EU's migration policies for being weak and ineffective in confronting Europe's migration crisis. Eventually, a compromise was struck between Merkel and Seehofer, but Seehofer's mutiny nevertheless exposed the fragility of Merkel's grand coalition.

Many saw Seehofer's hard line stance on migration as a political ploy to quell AfD's popularity in Bavaria ahead of the Bavarian state election in October. At the time, the AfD was surging in the polls, mostly at the expense of CSU; hence, a shift to the right represented an attempt to win back support in the months leading up to the election. Although CSU secured a victory in Bavaria, both CSU and SPD lost significant support to AfD, which gained about 10.2 per cent of the vote in its first Bavarian state election. Equally significant was the surge in support for the far-left Green Party, revealing the rise in support for populist parties on both sides of the political spectrum and signifying the German public's disillusionment with the country's established political class. This fact is well captured by a recent poll conduct-

ed by Deutschlandtrend which places the AfD as the second most popular party in Germany, trailing only the Christian Democrats.

A MERKEL-LESS EUROPE

These results are concerning for Merkel and her coalition. The weakened state of the German political establishment represents a victory for AfD. The events leading up to the Bavarian state election also show AfD's influence on the German political arena at large. The rightward shift by CSU did not pay off in Bavaria, but it should be seen as a sign of what is to come. As the German centre-right attempts to win back support from AfD, and as the grand coalition searches for a new leader after Merkel, one can anticipate a reorientation of German politics.

The surge of AfD in Germany will surely have implications for the future of the European Union and Germany's role within it. Merkel, along with French President, Emmanuel Macron, are often seen as a fierce advocates of Europe's post-war liberal order in an EU that finds itself under increasing pressure from the Euroscepticism of the populist right. However, the future of the EU will be even more uncertain as Merkel's successor remains unknown. What is certain is that proponents of the old liberal order both within and outside of Europe will be watching very closely as a new political era unfolds in Germany.

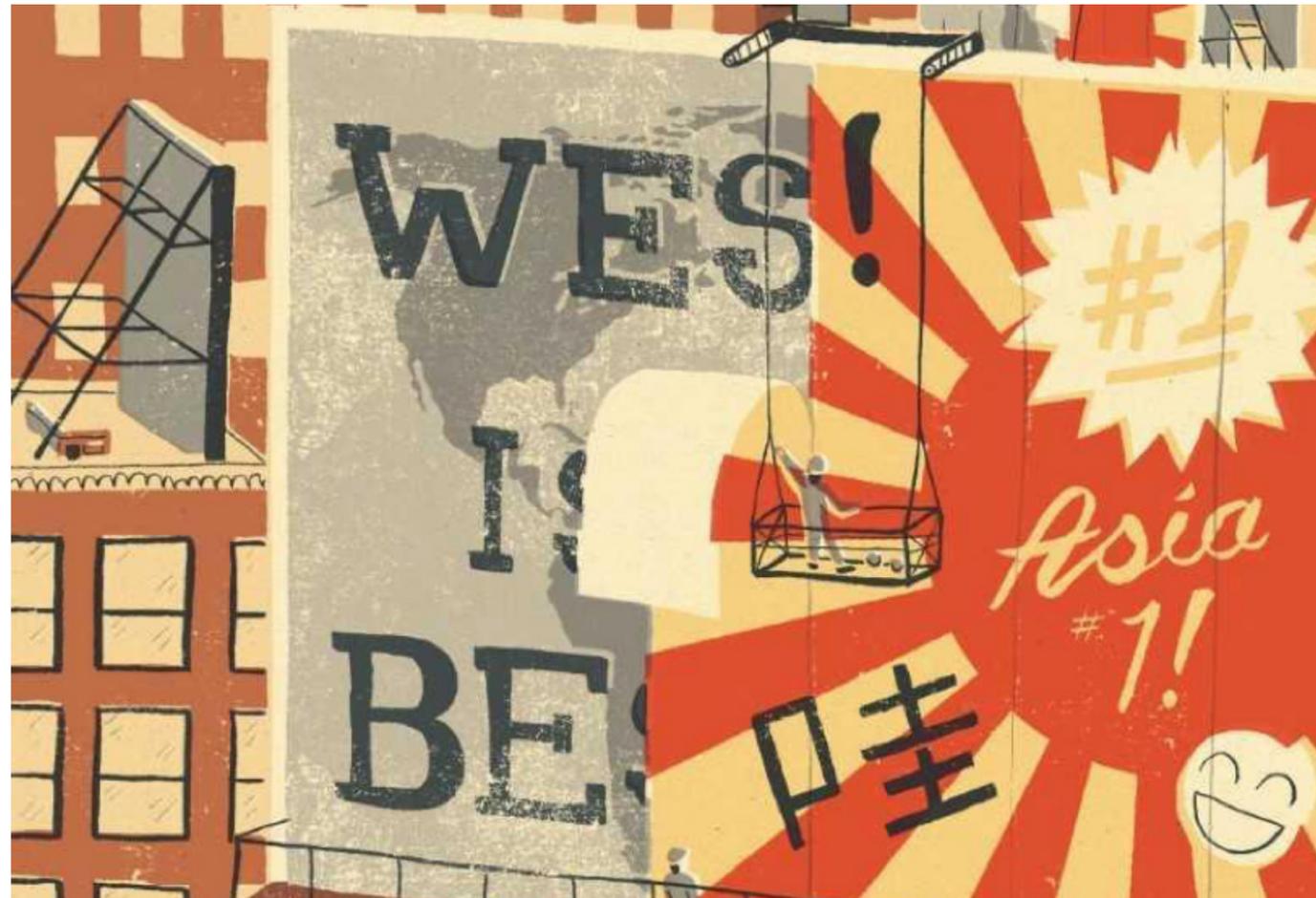


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PHOTO SOURCE: NOT PROPERTY OF THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION

The Chasmic Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative

BY ROBBIE FRANK



IN May 2014, China and Malaysia celebrated their 40th anniversary of having diplomatic ties, only two months after the disappearance of flight MH370, a Boeing 777 filled with 227 passengers travelling to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur. Although tensions arose, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and then-Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Razak marked this event as a reminder of the original purpose of establishing bilateral ties: to facilitate exchange and cooperation, to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability, and to promote common prosperity.

This message was delivered in the wake of China's announced Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive

development project that aims to build infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Europe and to facilitate global trade and development. The BRI is composed of two main elements. First is the Silk Road Economic Belt, which aims to create a land-based corridor by means of transport-links that will connect China to Europe. Second is the Maritime Silk Road, which will invest in marine and port infrastructure to facilitate maritime trade routes to the Mediterranean Sea through the Indian Ocean, connecting China with South Asian countries, East Africa, and Europe. The sheer scale and ambition of the BRI will undoubtedly have major implications for the global economy.

PHOTO SOURCE: SAM BREWSTER

RENMINBI DIPLOMACY

China's vision for the BRI aims to facilitate international trade, create mutually beneficial transportation and energy infrastructure, and solidify cultural ties with partner states. The project entails large-scale construction projects, but has experienced increasing cost estimates, currently ranging between one to seven trillion dollars USD. However, the high price of this project is expected to be mitigated by the reputational and economic benefits that China will receive from this undertaking. The BRI will afford Chinese investors new opportunities and Chinese companies access to new markets with lower transaction costs.

China is the world's largest foreign currency reserve holder. With over three trillion dollars being USD in reserve, China has long depended on possessing foreign currency to underpin its rapid economic development. With China now looking outward, it is seeking to promote the use of the Chinese currency, the Renminbi, as an alternative to the US dollar or the Euro as a major global trading currency. Due to the BRI's focus on the transport and energy sectors, some believe that China is hoping to replace the US dollar as the main price-indicator for certain commodities. Earlier this year, China set up the first yuan-backed oil futures contract on the Shanghai stock exchange. Expanding the power and reach of the Chinese currency would significantly alter the current dynamics of world trade.

INTERNATIONAL BACKLASH

In some cases, the difference between China's anticipation of positive reactions from partner nations and reality is striking. Certain aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative policy have been met with sharp criticism, particularly the counter-argument that claims the BRI represents a way for China to generate neo-colonial relationships of trade, through its mercantilist policies and ownership of foreign debt. Critics have often pointed to Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, which China built for Sri Lanka as part of the BRI, but was subsequently leased to China for 99 years, as a means for Sri Lanka to pay down some of its eight billion dollars of debt it owes to

China. Critics use this example to argue that the BRI is shifting the balance of power and indebtedness between China and comparatively poorer partner states around it due to the influx of Chinese capital required for the development of key infrastructural components of the project.

Additionally, China has faced delays due to multifarious factors such as political shifts in partner nations, reassessment of original cost estimates, and withdrawals from contracts in some cases. Furthermore, important to note are the environmental factors and increasing levels of carbon emissions that are inevitable with large-scale development projects. Similarly, international projects of this magnitude also pose the risk for predatory environmental exploitation in countries lacking adequate regulatory controls. Due to the difficulty of monitoring the many facets of the BRI, critics have called for transparency to ensure both predictability and sustainability going forward.

Debate on the positive and negative aspects of the BRI will undoubtedly continue for decades. A lingering concern is trying to pinpoint what China's underlying motivations are for the BRI - is it part of a benign effort to boost trade and development in its neighbourhood and beyond, or, is China seeking to expand its sphere of influence through malicious lending practices to compete for greater geopolitical power? Or, perhaps, it can be both. What is certain however, is that China is no longer the quiet, inwardly focused country it once was. The Dragon has awoken.



Robbie Frank is a Montreal native who graduated from the University of Ottawa in 2014 with an Honours Bachelors of Commerce in Finance. During his time in undergrad, he participated in a variety of case competitions and was an active member of numerous student clubs within the business faculty. During the final year of undergrad, he had the opportunity to study abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark at the graduate level. Since obtaining his degree, he has worked as an analyst for RBC Capital Markets in Montreal during which time he passed CFA Level 1.

Women: The Unexplored Community Within the Alt-right

BY FIONA CASHELL



THE growing presence of women within the alt-right—a movement often characterized by misogyny and white supremacy—is disrupting previously held assumptions that the ideology only attracted white men. Over the course of 2018, 2.7 million people participated in the Women’s March and there has also been an increasing backlash against misogynist groups, such as the involuntary celibates community. Despite this, the community of women is nevertheless growing within the alt-right movement.

IN DEFENSE OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

The women involved in the alt-right represent neither the majority of the movement nor the majority of

women. The author of *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, George Hawley, estimates that women represent 20 per cent of the movement. Beyond simply being involved, women get the sense that they are finding a form of power through being a part of these movements. Women in the alt-right see success as their ability to have the financial power to be stay-at-home mothers and continue their ‘heritage’ through their children. They also take part in activism, so long as their other obligations to their family are being completed. When asked about women’s rights by *The Economist*, alt-right activist Claudia Davenport said, “There’s nothing that has made me feel more empowered in my life than supporting and being supported by a strong man.”

“There’s nothing that has made me feel more empowered in my life than supporting and being supported by a strong man.”

In an article for the *Women’s Studies Journal*, Emma Blackett hypothesizes that women can feel drawn to the alt-right based on feelings of loss of their ideal way of life. This can include the economic necessity of working outside the home, an issue that they perceive as being the result of immigrants ‘stealing’ jobs, making a single breadwinner family near impossible. Further, they may see the advancement of reproductive rights as an affront on the family unit that they value. Some women may simply wish to maintain a traditional way of life. “Like most, I had been pretty liberal in my twenties, but my desire to be a wife and homemaker led me to the conservative side of life,” Ayla Stewart of *Wife with a Purpose* proclaims in her video “Welcome to My Channel”.

Just as the men in the alt-right movement have gained momentum through social media, so too, have women. On YouTube, women promote themselves as “tradwives” – their videos discuss the importance of maintaining traditional values and gender roles. Similar to other YouTubers, they offer audience engagement by creating challenges. However, unlike makeup challenges or games, channels, such as *Wife With a Purpose*, offer the “white baby challenge.”

THE LIBERAL WOMEN BACKLASH

While there isn’t a lot of research surrounding women in the alt-right, there are a number of publications on the motivations that draw women to be politically left-leaning in the United States. According to The Pew Research Centre, as of 2017, 56 per cent of American women identified as democratic or democratic-leaning. Causes that drew women to participate in events,

such as the Women’s March, include engaging with intersectional issues regarding women.

In contrast to women activists within the alt-right, there are a growing number of women who are taking part in left-leaning activism. The U.K. based research firm YouGov polled 1207 US adults in 2018 and found that 38 per cent of women identified as feminists. This statistic is higher than in 2016, which found that 32 per cent of women identified as feminists. Thus, in some respects, the reverberating effects of the alt-right movement may be leading many women to drift towards liberal politics, just as the rise of so-called ‘social justice’ issues may have contributed to an increasing prevalence of right-wing women.

ALT-RIGHT WOMEN: CANADIAN AND AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

With a community based online, ideas are likely to spread - in this case, from the U.S. to Canada. On October 16th, *Wife with a Purpose’s* blog post endorsed Toronto mayoral candidate Faith Goldy, who has ties to the alt-right. The presence of groups, such as *Women for Kavanaugh*, which may not be explicitly linked to the alt-right, demonstrate a growing presence of women who are in opposition to women’s rights movements. To ignore women’s participation in the alt-right is to ignore the reality of the movement and weakens understanding of the risk it poses to the U.S. and beyond.



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*She is currently the Treasurer for the Intersectional Feminist Collective at Munk, and was an active contributor for the student newspaper *The Ontarion* during her time at Guelph.*

PHOTO SOURCE: NOT OF THE PROPERTY OF GLOBAL CONVERSATION

How Does Foreign Aid Fit Within the Populist Agenda?

BY EMMA AMARAL



THE United States and the United Kingdom have historically been at the forefront of providing aid dollars for development and humanitarian projects. In recent years, both countries have experienced an incredible rise in both populism and nationalism. The U.S. elected businessman and reality TV star Donald Trump, and Brexit is underway to remove the U.K. from the European Union. These populist trends threaten the historically bipartisan tradition of foreign aid and humanitarianism. As András Derzsi-Horváth notes, “The success of populist parties and their preoccupation with domestic growth through protectionist measures is at odds with international solidarity.” Jointly, the U.S. and the U.K. provide over 40 per cent of global humanitarian contributions; thus, any reductions will be deeply felt by a financially strained sector.

RE-THINKING FOREIGN AID

Countries in Europe are rethinking billions of dollars in foreign aid money. Even historically generous

countries, such as the Netherlands, have cut their aid budgets and redirected overseas dollars towards resettling refugees at home. This comes at a time when donors are increasingly critical of development work, especially following recent sexual abuse scandals. The U.K. government has certainly been under scrutiny regarding which organizations it funds. Despite this, Prime Minister Theresa May has remained committed to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on foreign aid. However, others from May's own conservative party argue that this target should be reduced, and the populist U.K. Independence Party has declared it would cut the country's aid budget by 80 per cent.

In the United States, President Trump champions “America First” policies to scrap or renegotiate what he perceives as unfair multilateral agreements. This strategy has targeted military alliances, trade deals, and international organizations like the United Nations. It is consequential for many, as the U.S. is the largest single donor of aid spending (despite lagging behind other developed countries in terms of aid as a percentage of GDP). From Trump's inauguration until this past August, there have been repeated attempts to cut foreign aid spending by up to 37 per cent. Institutional mechanisms have thus far mainly succeeded in preserving the status quo, including a bipartisan task force that fought back against the proposed cuts.

‘FRIENDS FIRST’ POLICY

But there is much that the President has done already. Trump has been upfront about ‘instrumentalizing’ foreign aid to strategically reward or punish other states. He has urged Congress to pass laws that ensure “American foreign-assistance dollars always serve American interests and only go to America's friends.” This was repeated in his recent UN General Assembly

speech, a blatant departure from the humanitarian principles of needs-driven and impartial assistance. Trump has gone so far as to warn member states who vote against the U.S. on issues, such as the relocation of the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem: “This isn't like it used to be where they could vote against you and then you pay them hundreds of millions of dollars.” Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, echoed Trump and announced that she will be “taking names” of those who vote against U.S. interests. “We will remember it when, once again, we are called up to make the world's largest contribution to the UN, and we will remember it when many countries come calling on us to pay even more and to use our influence for their benefit.”

Many have raised doubts over whether this strategy will benefit the U.S. and its allies over the long term. President Trump has withheld \$65 million in aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, following Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' criticism of the American embassy relocation. As the U.S. was the UNRWA's largest donor, the cut sent other countries scrambling to continue providing refugees with education, health care, and social services. Israelis have raised concerns that defunding the UNRWA could lead to more instability and extremism in Palestine. In the lead up to U.S. midterm elections, Trump threatened to withdraw aid from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, if they did not stop the flow of migrants headed towards the Mexico-U.S. border. Under mounting pressure, the Honduran government is urging its citizens fleeing violence not to join the migrant caravan northwards and will support those who return. Guatemalan police have also detained a prominent organiser of the caravan.

LESS AID - LESS INFLUENCE

Development projects that address economic development and youth unemployment are of highest priority in developing countries. The populist and anti-immigration Italian Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini, has acknowledged this and pledged at least one billion euros in investment for North African countries “to support the economy and the work of hundreds of thousands of people in hardship.” Honduran president

Juan Orlando Hernandez has stated that any cuts in aid from the U.S. would actually reduce the country's capabilities to reduce illegal immigration as many migrants are looking for economic opportunities.

Reduced aid from the U.S. may result in its diminishing leadership around the world. In fact, the origins of modern U.S. aid come from the geopolitical Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe, aimed at countering Communist influence. China's presence is growing in Central America, in an effort to win over the last few countries who still have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Hernandez has stated that this presents a welcome opportunity for Honduras.

Foreign aid is also used to prevent countries from turning into failed states and stabilizing those that do, as a method of combating extremism (aid levels rose immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks to promote global economic development). Many within the U.S. are concerned that cuts to aid spending will ultimately reduce domestic security. Withholding funding may also lead to international skepticism over whether the U.S. is a reliable partner in supporting long-term projects, such as the humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen and the operations of the United Nations itself. An American foreign aid policy in retreat will undoubtedly have far-reaching consequences, both in the U.S.' ability to exert its influence globally, but, more importantly, for those who need humanitarian assistance the most.



Emma Amaral is a second year Master of Global Affairs student who previously studied psychology at the University of Toronto. During a gap year, Emma worked in social services and mental health research.

Emma is interested in political psychology and diplomacy, as well as the human impact of emerging technology especially as it relates to social inequality. She recently interned at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

Where Does “Make America Great Again” Leave Canada?

BY EMMA SCHWARTZ



WHEN Donald Trump and Justin Trudeau crossed paths at a UN General Assembly luncheon in late September, no one expected an affectionate encounter. The cold, brief handshake between the two leaders seemed to epitomize the animosity that had recently built up between the governments. Much of this shift in attitude can be traced to the Trump administration’s unrelenting disdain for international cooperation on issues ranging from free trade to multilateral security. Supported by his base’s dissatisfaction with globalization and the fear that the United States is losing out to other countries, both economically and in prestige, President Trump has focused his policies and rhetoric on putting U.S. interests first – with seemingly little regard for the broader ramifications.

LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

With our southern neighbour unabashedly “Making America Great Again,” the Trudeau government has been forced to adapt to protect its economic and security interests. It has done so by toughening its own rhetoric, as well as doubling down on its commitment to liberal international principles such as support

for multilateral institutions and alliances. Pundits and politicians alike have questioned the Trudeau government’s ability to uphold Canadian interests as the United States continues to distance itself from international agreements. Despite widespread public concern for the future of interstate alliances in the face of increasingly protectionist U.S. policies, recent trends in Canadian policies and their positive global response hint at a future that is far from devoid of international cooperation.

Since the beginning of his presidency, Donald Trump has sought to dismantle what he sees as the United States’ unfair burden in the international realm and a globalized system that makes his country pay more than its fair share. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a staple of American and Canadian defense policy since 1949, is among his most pressing complaints.

Trump has characterized other members of the alliance, including Canada, as “delinquent” and “freeloaders,” and has publicly complained that the United States is “paying for the whole thing.” In response, Trudeau

has maintained that Canada’s defense spending and contribution to NATO – although significantly lower than that of the United States – is adequate and has insisted that a country’s level of monetary contribution does not tell the full story. In October, U.S. ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchison, seemed to agree, acknowledging that there are many ways to contribute to the alliance other than through the two-per cent of GDP mark countries contribute. She mentioned specifically Canada’s military leadership in Iraq and Latvia. Hutchison’s remarks – coming, as they do, from an official of the Trump administration – highlight a less starkly isolationist outlook on the part of the United States government than is popularly portrayed.

A BITTER SUMMIT

The US and Canada were also at odds over what both countries saw as the other’s unfair trade policies, and this was on full display after the most recent Group of Seven (G7) summit. The June G7 meeting in Charlevoix, Quebec ended in Donald Trump calling Trudeau “meek and mild” and “dishonest and weak” on Twitter, and pulling out of the summit’s communiqué after Trudeau asserted that Canadians would “not be pushed around” on trade. This prompted the spokesperson for Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, to declare, “The European Union stands fully behind the G7 communiqué agreed to in Charlevoix and President Juncker wishes to thank publicly Prime Minister Trudeau and his team for the excellent preparation and chairing of this challenging summit.” The spokesman also asserted that the EU would “continue to stand up for an international rules-based, multilateral system.” Such international backing of Canadian efforts in the face of what some leaders view as bullying by President Trump and the United States’ attempt to dismantle liberal principles due to relatively minor, two-state disputes, is symbolically important. However, such support is less consequential than are Canada’s own actions.

NAFTA ON THE ROCKS

The highly-publicized North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations that concluded in early October provide a telling example of the Trudeau

government’s unwillingness to compromise on the guarantee of impartial arbitration, even in response to Trump’s concern regarding United States’ sovereignty. As early as July 2017, the Canadian government singled out chapter 19 of NAFTA – which allowed for the creation of a five-member panel to interpret the legality of duties in antidumping and countervailing disputes under U.S. law – as an imperative to be included in the renegotiated deal. More than a year later, the Trump administration conceded to keep the clause, despite the President’s earlier concerns. Trudeau insisted, in an interview with a Canadian radio station in September, that the chapter be preserved precisely because Trump “doesn’t always follow the rules as they are laid out.” Although some contested the practical importance of chapter 19 for Canada during the negotiations, the Trudeau government’s ability to emerge victorious on the issue both reflects Canada’s persistence when arguing for unbiased, bilateral cooperation, and also signals the United States’ willingness to concede on such matters when its own interests are at stake.

So far, Trudeau’s government has responded to Trump-era policies that threaten to undermine international cooperation by standing firm in its commitment to free trade and multilateral defense measures, while negotiating with the United States in a way that preserves the fundamentals of their relationship. Canada’s efforts have been lauded by much of the global community, and there are reasons to believe that Donald Trump’s commitment to protecting U.S. interests need not detract from Canadian efforts to engage in interstate cooperation. Such success is a sign that, while the liberal order may be in retreat away from U.S. leadership, it is not in total or unsalvageable decline.



Emma is a first year Master of Global Affairs student, pursuing a collaborative specialization in environmental studies. She completed her BA in political science at Wellesley College, where she conducted research on American foreign policy and US-Russia relations. Prior to moving to Toronto, she worked as a mental health educator and legal services advocate in the Boston area. She is passionate about global environmental issues and suicide prevention advocacy.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

Democratic Repression and Resilience in Nicaragua

BY AMAL ATTAR-GUZMAN



“LONG live free Nicaragua!” some screamed when leaving the maximum security jail of El Chipote, infamous for torturing protesters over the last six months. Raising their fists in defiance, 38 protesters detained from the October 14th anti-government protest were released on October 16th due to pressure from the Organization of American States (OAS) and human rights groups. However, a few days later, Nicaraguan police instigated more crackdowns on protesters, following the government’s passage of stricter anti-protest regulations.

The largest country in Central America, Nicaragua has hosted prominent culture, natural resources, and tourism industries. Yet, it has also endured a dark and conflicting past. Forty years of dictatorship, the 1979 Revolution, and the subsequent 1981 civil war, all forced Nicaragua to grapple with many great political changes in a short period of time. The present civil conflict is now one of many. President Daniel Ortega, a Sandinista commander during the Revolution and

civil war, is now strongly criticized by the descendants of the Revolutionary generation. Somewhat ironically, old Sandinista revolutionary slogans of the past are now being used against the Ortega government.

Over time, underlying tensions between Nicaraguans and the government have festered. Frictions over stalling the construction of the controversial Nicaraguan Canal, the lack of response from the government in combating wildfires, and corruption allegations against government officials have all contributed to the widespread resentment of the Ortega government.

A NATION IN PROTEST

The most recent protests were sparked over government cuts to social benefits for senior citizens. Robert López, President of the National Social Security Institute, announced that the reforms would apply a five per cent charge to old-age and disability pensions. Critics claim that, due to former mismanagement of recent governments, the current administration is making the most vulnerable pay for their recklessness. Although Ortega, as well as his wife and vice-president, Rosario Murillo, have defended the reforms as necessary to save the state from a financial crisis, many citizens see them to be unacceptable and worth fighting for.

Nicaragua’s political and social climate slid into disarray, following demonstrations beginning on April 18th. Protesters were attacked by tear-gas and bullets by government forces. After the first two days, 46 deaths were recorded, most of them under the age of 25. In response to the violence, University students, professionals, members of the private sector, and many representatives of the Roman Catholic Church have united in solidarity with the protesters, calling for the president’s resignation. As social division has grown within the country, state and civil violence has escalated.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

The Sandinista Youth, a pro-government youth group, has allegedly sought out protesters and used acts of violence in order to silence them. Masked civilians and undercover officers have also been reported to participate in these attacks. Other paramilitary forces have been accused of murder, torture, rape, kidnapping and causing the disappearance of protesters, with the goal to both punish and deter protesters. However, human rights abuses also have been committed by anti-government protesters, as indicated in a UN report. Violence has become an everyday occurrence now in Nicaragua. According to reports from human rights groups, there were over 481 fatalities in September alone, more than the notoriously crime-ridden city of Chicago has had the entirety of 2018 thus far.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

After hearing testimonies, Amnesty International issued a report about the state’s human rights abuses against protesters. From the findings, Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International stated: “The Nicaraguan authorities have turned on their own people in a vicious, sustained and frequently lethal assault on their rights to life, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The government of President Ortega has... shamelessly tried to cover up these atrocities, violating the victims’ rights to truth, justice and reparation.”

Government officials have dismissed these criticisms. Nicaraguan Ambassador to France, Ruth Esperanza Tapía Roa, claimed that the Amnesty International report was “baseless.” At home, Ortega denied allegations of state oppression towards Nicaraguan civilians. He claimed that the report “is biased and slanted with subjective assertions,” claiming that it relied on accounts from anti-government media. Consequently, he ordered the expulsion of the UN human rights delegation out of the country.

Due to the regional threat, OAS member-states met in the spring to discuss the ongoing violence in Nicaragua. In a September press statement, Secretary-General Luis Almagro stated: “We condemn the killings carried out by the repressive forces and the armed forces and we express our solidarity with the families of the victims. We call on the State to stop the violence by these

repressive factors.” The Nicaraguan delegation further denied these allegations, however, the Permanent Council of the OAS passed a resolution urging “the Government of Nicaragua to take immediate steps to investigate the violations and abuses documented in... reports and take effective steps to bring the perpetrators to justice and grant reparations to victims”. The resolution was passed with the majority-support of member-states.

THE CRISIS WIDENS

The political turmoil in Nicaragua has had unexpected consequences human migration flows. As levels of violence have persisted, many people are fleeing to the neighbouring country of Costa Rica for asylum. In August, an average of 200 refugees per day have been claiming asylum in Costa Rica, with an additional 25,000 Nicaraguans planning to or having already applied for asylum. While the Costa Rican government is complying with refugee protocol, a refugee crisis may erupt, which could inflame and exacerbate existing migration crises in Latin America.

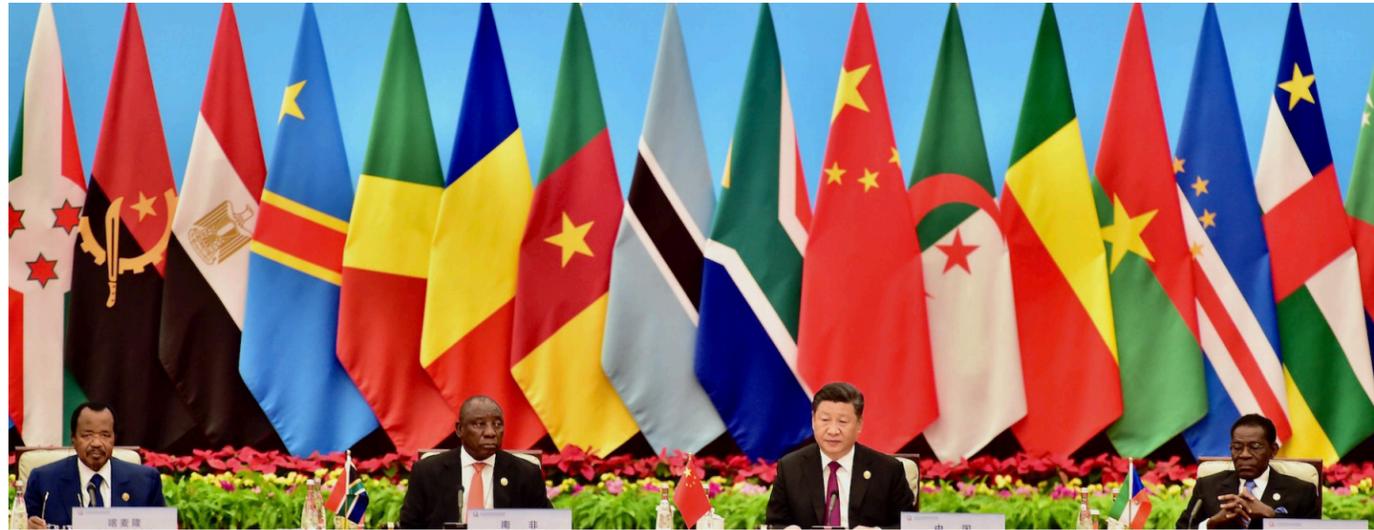
As the conflict continues with no end in sight, the UN human rights chief Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein has stated that “repression and retaliation against protesters continues... as the world looks away.” These protests, and the harsh crack down that has followed them, demonstrate how Nicaragua’s democratic institutions and liberal ideals are being threatened. Yet, despite all the obstacles, many are holding strong onto these democratic ideals, continuing to protest and remaining resilient. Francisco Sánchez, a protestor and student leader, was quoted saying; “We Nicaraguans are tenacious and strong... We’re going to make history once again...so we can have a society that’s democratic and egalitarian.”



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The U.S. vs China - a New Scramble for Africa

BY VANESSA HAYFORD



IN early September of this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a hefty investment plan for Africa. Through this project, China pledges \$60 billion USD in financing projects, including grants, interest-free loans, credit lines, and a promise to encourage companies to invest at least ten billion dollars in African countries over the next three years. As a response to increasing domestic and international pressure, China's new investment plan is intended to increase trade and investment, as well as improve political ties with the continent.

China's move to increase trade, investment, and political ties with Africa appeared to startle its economic rival in the West into action. Only a month after President Xi's announcement, United States President Donald Trump signed a bill to implement his own \$60 billion dollar plan and create a new agency – the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. This new organisation is expected to lead to greater American investment in Africa. America's response to China's increasing influence in Africa may be a day late and a dollar short. There is evidence to suggest that African countries already prefer aid from China, and that China is rising as a major donor to the continent. Nevertheless, with two major world powers now competing for

influence in African economies, there are fears that the continent may soon be caught in the throes of a new form of colonialism.

CHINA'S AID – A TREAT OR A TRAP

After decades of American dominance in the realm of foreign assistance, China has recently overtaken the United States as Africa's biggest investment partner. This is in part due to China's Belt and Road initiative, through which China engages in infrastructure projects in Africa to create physical and economic links to the continent's economies. Many African countries have thus looked favourably upon China's aid because, rather than coming in the form of cash transfers and physical materials like many forms of American aid, China's assistance answers immediate infrastructure needs with fewer conditions on governance. Through Chinese assistance many African countries have experienced an increase in job creation, marginally reduced energy deficiencies, and have allowed for better transportation access to rural areas.

Despite the benefits that may come from China's increased influence in development assistance over the U.S., there are also definite risks. China has

been harshly criticized for extending credit for costly infrastructure projects in developing countries, and demanding influence in the country or control over the infrastructure in question when these countries are unable to pay back their debts.

This phenomenon has been referred to as debt trap diplomacy, and there are several examples of this across the developing world. An African example of this phenomena is found in Djibouti, a small African state that became indebted to China after numerous expensive infrastructure projects. It has been argued that China has used this opportunity to have a heavy influence over a major port in Djibouti and has since opened its first overseas military base in the country's capital.

Examples like this and several others have made it increasingly apparent that China may be investing in Africa for politically strategic reasons, putting the country's altruistic intentions into question. Many have stated that this is a continued form of neo-colonialism on the part of China; a subtle means of increasing the country's economic influence across the world at the expense of developing states that have sought their assistance, and a continuation of economic proxy wars that have spanned generations.

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

In light of recent developments, many will write about the power struggle between the U.S. and China without acknowledgement of the fact that many African countries have made up their minds about aid, with some intending to phase it out entirely.

At a joint press conference during a state visit to Ghana in late 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron and Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo were asked whether France intended to increase support for African countries that were not former French colonies. While Macron delivered a rhetorical answer to such a question, Akufo-Addo's response caught the world's attention.

“We can no longer continue to make policy for ourselves — in our country, in our region, in our continent — on the basis of whatever support that the Western world

or France or the European Union can give us,” Akufo-Addo stated. He emphasized that African nations must focus on growing their own economies in order to increase the continent's global economic presence.

Akufo-Addo's comments are a reminder of a slow shift in developing world's sentiments as it pertains to development assistance from the West. With his election last year, Ghana adopted its “Ghana Beyond Aid” mantra that seeks to wean the country off of economic assistance. Rwanda, too, has decreased its aid dependency by half every decade.

Looking more broadly, a palpable sense of economic empowerment and a desire for self-sufficiency across the African continent was made very clear in March of this year, when 44 African states signed on to create the African Continental Free Trade Area through the African Union. The creation of such a free trade area is likely to increase domestic and regional economic capacity, while making African economies more attractive to foreign investment—investment that could be considered a mutually beneficial endeavor, rather than a purely developmental initiative.

In the melee of speculation on China's aid versus that of the U.S., it is clear that the will and interests of African countries should not be forgotten. There is something to be said about the potential benefits that this new competition between the world's economic powerhouses may bring to the continent – with fresh and competing interest in their economies, African states may have increased bargaining power and could be in a better position to ensure investment deals suit their needs. Ultimately, it is evident that regardless of which economic power's offers for assistance ends up being the most favoured or successful, the scramble to win global influence through Africa has taken on a new dimension.



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PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

China's Economic Dilemma

BY YUSHU MA



CHINA, the second largest economy in the world and the largest economy amongst developing countries, has faced tremendous challenges in 2018. The country's economic growth slowed to 6.5 per cent on a year-over-year basis in the third quarter of 2018, according to official data released in October. This number not only missed the expectation of a 6.6 per cent growth, but it was also the lowest growth figure since the global financial crisis of 2008-9. What is worse is that another round of tariffs, ten per cent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, which became effective on September 24th. Additionally, President Trump threatened to impose further tariffs on the remaining \$267 billion worth of imports if China were to retaliate. These trade-related tensions with the United States have not only cast uncertainties over the Chinese economy, but they have also threatened the stability of the regime.

The question is: What strategies are at China's disposal? How did China's fiscal and monetary policies play out in response to its trade war with the United States and its decelerating economic growth? The answer is that China is currently facing a dilemma; although Chinese authorities have introduced a series of monetary easing measures and expansionary fiscal boosts, these maneuvers have only been modestly reflationary. Meanwhile, China finds itself restrained to pursue more aggressive policies.

FISCAL STIMULUS

Why is fiscal stimulus important? China's export dependency—export as a percentage of GDP—has decreased from roughly 35 per cent in 2007 to 19 per cent in 2017. Hence, punitive tariffs by the U.S. might not have had a substantial impact on the Chinese economy in the short run. They will, however, have repercussions beyond the economic domain. More than 80 million people in China are employed in the manufacturing industry, whose jobs are likely to be affected by tariffs. Unemployment and the social unrest that may ensue are an anathema to the regime. Thus, it is imperative that the government finds a way to stabilize the economy. Fiscal stimulus is one of the most common tools to achieve this.

However, the main constraint on China's fiscal policies is its deleveraging campaign. Since Chairman Xi came to power in 2013, he has pursued a relatively tight monetary and fiscal policy as a means to lead the economy away from debt-fueled and investment-led growth, towards more innovation-driven growth. This campaign accelerated in late 2016 and aimed to reduce overall corporate-level debt, to regulate local governments' debt, to shutdown shadow banking, and

to mitigate systemic financial risk.

Many of the problems that Xi's campaign aimed to tackle were the direct outcomes of the stimulus splurge, worth four trillion yuan, in response to the financial crisis of 2008-9. This massive stimulus resulted in severe economic problems including but not limited to a rising overall debt level, over-capacity in resource and steel industries, and asset bubbles. Therefore, in recent months, the Xi government has reiterated several times that it will not ordain any indiscriminate massive stimulus, such as the four-trillion-yuan stimulus.

On the other hand, as trade tensions with the U.S. are heightened, the Xi government was forced to alter the pace and intensity of its deleveraging campaign. At the Politburo meeting in July, Xi pledged to make China's fiscal policy more proactive and to find a better balance between serving the real economy and the deleveraging campaign. One example would be to accelerate the issuance of local government bonds. In August, the Chinese Ministry of Finance asked local governments to speed up the issuance of bonds as Beijing tried to boost investment amid slowing economic activity and trade headwinds. According to the Finance Ministry's data, by the end of September, local governments have issued 2.01 trillion yuan of brand-new bonds. These amounted to 92.2 per cent of the 2.18-trillion quota set at the beginning of 2018, implying that the remaining policy space for fiscal stimulus through local government bonds is limited. Additionally, local government bonds are mainly used to fund infrastructure projects, which the administration tried to reduce. Furthermore, the acceleration of local government bonds issuance will raise the overall debt level, which goes against the deleveraging campaign. Therefore, China is facing a very difficult fiscal policy dilemma.

MONETARY EASING

Monetary policy is China's alternative means of an economic electrification which normally requires a far shorter lag period than fiscal stimulus. Since the beginning of 2018, China has conducted several monetary easing measures. Monetary easing is less likely to overshoot than fiscal stimulus, but it has proven to be more difficult to implement.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) conducted its fourth reserve requirement ratio (RRRs) cut this year in October. This move cut RRRs by 100 basis points, injecting 750 billion yuan into the market and releasing a total of 1.2 trillion yuan in liquidity. The PBOC expected this RRRs cut to boost confidence in the economy. However, the market reacted differently. Four days after the RRRs cut, on October 18th, the Shanghai Composite Index dropped below 2500. It closed at 2486.42, hitting its lowest point since November 2014.

China could also further depreciate its currency to boost export competitiveness. It has already nudged the currency lower since the beginning of the trade war. The Chinese Yuan relative to the U.S. Dollar depreciated by roughly ten per cent since April. By doing so, Chinese goods could become cheaper and more competitive in the U.S. and other global markets, partly offsetting the tariffs. However, a weaker currency could also potentially result in massive capital outflows, as occurred in 2015-16. In addition, the U.S. has long accused China of being a "currency manipulator" and such a move could trigger further retaliation from Washington.

THE DILEMMA

China's current fiscal and monetary policies are constrained and have so far only yielded a modest result. With concerns regarding the national debt level and a deleveraging campaign, China is constrained from conducting aggressive fiscal stimulus. The country's monetary policies are also impaired by fears of capital outflow and further U.S. retaliations. Beijing might need to look for other "unconventional weapons" such as trade restrictions if it wishes to avoid running out of cards in the trade game with Washington.

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PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

Breaking the Silence on Systemic Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

BY GILDA MONREAL



SILENCING survivors of violence is a strategy of choice imposed by systems of oppression. Systemic violence against Indigenous women and girls has long been underreported and silenced. Despite evidence gathered over recent years, which reflects the necessity to break this silence, huge gaps in knowledge, data, and policy remain. In 2014, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police acknowledged that there were about 1,200 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) registered since 1980. However, due to gaps in accurate data, it is argued that the number may actually be well over 4,000. In 2016, the U.S. National Crime Information Center reported 5,712 cases of missing indigenous women. In regions such as South America, Africa, and Asia Pacific, fewer statistics are available and underreporting remains a serious challenge.

THE ROOTS OF SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As of 2018, non-governmental databases in North America have begun to register their own statistics on MMIWG. Some of these databases have been created by doctoral students, such as Annita Lucchesi. To date, Lucchesi has documented 3,200 cases in Canada and the United States since 1900, with about 50 per cent of cases located in Canada. Of the total number of cases documented in this database, 66 per cent are murder cases and 15 per cent are domestic violence-related. Sexual assault is reflected in six per cent of all cases recorded by Lucchesi, while an additional six per cent of cases involve sex workers or victims of sex trafficking. Tragically, one third of all MMIWG cases are girls ages 18 and under. Additionally, this database records that 65 per cent of victims who were in foster care were subjected to sexual assault, domestic violence or sex trafficking. Finally, a total of 37 cases involve police brutality or negligence, and 14 cases include trans-women and two spirit victims.

On a global scale, the United Nations has compiled a comprehensive report on violence against Indigenous women and girls focused on South America, Africa, and Asia Pacific. In acknowledging harmful practices and economic exploitation, the report emphasizes the importance of understanding intersectionality, in addition to prioritizing constitutional, legislative, and institutional reforms. Listed amongst the challenges that need to be addressed are a culture of impunity and patriarchal discriminatory attitudes of service providers, law enforcement, and judicial personnel. Structural factors such as poverty and limited access to education, healthcare, justice services, and social welfare are also highlighted. As steps forward, the report reaffirms the urgent need to improve reporting mechanisms and data collection in order to better inform policy, programming, prevention, and justice.

Systematic factors of land dispossession and residential schooling are risk factors for violence against Indigenous women and girls. Factors such as these negatively impact quality of life and lead to higher economic insecurity and exploitation. These are just a few of numerous reasons why free, prior and informed consent are fundamental to human rights. Furthermore, case studies in countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru have found that Indigenous women are specifically targeted for sexual violence during times of armed conflict. Cases of rape, sexual slavery, abduction, trafficking, and forced sterilization have been recorded in First Nations communities across the world.

CANADA'S TROUBLED PAST AND PRESENT

Canada is no exception, as over 50 reported cases of forced sterilization of Indigenous women have come forward since July 2017. Canadian lawyers presented these reports to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in February of 2018. Pursuant to the United Nations' definition of genocide, coercive sterilization should be understood as an imposed measure intended to "destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." With mounting evidence of Indigenous women and girls affected by a calculated prevention of births, it is imperative that these cases in Canada are addressed so that this institutionalized violence is stopped.

In Canada, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), including LGBTQ2S people, is at the beginning of a journey towards building a potentially constructive foundation for justice, policy reform, and reconciliation. Most importantly, building these foundations will save the lives of thousands of women. The significance of this inquiry is a historic turning point for a country that has a legacy of systemic violence against First Nations. The National Inquiry has faced major challenges, including the resignation of commissioners and lawyers, who have critiqued the commission itself and cited government interference. There have also been criticisms that the commission failed to properly inform communities on hearing processes and that community hearings were rushed due to a restricted timeline allotted by

the Canadian Government, both of which impede a fully and properly informed investigation. Despite these challenges, the inquiry has already made several significant discoveries, some of which are included in its interim report. Commissioner Michele Audette has also publicly stated that the inquiry has discovered over 150 repeated causes of systemic violence against MMIWG. As the commission has been denied a two-year extension, the historic final report on MMIWG is expected on April 30th, 2019. This coming year will also present the Supreme Court's ruling on Cindy Gladue's case, who was killed in 2011; one which could alter consent and sexual assault laws in Canada.

THE COST OF SILENCE

According to estimates of economic impact of violence, the cost of continuing systemic violence on Indigenous women and girls, and doing nothing to stop it, is calculated to be over \$675 million annually in Canada, including police, court, funeral and counselling expenditures. However, this does not include the cost of intergenerational trauma and its externalities, nor the loss of human life and dignity. The United Nations reports that governments across the world, including Canada, have failed to address violence inflicted on Indigenous women and girls. In order to begin moving forward and end the cycle of institutionalized and systemic violence, it will be critical to establish accountability frameworks and improve data collection, reporting mechanisms, and education.

One thing is clear: there can be no healing in silence. The right to speak is fundamental to healing, and it is by listening to the voices of Indigenous women and girls, and their families, that lifesaving reformative policies will be achieved.



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PHOTO SOURCE: "NIKIWIY NITANI" BY MACKENZIE ANDERSON ('MOTHER AND DAUGHTER' IN CREE)

Opening Pandora's Box: Decrypting AI in the 21st Century

BY ABISHNAN RAVINDRANATH



INVESTMENT in artificial intelligence (AI) peaked at nearly \$40 billion USD in 2016, and since then, public and private actors have continued to invest aggressively in the technology. Likewise, academic researchers and industry leaders predict that AI will fundamentally re-define the structure of our existing economic and political systems. However, the contemporary debate concerning AI is polarizing and divided into a utopian-dystopian dichotomy. Proponents of AI believe that these intelligent machines will solve intractable problems and heighten human potential. In contrast, critics of machine intelligence warn that the black boxed nature of AI systems can grossly undermine the integrity and stability of existing social systems.

Although AI possess a diverse array of ethical, legal and regulatory challenges, the development of a broad set of technological tools and rigorous ethical standards, by the public and private sector, will ensure that AI machines can be deployed in a systematic manner that promotes accountability and transparency.

AN UNETHICAL AND UNACCOUNTABLE TECHNOLOGY

The fundamental problem posed by artificial intelligence is its black box nature; that is, software engineers are unable to explain the methodology by which heuristic algorithms produce a specific output given a precise input. The black box creates substantial interpretability problems for governments, corporations, and academic institutions, as individuals cannot trust the decision of an AI system if they cannot grasp its decision-making methodology.

For example, AI systems have massive potential in the healthcare industry as they have the ability to provide medical professionals with valuable information. Likewise, psychiatrists at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York developed a machine learning program called Deep Patient which was able to accurately predict schizophrenia in patients. Even though Deep Patient was able to diagnose a psychiatric condition that is

particularly challenging for physicians, it failed to reveal the intuition behind its decisions. This ambiguity is gravely concerning, as reasoning and interpretability are crucial factors in the medical profession, where agents make life or death decisions. Likewise, oncologists stopped using Watson Oncology—a supercomputer developed by IBM that was used to detect tumours—as it failed to explain how it reached a differential diagnosis. These cases demonstrate how the uncertainty surrounding AI can hamper its use, as human agents are not comfortable with deploying systems they do not trust or necessarily understand.

SHINING A LIGHT INTO THE BLACK BOX

Fortunately, researchers in the field of AI have crafted diagnostic tools which have begun to unravel the mysteries inside the black box. DARPA, the research wing of the United States Department of Defense, is beginning development on third-wave AI systems (XAI) which act as explanatory models of how machines interpret their context and environment.

Similarly, the emergence of the new, innovative field of AI Neuroscience has developed three promising sets of tools that can deconstruct neural networks. The first set of tools seeks to control the black box by writing predictability into the systems. These models use an enhanced version of the generalized additive model (GAM)—a model that uses linear regression to find trends in data—to organize multiple variables into a single regression line, with the intent of uncovering a relationship. Although GAM based tools are powerful in identifying causal relationships in static data (e.g. numbers and words), they are weak at decrypting dynamic data such as images and sounds. The second set of tools seeks to dissect the black box using counterfactual probes. For example, the Local Interpretable Model-Agnostic Explanations (LIME) uses counter-factual probes to manipulate key terms or images in order to determine which piece of data had the largest impact on the final output of the AI system. Counter-factual probes are powerful in providing transparency, but these tools require iterative testing and lack the capability to provide comprehensive insight into a machine's overall logic. The third set of tools exploit the ambiguity of the AI systems by building complementary neural networks to fill knowledge gaps

and identify patterns. For example, an image generator and an image classifier can be successfully paired to learn the nuances of AI decision making.

Diagnostic tools need to be accompanied by a rigorous regulatory framework that systematizes the ethical conduct behind the deployment of advanced machines. The AI Now Institute at NYU recently released a ten-step guideline that should be used as an industry standard when crafting policies and governance standards. The guideline provides ten generic policy-prescriptions: (1) prohibiting the use of black box AI systems in public agencies; (2) mandating pre-release trials for AI systems; (3) continuous and sustained monitoring of AI systems; (4) pursuing research on the impact of AI on labour rights; (5) reporting and identifying biases and skews when training AI with data sets; (6) promoting interdisciplinary collaboration; (7) creating rigorous auditing standards for ad-hoc AI technologies; (8) diversifying AI leadership beyond computer science; (9) creating powerful accountability and oversight mechanisms; (10) expanding stakeholders to include marginalized groups and women. Humans have a propensity to develop and hastily deploy complex instruments without understanding the relevant threats and vulnerabilities. As a result, AI should not be analyzed in a technological vacuum, as these machines are integrated within broader phenomena such as rising populist movements, increasing inequality, and the concentration of geopolitical supremacy. Furthermore, emerging fields of AI ethics and risk assessment must rigorously analyze the economic, social, and political implications of deploying advanced algorithms in society. Additionally, effective risk assessment tools can prevent systemic risks and mitigate ongoing risks by building resilient management frameworks. Hence, there is a critical need for creating technological tools and rigorous ethical standards that will ensure that AI machines can be deployed with increasing accountability and transparency.



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PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS

Yazidi Women Under Daesh

BY DEAN LAVI



ON its war path, the Islamic State (Daesh) orchestrated mass killings, forced conversions, rape, and forced enslavement across the Middle East. Yet, no religious group was subjected to the determined, white-hot destruction that the Yazidis suffered under IS control.

YAZIDI PERSECUTION – THEN AND NOW

Long before succumbing to Daesh control, the Yazidi had already undergone centuries of sectarian violence in the region. Practicing a monotheistic Zoroastrian religion that precedes Christianity, they endured a widespread falsehood that paints their ethno-religion as one of Satanists and devil worshipers. Many in the region still disparage the Yazidi, committing acts of hate-speech, discrimination, and violence. Al-Qaeda's radical militant presence in the early 2000s only exacerbated these tensions, already high after a prominent Mosul mosque handed out leaflets preaching the Yazidi to be "infidels and outlaws."

While other Yazidi communities dispersed, those located in Iraq had, until the rise of Daesh, been experiencing relative success in overcoming adversity. Half a million Yazidi lived in the country, making Yazidism Iraq's second largest religious group. On August 3rd, 2014, Daesh attacked, conquering the Yazidi town of Sinjar in Iraq's northern Nineveh province. Daesh pushed through the city, murdering nearly 5,000 Yazidis, capturing 6,300 more, and forcing 400,000 to flee to Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan. Tens of thousands were besieged in Sinjar's hills.

When the besieged Yazidi eventually wore out, Daesh fighters executed all men and older boys who refused to convert to Islam. But the forced conversions did not offer the Yazidis protection or equal status. They were unable to leave, and those who attempted to escape were executed.

"After we were captured, ISIS forced us to watch them beheading some of our Yazidi men. They made the men

kneel in a line in the street, with their hands tied behind their backs. The ISIS fighters took knives and cut their throats".

Girl, aged 16 at capture, held for 7 months, sold three times.

THE TOOLS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS GENOCIDE

Yazidi women, on the other hand, were raped, endured mental and physical trauma, enslavement, and were openly traded in a system designed to debase and humiliate. The system was created to destroy the Yazidi people by killing or converting the boys and men and selling the women to Daesh fighters in sexual servitude, thereby tearing apart the Yazidi community. While Daesh militants would force Christian women from their homes, "only Yazidi women [were] kidnapped. Of the more than 500,000 Yazidis in Iraq, some 25,000 Yazidi girls have been abducted by IS militants." Every housing area was severely overcrowded, with captives receiving little food, and having to drink water from the toilets. With insufficient food, mothers went hungry to feed their children, and many young children became ill. Yet, no medical care was provided.

"I wish I was dead. I wish the ground would open and kill me and my children"

Woman, held for 17 months, echoing many who reported feeling angry and hopeless

When a Yazidi girl reached the age of nine, she would be sold as a slave. When a Yazidi boy reached the age of seven, he was sent to an indoctrination camp, taught to kill those who "belong to the wrong religion... even if they are [his] father and brother." The Daesh doctrine believed that "children are young; they are like animals. We can change them."

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, ERIC LAFFORGUE

Daesh tightly controlled sexual violence and slavery, as demonstrated by their usage of the word "Sabaya" – literally "slaves" – to describe Yazidi women and girls. Girls over the age of nine were subjected to brutal sexual violence, reporting violent daily rapes by their captors. They were forced into marriage and sexual slavery by men who saw themselves as actors in a holy war. Daesh's aim was a form of "genocidal rape", a systematic policy which intends to cause the "erasure of the foreign captive's ethnic identity." The rape and sale of Yazidi women by Daesh is thus a crime differentiated by the systematic political nature behind the act.

Daesh's intentionally dehumanizing policies were predicated on a single genocidal mandate, to "drive the world into an apocalyptic end-of-times drama" as predicted by their interpretation of Islamic scripture. Daesh was building towards a vision of a world free of 'infidels' like the Yazidi – be it by death or conversion. What this entails is a clear intent to commit genocide of the Yazidi people.

CRY FOR HELP

With no clear geopolitical partner, Iraqi and Syrian Yazidis face an uncertain and worrisome future. Those states signatory to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) must realize that the responsibility does not stop once Daesh falls, but extends into the realm of transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction.

From historic persecution, to institutional genocidal rape, the Yazidi people have long suffered. It is now that Raqqa has fallen, and Daesh is on its deathbed, that the international community must act. It has a duty to convict Daesh leaders and operatives at the ICC, and to declare the atrocities committed as acts of genocide.



Dean Lavi is a Feature Contributor on the topic of Human Rights at *Global Conversations*. He's passionate about Canada's development as a leading international actor. Graduating in 2018 with a Double Major in Political Science and Criminology at Western, he specialized in international security, transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction.



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