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2017

# the 2016-17

global conversations team

**Executive Producers**

Bojana Radan & Nikki Gladstone

**Associate Producer**

Tessa MacNeil

**Director of Written Content**

Colin Baulke

**Director of Creative Communications**

Gabrielle Lim

**Associate Editors**

Doug Turner

Cadhla Gray

Akshay Sharma

**Co-Directors of Publications**

Alessandra Jenkins

Moyo Arewa

**Written Contributors**

Creed Atkinson

Sarah Israr

Ari Blaff

Michael Thomas

Rinchen-Dolma Karma

Briana MacLeod

Zara Bukhari

Andrew Aulthouse

Ben Windeler

Mojann Zibapour

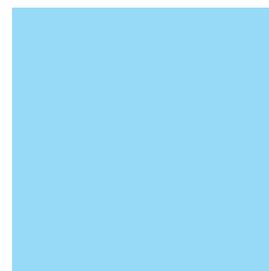
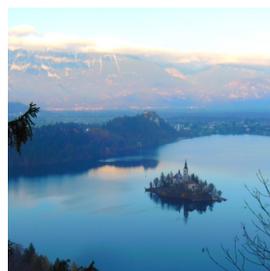
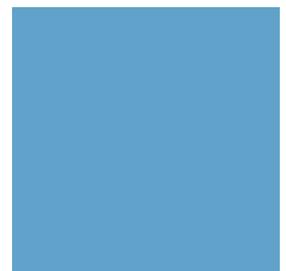
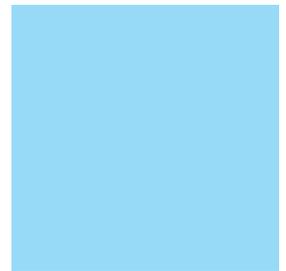
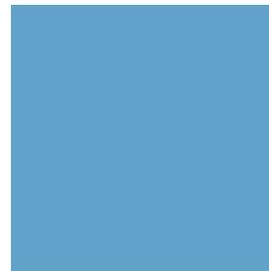
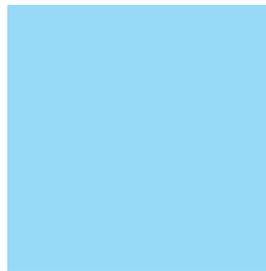
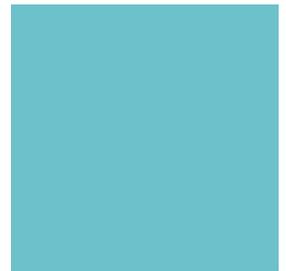
Kyle Jacques

Marko Kljajic

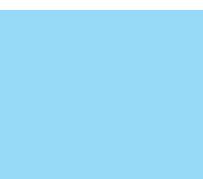
Siobhan Bradley

Tara Jahara

Graeme Stewart-Wilson



Cover Photography:  
Alex Furgala  
Cadhla Gray  
Rinchen-Dolma Karma



Design:  
Nikki Gladstone



# Letter from the Executives

We're thrilled to present the Winter edition of Global Conversations (GC) for the 2016-17 academic year.

This is the second publication for this year's GC team. To date, this has been an exciting year for GC. We strengthened our presence online with a new website ([munkgc.com](http://munkgc.com)). We've run two successful and informative workshops on blogging and pitching an article. At the same time, we have built new partnerships across departments at the University of Toronto. We will continue to find new ways in which GC can broaden its contribution to the larger UofT network.

In this issue, readers will find high caliber, analytical pieces covering everything from U.S. relations with Cuba to the future of private employment in China and Sweden's feminist foreign policy. We hope this thematic diversity speaks to the range of issues playing out on the international stage this year. On the cover, you will also find photography



of talented MGA students Alex Furgala, Cadhla Gray and Rinchen-Dolma Karma.

As always, we encourage our readers to share and respond to our publication. We commit to publishing any written responses to anything we publish and, in tribute to our name, support continuous conversations on these topics.

*Executive Producers,  
Nikki Gladstone & Bojana Radan*



# in this issue



*Creed Atkinson* covers the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) maneuvering in the Asia Pacific.



*Briana MacLeod* reports on European Asylum procedures in light of the ongoing refugee crisis.



*Siobhan Bradley* looks into Sweden's feminist foreign policy and its prospects for success in the 2017 international arena.



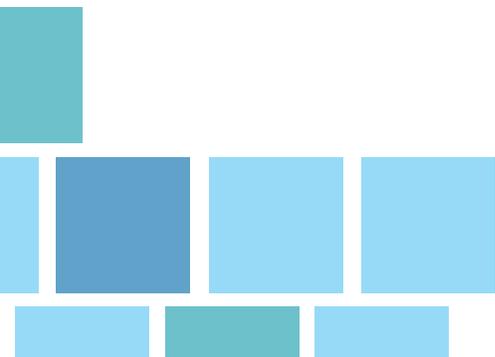
*Michael Thomas* talks about Foxconn and the future of private employment in China.



*Ben Windeler* covers the diverging tones of the U.S. and China in climate change talk.



*Rinchen-Dolma Karma* reports on Taiwan's progress with the LGBTQ community.





*Sarah Israr* details future of smart state infrastructure.



*Andrew Aulthouse* asks what a Trump presidency means for U.S. relations with Cuba.



*Marko Kljajic* covers the recent persecutions of the Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state in northwestern Myanmar.



*Kyle Jacques* investigates human rights incidents in the Canadian mining industry.



*Tara Rajabi* discusses what the forced return of asylum seekers to Afghanistan means for the country.

# A BALANCING ACT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

BY: CREED ATKINSON



Source: DK|Photography, Creative Commons

As the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) either becomes entirely unravelled or significantly restructured with new members, countries in the Asia Pacific will be tasked with recalculating economic and security risks in the region. On January 23, 2017, President Donald J. Trump signed a presidential memorandum requesting that the “United States withdraws as a signatory of the TPP and withdraws from the TPP negotiating process.” Of the 12 original signatories, seven are in the Asia Pacific.

Although China has publicly announced they would be open to being included in TPP negotiations, it seems like this would be undesirable for countries trying to balance against China’s rising economic power. The TPP can be seen as a dual-use instrument - increasing Pacific trade by bridging Asia Pacific with Western Pacific, while simultaneously balancing against China’s growing asymmetric economic interdependence. Former President Barack Obama publicly singled out China over his concerns of China’s

growing role as an actor who is capable of writing “the rules of the global economy.” Ironically, it is the U.S. who is also able to write the rules of the global economy, but China is seen as a larger threat to Asia Pacific countries due to proximity.

The U.S. pulling out of the TPP impacts economic strategy for all participants, but the seven Asia Pacific countries must also remodel their security calculus for the surrounding region. Given their economic and military size, both China and the U.S. can be seen as security and economic threats to countries in the Asia Pacific. However, China is a larger threat due to its close proximity to all seven Asia Pacific members. This leaves the seven Asia Pacific countries with three options to deal with a TPP absent of the U.S.: include China in the trade agreement and further integrate their economies with the mainland; scrap the deal entirely; or, continue pushing for the TPP without the either the U.S. or China as a member.

Trade with China is inevitable for nearly any open economy, especially countries located in the Asia Pacific. Including China in the TPP may not necessarily lead to security concerns, but actually help increase security in the region. As a naval powerhouse, China will be incentivized to ensure that maritime trade routes are protected in the Asia Pacific in order to prevent any disruption in the flow of goods between the TPP members. The downside of including China in the TPP is that asymmetric economic interdependence gives China an advantage that could inadvertently create future insecurity for the other Asia Pacific members when disputes occur. If China is a TPP member and economic linkages are strengthened in the Asia Pacific, they will have the ability to coerce countries with economic sanctions and tariffs should a dispute occur. Although this would hurt China as well, due to their significant asymmetric economic superiority, the damage to China would be relatively small compared to the economic impact it could have on any country it wishes to coerce.

Alternatively, TPP members can continue along without inviting China, or cancel the trade agreement entirely. In this scenario, each Asia Pacific member would likely create bilateral trade agreements with China, if they do not already have them in place. This could mitigate any negative responses from the Trump Administration which would likely question the motives of including China in the TPP. However, China may perceive this decision as going against their interests in the region and push for tighter economic linkages regardless.

Increased trade does not always correlate with increased security between trading partners. However, countries in the Asia Pacific are more likely to feel compelled to balance against China's growing economic and military strength because of the close proximity and immediate threat China poses in the region. Determining if including China in the TPP is optimal from an economic and security perspective is not straight forward, but Asia Pacific countries are undoubtedly reconfiguring their calculus of security and trade in the region because of the U.S.' withdrawal from the TPP.

Decisions on the fate of the TPP will have to be decided in the near future, what implications arise from this are still uncertain. China will likely attempt to

convince TPP members that including them in the partnership is beneficial for all. Many of the Asia Pacific countries will be skeptical however because of the threat China poses to them. The question that remains is - what are the security implications for these smaller Asia Pacific countries that arise from increased asymmetric economic interdependence on a military and economic powerhouse? 



*Creed is a 2nd year Master of Global Affairs (MGA) student at the University of Toronto whose topical interests lie in international security, strategy and game theory, finance and economics, and innovation. Although his regional focuses tend to shift, he is*

*currently most interested in Asia (inclusive of the Middle East) and the U.S. Specifically, he has done research in cybersecurity, economic sanctions, and diplomatic negotiations.*

## EUROPEAN ASYLUM PROCEDURES: CAN EUROPE BUY ITS WAY OUT OF INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

BY: BRIANA MACLEOD

This month, despite less coverage in mainstream news, refugees remain stranded in life-threatening cold weather across Europe.

### REFUGEES VS. ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Refugees are a special class of migrants who receive specific protection under international law, specifically by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. It is important to understand the differentiation between a refugee and an asylum seeker in order to understand the policies related to each. A refugee is 'a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster' (Oxford Dictionary). However, a refugee is not the

same as an asylum-seeker. In comparison, an asylum-seeker is much more distinct group with specific language defined by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as ‘someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed’. Therefore, not every asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker. According to the United Nations, Asylum is a fundamental right and an international obligation.

974,610 asylum applications were rejected by the European Union (EU) in 2016.

## THE DUBLIN REGULATION

The Dublin Regulation is an EU law that determines which Member State is responsible for an asylum claim. Usually, the responsible Member State will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. Therefore, the Dublin system places more responsibility on the external border regions of the EU, especially since the start of the migrant crisis. Consequently, in early 2016, certain countries – such as Hungary – were overburdened by asylum applications to the point that they stopped accepting applications and temporarily closed their borders.

## THE EU-TURKEY DEAL

EU leaders struck a deal with Turkey in March 2016, which sent migrants arriving in Greece back to Turkey in order to discourage people from making the dangerous journey by sea from Turkey to Greece. However, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) warns that the deal sets a dangerous precedent for the future and refused funding from the EU in June 2016 as a protest to their policies.

*“The EU-Turkey deal sets a dangerous precedent for other countries hosting refugees, sending a message that caring for people forced from their homes is optional and that they can buy their way out of providing asylum.”* – MSF website

The EU-Turkey deal raises three main legal issues relating to the human rights obligations of the EU member states. First, both international and EU law prohibits the collective expulsion of foreigners. Secondly, returning a person seeking international protection to Turkey breaches the international recognized duty

of non-refoulement. Non-refoulement is a principle in international law, which forbids the rendering of a victim of persecution to his or her persecutor. Finally, there is the question of whether Turkey constitutes a ‘safe third country’ for refugees. As a result, many claim that the EU is violating international law as well as its own statutes by sending asylum seekers back to Turkey.

Human rights groups have accused Turkey of deporting refugees to unsafe countries including Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. This is problematic for the EU because sending asylum-seekers to a country that is not safe for them without giving them an opportunity to apply for asylum is against international law. As a result, many asylum seekers are lodging legal challenges against governments who fail to provide the international protection that they are required to. Additionally, Access Info Europe is taking the European Commission to the ECJ to obtain its legal analysis of the deal.

## A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT

This month, the Maltese EU presidency proposed to offer Libya a similar style deal to the one between the EU and Turkey. Although this proposal was rejected by the European Commission, it suggests that the concept of buying your way out of asylum is gaining legitimacy on the international stage.

Throughout history, many authorities have violated fundamental human rights and laws in situations of crisis. It is therefore necessary that the European Commission report more on possible human rights abuses resulting from the unprecedented EU-Turkey deal as well as the various asylum procedures adopted in different Member States. Without transparent reporting, it is difficult to know about or speak out against the human rights abuses that are occurring. All EU Member States should ensure access to fair and efficient asylum procedures so that our values are not compromised in these difficult times. 



*Briana just finished her undergraduate degree at Dalhousie University, double majoring in Political Science and International Development Studies. While her ideas about her future are dynamic, becoming a diplomat has always been a dream of hers. Most recently, Briana traveled to Strasbourg to participate in an internship with the Council of Europe.*

# SWEDEN'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: NAÏVE OR NECESSARY?

BY: SIOBHAN BRADLEY



Source: Margot Wallstrom, Creative Commons

In January 2017, Sweden held the month-long presidency of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, where the country aimed to underpin negotiations with its feminist foreign policy goals. The same month saw the UN's host country, the United States, inaugurate a leader whose contempt for women's rights and gender equality translates to a narrow space for a rights and valued-based foreign policy.

This raises the question about the nature of Sweden's feminist foreign policy and its prospects for success in today's international arena?

In 2015, Sweden's foreign minister Margot Wallstrom promoted a foreign policy that emphasizes gender equality as a more balanced means to ensure peace, stability and sustainable economic development. Wallstrom continues to drive this strategy by promoting the rights of women and girls, supporting women's representation in decision-making, and ensuring resources for promoting gender equality.

Wallstrom has matched rhetoric with practice by incorporating a gender perspective in all negotiations, including the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Feminist foreign policy has also become a precondition for accomplishing a wider range of Sweden's security, development, and peace objectives, including fighting sexual and gen-

der-based violence in conflicts.

This January, Sweden brought civil society organizations from Nigeria and Somalia to the UN Security Council to draw attention to the dilemmas and political capacity of women. The country also emphasized the necessity of involving women in political negotiations of the future of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is proven that when women are meaningfully engaged in peace processes, the chance of a peace agreement lasting 15 years increases by 35 per cent. According to Wallstrom, "There cannot be sustainable peace if half the population is excluded."

Sweden's feminist foreign policy doctrine has earned the country both praise and notoriety. For many it is seen as an extension of the country's reputation as a humanitarian superpower and one of the most influential countries in the European Union.

However, it has proved challenging to convince Wallstrom's political constituents and the public, domestically and internationally, that a feminist approach is the right approach. Trying to change deeply ingrained patriarchal structures, gender biases, and international institutions has, as always, encountered global resistance, as critics have decried Sweden's strategy as vague and naïve.

After Wallstrom criticized the treatment of women and human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia in 2015, Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Sweden. Stockholm subsequently cancelled its arms deal worth over \$560 million with Saudi Arabia, infuriating Swedish business leaders. Wallstrom, however, was unrepentant and stood by her strategy in the face of criticism, stating, "I don't think a feminist foreign policy is idealistic. It is the smartest policy you can have at the moment. Every peace agreement has a better chance to succeed if you involve women."

Many have also raised concerns about Sweden becoming a “one-issue” country that necessitates the inclusion of women as part of a broader approach. Elizabeth Weingarten, director of New America’s Global Gender Parity Initiative, affirmed, “[Gender] mainstreaming as just forcing something isn’t a sustainable strategy.” She advises thinking of the perspectives lacking from a certain group, rather than just check marking a gender box.

Beyond Sweden, leaders are applying a gendered lens on global strategies in hopes of empowering women and advancing peace and security. From a gender-equal cabinet in Canada, to South Korea and Japan’s funding increases towards gender equality in fragile states, it is clear that countries are taking steps towards feminist frameworks.

Despite this, it is estimated that women are just 4 per cent of signatories to peace agreements, and only 6 per cent of aid to fragile states prioritizes gender equality. Feminist foreign policies therefore remain primarily rhetorical until they are able to thoroughly and effectively integrate these gender considerations.

Sweden merits attention for its aptitude to merge the ideals of a feminist foreign policy with practicality, and helping to alleviate global problems by offering insightful solutions. While some contend that a feminist foreign policy model will be remembered solely as an audacious proposal, many believe it carries huge potential for being embraced in other countries as a tool to improve peace and security.

Though it is clear that women’s rights as human rights remain controversial among countries and leaders, Sweden is challenging these assumptions by changing how international relations and diplomacy operate. 



*Siobhan is a first year Master of Global Affairs candidate at the Munk School of Global Affairs, and also holds a BA Honours in Political Science with a History minor from Queen’s University. She is passionate about global health, development, gender equity and human rights.*

# FOXCONN AND CHINA: THE FUTURE OF PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC

BY: MICHAEL THOMAS

Despite being one of the most globally recognizable Taiwanese corporations of the past decade, Foxconn has gained global recognition not for its operations in its home jurisdiction, but for its presence in China. The company’s global association with the fiercest political rival of its country of origin has emerged for two very different reasons. The first is the status of Foxconn’s Chinese factories as the main supplier for Apple. In addition to the many factories it owns throughout China, Foxconn has become the world’s largest contract electronics manufacturer and the assembler for many of the world’s top electronics brands. The second reason is the string of over a dozen highly publicized suicides of Foxconn workers in China in 2010. These troubling developments for the company’s Chinese operations has stirred debate about the conditions under which Foxconn employees are asked to work. While these contrasting images have created polarized perceptions of the electronics giant, Foxconn’s importance to the Chinese economy is clear.

As the employer of nearly a million people in mainland China alone, Foxconn is the country’s leading exporter and its largest private employer. The scale of its employment is as impressive as it is vital to the Chinese labour force holistically. It has also led many to view the firm as a beacon of stability that will continue to produce jobs for those seeking employment. However, as a highly-globalized firm in a swiftly changing world, Foxconn’s status as a major supplier of labour for China’s workforce may not be as permanent as many are led to believe. The reasons for this are both political and non-political, and are mostly out of China’s control.

The first of these relates to the current foreign policy environment in Taiwan. Long a political rival of the mainland to which it once belonged, Taiwan has



Source: Jacky See, Creative Commons

recently made efforts to decrease its economic reliance on China. Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, recently implemented her "New Southbound" policy to incentivize Taiwanese companies to shift their operations out of mainland China. Coming into effect at the beginning of 2017, the policy is a five-year plan aimed at reducing Taiwan's economic reliance on the mainland. As one of Taiwan's most important companies, Foxconn may find itself in the policy's crosshairs.

The new administration in the United States could also affect Foxconn's operations in China due to its distaste of any American companies looking to move their manufacturing operations abroad. These sentiments may lead to the administration pressuring Apple to shift its manufacturing operations back to the US. After some speculation that it may be increasing its American presence, Foxconn itself has assured China's leaders that it will not be shifting investment to the US if it faces pressure from US President Donald Trump's policies. However, if Apple sees enough of an incentive from Trump to move its manufacturing back to the US, Foxconn could find itself without its largest customer. This could be a disaster for private employment in China.

A worldwide decline in Apple's sales could pose an additional risk to Foxconn's consistency as a major Chinese employer. In 2016, the tech giant's sales declined by more than 7 per cent. For the iPhone, which drives much of Foxconn's business, sales declined more than 8 per cent. If this decline gains more momentum,

Apple could reduce the amount of units Foxconn produces, thus decreasing the amount of labour the country will supply.

Finally, the rise of automation within Foxconn's Chinese factories could be the strongest blow to the company's employment figures. Last year, Foxconn announced its goal of having automation account for 30 per cent of its operations in Chinese factories by 2020. This is part of a multi-stage plan to eventually have all operations in China conducted via automation. This could cause a major decrease

in the amount of workers employed in China's private sector.

While Foxconn is just one company, its importance could serve as an indicator for the changes that the Chinese economy may face as it expands and increases its global integration. The employment through labour that is supplied in the manufacturing sector has been an important pillar for China's economic growth. A significant share of its supply has come from foreign companies. While foreign policy, declining demand for production, and the increased use of automation all pose the risk of substantially decreasing the scale of privatized labour in China, the country's workforce is still resilient. The effects of these threats could be delayed for decades, or they could be overcome altogether. If this is the case, Foxconn's next challenge will be to increase the satisfaction of the employees which the company's success has been built upon. 



*Michael is a Master of Global Affairs candidate with a broad interest in global capital markets. He is primarily focused on Canada's trade relationships and foreign direct investment outflows, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Michael has held multiple positions*

*in globally-focused organizations, including the Thai-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Descartes Systems Group and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Carleton University.*

# CHINA AND AMERICA: SL

BY: BEN WINDELER

The leaders of the two largest economies in the world are striking diverging tones on global climate change action. One is deriding the threat of climate change, denouncing globally coordinated action, and aiming to bolster his country's fossil fuel industry. The other is stepping in, calling for international action, and investing in what is already the largest renewable energy sector in the world.

A few years ago, it would seem unlikely that the regressive dissenter would be the President of the United States, and the global-minded leader would be China's President Jinping. Yet each country is more than their leader, and progress will also depend on the actions of government and business at the local level.

## TRUMP'S CARBON-POWERED AMERICA

While it is still too soon to determine exactly how President Trump's environmental policies will unfold, it is clear from he and his government's statements that they will backtrack on the progress made under President Obama. Moves including the appointment of Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State, orders to pursue the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, and promises to reinvigorate the coal industry clearly indicate the new government's position on carbon-intensive fossil fuels.

While Trump's policies will certainly impede the country's progress towards its climate goals, the White House is not solely responsible for, and does not entirely control, the nation's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The US led the world in reducing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in 2015, and appears to be continuing that trend. While investments into green technology and renewable energy have helped by decreasing energy demand and chipping away at the dominance of fossil fuels in US energy production, by far the largest factor has been the transition from coal to natural gas. Since natural gas has been a huge boon to the



Source: Craig Mayhew and Robert Simmon, NASA GSFC

US economy, this is a trend that the government is unlikely to reverse. And while the president seems unlikely to take action on US commitments under the Paris Agreement, mayors and private companies are pushing back. Cities and businesses drive the US economy, and their leadership could push the country on track with its climate commitments.

## CHINA'S PUSH FOR CLEARER SKIES

Meanwhile, China appears eager to step into a role of climate action leadership. At the World Economic Forum's 2017 meeting, President Xi Jinping was contrasted against President Trump when he called for global coordination

# LOW CLIMATE PROGRESS



and Guiyang have announced even more ambitious climate goals than those stated in the Paris Agreement. Much of this local action comes to address the multi-dimensional issue of air pollution, which impacts health and productivity. The central government is doing its part to facilitate the transition, by stepping up environmental regulations and decreasing the use of performance indicators based on economic growth.

## AMBLING TO A GREEN FUTURE

Comparing the leaders of China and the United States evokes the tortoise and the hare. President Jinping is presenting himself as the steady leader making gradual progress towards a green future. Presidents Obama and Trump are temperamental opposites: making great strides one moment, then falling behind the next. In both cases, progress remains slow, and comes with caveats. China's world-leading renewable energy sector is laudable, but much of their capacity sits unused due to poor planning around demand. And an energy transition in the US may be promising, but lowered emissions depend on on-site methane capture technology and accordingly stringent environmental regulations that will likely weaken.

China remains the largest total greenhouse gas emitter, and the US is the largest emitter per capita. For both, the source of action on climate change must be deeper than the proclamations and regulations of central government. The world's two largest economies are massive, diverse behemoths, and their net progress on climate change will depend on leadership at the local level. 

on climate change action. State policies give credence to his plea. In 2015 China made USD102.9 billion of new investments in renewable energy, more than the United States and Europe combined. At home, China has incorporated a major focus on reducing air pollution from fossil fuel energy in its most recent Five-Year Plan.

Yet, like in the United States, China's central government cannot dictate the actions of the entire country. At the local level, China's path towards a more environmentally-friendly future is a mixed bag. Some local governments depend significantly on revenue from coal power plants, and are resisting efforts to decrease reliance on coal power. However, many major cities including Beijing, Shanghai,



*Ben graduated from McMaster University in 2015 with a degree in Integrated Science. Ben's experiences include stints as an environmental modeller, a science literacy TA, an AML investigator, and a canoe trip guide. The frontier of science is fascinating, and he believes that clear communication of research findings can benefit professionals in all fields.*

# SMALL STATE, BIG ROLE: TAIWAN LEADS ASIA'S LGBTQ MOVEMENT

BY: RINCHEN-DOLMA KARMA



Source: D Rickchen, Creative Commons

Asia's biggest gay pride parade took place in Taiwan last October, with over 80,000 taking to the streets to call for the Taiwanese government to legalize same-sex marriage. Remarkably, the small island republic is often considered to be the most LGBTQ-friendly country in the region. Indeed, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen publically stated her support for same-sex marriage during her election campaign in 2015. In addition, a draft bill that would grant marriage equality passed a committee hearing in the legislature on December 26, 2016, and a firm proposal is expected to be presented to the Legislative Yuan sometime in the Spring and voted on later this year. All these developments indicate that Taiwan could become the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. While this trend may seem to be at odds with the predominant Confucian values of Taiwanese society that place much importance on traditional notions of the family, several factors have led to the growth of the LGBTQ movement in Taiwan.

## CIVIL SOCIETY GROWTH AND LEGISLATION

Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan has seen an explosion of civil society organizations who have campaigned for more political openness and the right to have a diversity of political parties. These social movements not only helped end the Nationalist Party's political dominance, but also paved the way for issues such as LGBTQ rights to enter mainstream discourse. It was largely because of Taiwan's transition to democracy, the opening of its politics, and the active civic engagement of its population that the republic was able to implement various legislation to protect the rights of LGBTQ communities.

Taiwan is the only place in Asia where there are anti-discrimination laws on the basis of sexual orientation. The Employment Equality Act prohibits employ-

ers from discriminating against employees because of their sexual orientation. Similarly, the Gender Equity Education Act forbids discrimination against students on the basis of their gender or sexual orientation, and “affirmatively” requires schools to provide assistance to students who are disadvantaged on these grounds. The Ministry of Education further obliges textbooks to promote tolerance for LGBTQ communities. All these civic and legislative developments have arguably made Taiwanese society more open to the LGBTQ movement, and continue to remain relevant as the republic enters a new era of progress: the social movement for marriage equality.

## POLITICAL CLIMATE

In addition to legislative support, Taiwan’s ambiguous nationhood status may also be a crucial factor in making the island more receptive to the needs of LGBTQ communities. The cross-strait relationship between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China has been a highly contested topic since 1949. While China continues to claim sovereignty over Taiwan, the number of citizens who consider themselves Taiwanese, as opposed to Chinese, has been steadily growing. Arguably, this shift in self-identification contributed to the election of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for the first time in 2000, and again in 2016. The DPP is more progressive in its policies, differing from its counterpart, the Nationalist Party. It considers Taiwan as a separate entity independent from China, and asserts a distinct Taiwanese identity predicated on the basis of political and civil liberties.

The 2016 election was a decisive victory for the DPP, which secured a majority in the Legislative Yuan for the first time and brought Taiwan its first female president. The DPP has been largely supportive of gay rights, and as noted earlier, President Ing-wen has spoken publically in favor of same-sex marriage. Her appointment of Audrey Tang, a transgender entrepreneur, as a minister without portfolio illustrates her stance on this issue well. In the context of this climate of progressiveness and the DPP’s overall vision to promote a separate liberal Taiwanese identity, it is apparent that political support for LGBTQ rights has increased since Ing-wen’s election victory in 2016.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

It is important to note that the movement on same-sex marriage is not uncontroversial. Recent polls suggest that support and opposition to equal marriage rights are at about 46.3 per cent and 45.4 per cent respectively. Rallies against the island’s increasingly vocal LGBTQ community continue to take place, despite Taiwan being a young liberal democracy; Taiwanese society is still very much defined by socially conservative values. Nonetheless, the existence of such a lively debate in itself demonstrates Taiwan’s openness to discussing sexuality, which continues to be taboo in neighboring societies. However, what the future holds for the LGBTQ movement in Taiwan and whether it will become the first country in Asia to grant equal marriage rights remains uncertain. (CC)



*Richen-Dolma is a second year Master of Global Affairs student. She graduated from McGill University with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and East Asian Studies. Her research interests include: Central and East Asian politics, human rights, international law, and refugee politics. In summer 2016, she interned in the political section of the Embassy of Canada to Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.*

# THE FUTURE OF SMART STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

BY: SARAH ISRAR

In 1985, *Back to the Future* predicted the future to be a world of hoverboards, wireless devices and smart clothing. While the past thirty-two years haven’t produced commercial hoverboards as the movie predicted, *Back to the Future* did get one thing right – smart technology.

Referenced as both the digital and information age, the world has become more wireless, computerized and dependent on information transference. While the capitalization on computer microminiaturization has brought upon many advances such as faster computers, a larger capacity for storage and a boom

in smart technology, the increasing degree of world interconnectedness has brought problems that were unpredictable fifty years ago. Namely, the hacking of systems the world has become so dependent on.

Smart cities, being only an idea a few decades ago, have become a core focus for countries around the world. Smart cities are about maximizing the potential gain derived from ICT technologies and aligning state infrastructure with the benefits of integrating digital technologies. According to a report by Grand View Research, the global smart cities market is expected to hit \$1.4 trillion by 2020, which is triple the size of the global smart-city market in 2013. This market encompasses all facets of an urban metropolis, such as power grids, roads, utilities and public resources. The appeal of these smart cities is that they are not only seen as energy efficient and thus more friendly to the environment, they are projected to propel economic growth and thus attract foreign direct investment.

While many feel uneasily about the rising degree of societal technological dependence, others believe smart cities present themselves as a one-size-fits-all solution to urban problem such as pollution, urban mobility, street lighting, and safety of citizens. For a world where population density has created congestion and a plethora of development issues in urban sprawls, smart-cities represent an almost too good to be true solution.

A major drawback is the fact that smart cities cannot exist without an increased threat to inter and intra state security. Capitalization on this sector has already begun. Predicting that an increased technological dependence paves way for state vulnerabilities to cyber attacks, the smart security market already has a market tag of \$77.2 billion, seeing large gains of 14.8% annually until 2020. However, despite this investment, nations states are beginning to wonder if it is possible for a smart-grid to ever be truly secure. For example, the first solar paneled road was launched in France: a \$5.2 million dollar project spanning 30,000 square feet. A recent Forbes study proved that not only can hackers gain access to the power grid through the use of solar panels, but that the process as it stands today is relatively easy and poses a threat to drivers as signage and street lights can easily be manipulated. Late last year, a man in California hacked the solar panels in his own home and to his surprise, gained access to

information regarding the power supply of over 1000 homes in his district and information on his neighbors.

Although it is in its early days, it would be dangerous to underestimate the threats that arise from depending on a wholly electrical state infrastructure. According to a study done by the United States Government Accountability Office, even secure infrastructures like that of the U.S. Department of Defense are incredibly vulnerable to hackers. To heedlessly propel into a smart-grid future without accounting for cyberattacks would be foolhardy, and a Lloyds Bank study worries that cyberattacks could cost America up to \$1 trillion in the future due to the lack of secure and appropriate cyber defense. Ukraine's power grid was knocked offline, damaging physical infrastructure, and leaving 700,000 homes without power for several hours. Russia was supposedly behind the attack, but as is the case with many cyber attacks, it cannot be conclusively determined.

The solution to this problem is unclear. Hackers are known for learning new systems and exploiting any vulnerabilities they find. Hackers, whether they are individuals or organizations, gain their greatest strength from being adaptable. Ultimately, for smart-grids to be an integral component of state infrastructure in the future, governments need to find a way to match this malleability in both technology and strategy. Otherwise, incidents such as the one that happened in New Jersey last year – where an electronic street sign was hacked to spell out the word “poop” – will become not only a recurrence, but a common occurrence with a hefty price tag behind it. (GC)



*Sarah is a published writer and freelance journalist. Her work as a reporter has been published in the non-partisan International Affairs journal Freedom Observatory, the South China Morning Post's country business reports, and her literary pursuits have been recognized by the University of Toronto which awarded her the Sonny Ladoo Book Prize award in 2014. Trilingual, and having lived in three continents by the age of ten, she is an avid traveler and is passionate about cybersecurity, foreign affairs and ethical sustainability.*

# WHAT DOES TRUMP MEAN FOR U.S. RELATIONS WITH CUBA?

BY: ANDREW AULHOUSE



Source: Andy Farmer, Creative Commons

Last November two seismic events took place in North American politics. On November 8, 2016, Donald J. Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States in the wake of widespread shock. Just weeks later, former Cuban president and revolutionary Fidel Castro passed away. While Castro's death presented the end of an era in Cuba and opened the possibility of greater engagement with the United States, the ascension of Trump to the White House threatens to reverse the thaw that has been taking place in the traditionally frosty relationship between the two countries. How to treat these new relations will present an early diplomatic test for the Trump administration.

Following over five decades of economic embargo and diplomatic isolation, President Barack Obama re-established diplomatic ties with Cuba at the end of 2014. Since then, restrictions have been eased on travel, commerce, and remittances. Many of Obama's policies on Cuba were implemented as executive orders,

and could ultimately be reversed now that Trump is President.

As with many of his policy positions, Trump's stance on Cuba has been inconsistent. During his career as a businessman, executives from Trump Hotels & Casino Resorts allegedly violated the terms of the embargo when they travelled to Cuba in 1998 to inquire about a business deal and spent money there without obtaining the necessary license. Just a year later, Trump penned an op-ed in the Miami Herald stating he was opposed to doing business in Cuba, arguing that it would subsidize the oppression of its people.

Early on in his presidential campaign, Trump took a relatively soft stance on Cuba, saying that he was "fine" with Obama's push for engagement, and later said that he would "probably" continue diplomatic relations with Cuba. However, he wanted "much better deals than we're having."

Later in his election campaign, Trump's stance on Cuba shifted. In October, while speaking to an audience of anti-Castro Cuban-Americans in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, he said that Obama's deal with Cuba was "one-sided" and promised to reverse the actions that had been taken to re-establish ties.

Following his election, Trump appointed Mauricio Claver-Carone, the founder of an anti-Castro lobbying group, to serve on the transition team at the Department of the Treasury, the branch of government responsible for dealing with embargo violations. More recently, top advisors within the Trump administration have indicated that the president will reverse the course set by Obama unless the Cuban government makes concessions on political and religious freedoms.

While Trump has made frequent references to "the deal" with Cuba, there are in fact a number of agreements that govern the relationship between the United States and Cuba, on issues ranging from travel, to direct mail, to dealing with oil spills. It is possible that Trump may choose to keep some agreements in place and discard others.

Congress maintains control over economic sanctions, ultimately meaning that the decisions about the embargo will fall under its purview. Complicating matters is that the debate over Cuba is not neatly divided along partisan lines. There is both opposition and support for greater engagement with Cuba among members of both parties. Given these divisions and Trump's fluid views on the issue, it is unlikely that there will be any progress on ending the embargo.

Obama's recent Cuba policies were well received by the American public. A Pew Research poll found that 63 per cent of Americans were in favor of restoring diplomatic relations, and 66 per cent would like to see an end to the trade embargo. Industries such as shipping, agriculture, oil and gas, telecommunications, and Wall Street have all been supportive of greater engagement. A Florida International University poll found that the majority of Cuban-Americans supported normalizing ties and ending the embargo, indicating a generational shift in attitudes has likely taken place.

Cuba faces an aging and shrinking population, heavy

foreign debt, and severe economic stagnation. With few allies, it will likely have to turn to international markets, including the United States, if it wishes to alleviate its hardships. If the Trump administration is acting rationally, it will likely want avoid sowing chaos on the island by further damaging its economy, and the waves of refugees turning up on the beaches of Florida that such action might create. Even if there is no further thaw in relations, there are reasons why the status quo is favorable to both countries.

While policy decisions under a Trump administration are difficult to predict, it is likely that pressure from domestic business interests and public opinion will encourage a maintenance of the status quo, though no further advances are likely to take place. If Trump is thinking like a businessman, this is the likely policy that will be pursued. If not, then it will be a capricious situation to predict. 



*Andrew is a second year Master of Global Affairs student. This past summer he interned at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York City. Andrew previously studied transnational criminal networks in North America as a Research Assistant at the Queen's University School of Policy Studies. Andrew is passionate about all things political, and has a keen interest in North American relations, Canadian and American foreign policy, and American presidential politics.*

## WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE ROHINGYA IN MYANMAR?

BY: MARKO KLJAJIC

**D**o the recent persecutions of the Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state in northwestern Myanmar amount to possible crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing? Or are these external allegations of atrocities merely propaganda intended to attract, manipulate, and provoke international attention against the Myanmar government?

In the early hours of Oct. 9, 2016, dozens of Islamist militants coordinated a surprise attack against



Source: Steve Gumaer, Creative Commons

three separate Myanmar border outposts that left nine policemen dead. Police General Zaw Win said the attackers declared they were Rohingya. Another government official said the attack was allegedly carried out by the Aqa Mul Mujahidin, which has links to the Rohingya Solidarity Organization – a small militant Rohingya nationalist group that has been often accused of organizing attacks against government security forces over the years, as well as having links to international Islamic terrorist organisations. The government consequently launched a “clearance operation” to neutralize the alleged terrorist threat in the region.

Since the operations began four months ago, human rights observers have reported serious and persistent violations of human rights. More than 100 people have been killed and residents and refugees accuse security forces of arbitrarily detaining and mistreating civilians in the counter-insurgency operation. At least 1,500 buildings have been razed and at least 65,000

Rohingya have been displaced into neighboring Bangladesh, where they are confined to inadequate camps with scarce resources and limited access to education and healthcare. International humanitarian aid for more than 130,000 people remains suspended by the government, while international journalists are still prohibited from entering the northern part of the Rakhine state where most of the violence has occurred. John McKissick, a senior representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, claimed that security forces have been “killing men, shooting them, slaughtering children, raping women, burning and looting houses, forcing these people to cross [into Bangladesh to] achieve their ultimate goal of ethnic cleansing of the Muslim minority in Myanmar.” The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Special Envoy to Myanmar Syed Hamid Albar has called upon the UN to intervene in Myanmar “to stop further escalation of violence against Rohingya Muslims and avoid another genocide like in Cambodia and Rwanda.” Several members of the international community, including

the US, the EU, Canada, and Malaysia, have called for international observers to be allowed in the region and for the resumption of humanitarian aid. Myanmar authorities strongly deny any allegations of wrongdoing and continue to insist that a lawful counter-insurgency operation is underway. Presidential spokesperson Zaw Htay told the international media that he was disappointed by the allegations made by McKissick and said “he should only speak based on concrete and strong evidence on the ground.” However, this would be an impossible task given the complete lack of access to international investigators to the area. Htay criticized calls for UN intervention by outside observers as guided by misinformation. He said it would only end up facing “unwanted resistance from local people” and added that the government is committed to “working seriously and carefully on the situation in Rakhine.”

In January, the government established the Maungtau Region Investigation Commission to investigate the situation. The Commission found that the attacks were “a conspiratorial terrorist attack designed so that the international community would take an interest in the matter” and denied “external allegations” of human rights violations, cautioning readers to remain mindful of “fabricated rumors and news.” The Commission concluded that there was no evidence of “genocide and religious persecution in the region” given the presence of a “Bengali population and an increasing population of Malawi” and the existence of “mosques and religious edifices.”

UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee visited Myanmar in January for a twelve-day investigation of the region. Lee criticised Myanmar for its aggressive crackdown on Rohingya Muslims and urged the military to respect the law and comply with human rights. She found some of the official denials of human rights violations “quite incredible” as they offered no evidence against persistent reports of abuses and policies of systematic and institutionalised discrimination against the Rohingya. Lee said that “some of the portrayal of the situation may have been sensationalised” and that more data and evidence is needed to assess, evaluate, and respond to those in need, but emphasised that the “situation is worse than at any point in the past few years.” Lee did not comment on the possibility of atrocity crimes, but said the mistreatment of the Rohingya population appears less like isolated incidents and more like a “common practice.” Whether atrocity

crimes have been committed in Myanmar requires further investigation, but it is undeniable that the government has not upheld its responsibility to protect its population. It is important that the international community continues to pressure the government to restore international humanitarian aid and allow international observers to monitor the situation 



*Marko Kljajic is currently a MGA Candidate and enrolled in the Collaborative Program in Ethnicity and Pluralism Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto. Marko holds an Honours B.A. in International Relations and a Minor in Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction from the University of Western Ontario.*

## TIME FOR CANADA TO TAKE ACTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN MINING INDUSTRY

BY: KYLE JACQUES

**O**n January 17 2007, a half-dozen armed men claiming to work for Hudbay Mineral Inc., a Canadian mining corporation, stormed the one-room house of a woman living in Lote Ocho Guatemala. The men took turns raping her, before dragging her from her home and setting it on fire. There were ten other reported incidents of gang rape in the community that day, and many other homes were torched.

Two years later, on June 18 2009, the body of Marcela Rivera, a Salvadoran political activist and opponent of a proposed mine from the Canadian Pacific Rim Mining Corporation, was found dead in a well with his fingernails removed and indications that he had been strangled to death. On December 29 of that year, another prominent opponent of the mine, eight-months pregnant at the time, was assassinated in front of her two-year old son.

These are only a few of the incidents described in a recent report from Osgoode Hall Law School called “The Canada Brand: Violence and Canadian Mining

Companies in Latin America.” The report, compiled by Law Professor Shin Imai with assistance from law students at Osgoode, McGill, and Harvard, documents 44 deaths, 403 injuries, and 709 cases of criminalization, including arrests, detentions, and charges, that are in some way connected to Canadian mining operations in the region.

While the report does not claim to assign direct legal liability to Canadian companies in any of the documented cases, it maintains that “the close proximity of Canadian mining operations in Latin America to violence and criminalization, paired with the frequency with which such incidents occur, demonstrate a significant systemic problem that demands action by

the Canadian government.”

It also stresses that, even if Canadian companies are not to be held directly legally liable, there is still a troubling complicity in the creation of a “community context where violence and criminalization could occur.” In one instance, for example, Tahoe Resources, a Vancouver-based corporation, commenced a lawsuit against the government of Guatemala, demanding greater protection for its mines and from the large-scale protests that had erupted around it. Although the court dismissed the case, by the end of the year there were an estimated 7 deaths, 29 injuries, and 50 arrests connected to government actions against those protesting the mine.



Source: Maina Kiai, Creative Commons

This apparent complicity in acts of violence can even be found in many companies’ disclosure statements and risk reports. According to a statement from Barrick Gold, for example, the “manner in which the company’s personnel respond to civil disturbances and criminal activities can give rise to additional risks where those responses are not conducted in a manner

that is consistent with international standards relating to the use of force and respect for human rights.” This, it goes on, “can result in harm to employees or community members [and] increase community tensions.”

Companies listed on the Canadian stock exchange are legally required to disclose information that may affect their business to Canadian Securities Adminis-

trators. However, the report finds a “marked disparity between what was reported by local media sources, NGOs and academics, and what Canadian companies disclosed about the same events.” Only 24.2 per cent of incidents resulting in deaths and only 12.3 per cent of injuries to community members, for example, were reported by the relevant companies.

Indeed, it appears that relatively lax standards on company disclosures are one of the reasons why companies prefer to be incorporated in Canada. A report from Tahoe Resources, for example, says that “the regulatory and compliance costs to us under U.S. securities laws as a U.S. domestic issuer will be significantly more than the costs incurred as a Canadian foreign issuer.”

The current mechanisms in Canada for enforcing corporate social responsibility (CSR) abroad have little power to actually investigate allegations or mediate conflicts, and primarily monitor adherence to voluntary, non-enforceable CSR codes. While the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor can recommend the withdrawal of Canadian embassy support and funding from Export Development Canada for non-complying companies, there is not yet any evidence that it has done so.

The Osgoode Hall report is not the first to document these human rights abuses or to call on the Canadian government to take more responsibility. Four United Nations bodies have insisted that Canada do more to hold its mining companies and their subsidiaries accountable, while the American Commission on Human Rights has called on Canada to help prevent the continuation of “multiple human rights violations.”

In 2010 the Federal Liberals themselves, while in opposition, tried to pass Bill C-300, which would have created a new ombudsman’s office with the power to investigate complaints of Canadian companies and, if necessary, deny further government funding. Now in power, Justin Trudeau has promised a “Canada’s Back” brand of foreign policy that seeks to position the country as an exemplar for how to conduct business and diplomacy abroad. Until the government renews its initiative to hold these Canadian mining companies accountable, then it too can be considered complicit in the violence and human rights abuses that continue to proliferate. 



*Kyle Jacques graduated from McGill University in 2014 with an Honours Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science. While at McGill he worked as a research assistant on a book about the history of socialist political thought. After graduating, he worked as a freelance writer for a current affairs journal based out of Montréal, writing on various issues surrounding international human rights. He later traveled to Guatemala, where he conducted research for an organization that provides skills training and employment assistance to returned international migrants. He is in his first year of the MGA program.*

## THE “JOINT WAY FORWARD” AGREEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN

BY: TARA RAJABI



Source: Bruno Pagnanelli, Creative Commons

In January, a second round of 26 Afghan asylum seekers from Germany were returned to Kabul as part of an agreement reached between the EU and the Afghan government in October of last year. The agreement, titled “Joint Way Forward” (JWF), allows an unlimited number of rejected asylum seekers of Afghan nationality to be returned to Afghanistan. December saw the first round of returns in what has the potential to be a mass deportation of asylum seekers.

The agreement was established amidst a sensitive political climate regarding refugees and migrants in Europe. German officials, for example, after having

opened their borders to asylum seekers in the summer of 2015, faced heavy criticism and reduced public support for the policy in the months following. The JWF agreement is the latest step in a series of efforts to reduce this strain. Like the heavily publicized agreement between the EU and Turkey regarding Syrian asylum seekers, the JWF makes efforts to reduce the numbers of refugees on the European continent.

The agreement was presented alongside a conference hosted by the EU in Brussels regarding international aid commitments to the war-ravaged nation. This conference resulted in an agreement to pledge \$3.75 billion to Afghanistan in annual development aid over the next four years, on the condition that the nation meets its political and financial reform commitments outlined in a 2012 conference in Tokyo. The conference saw the development of the Tokyo Framework, a benchmark against which Afghanistan was to be measured in future agreements.

However, the JWF agreement, established alongside the international aid commitments, has been heavily criticized since its inception. Transparency International has commented on the lack of progress on preventing corruption in the nation, stating that of the 22 commitments made to combatting corruption, the Afghan government has only implemented two. Corruption had been outlined in the Tokyo Framework as an area in need of improvement. The shortcomings don't seem to stop there; another benchmark was progress in democratic elections, which were not held or standardized by 2015, as donor nations had hoped. While these standards were not met, the conference in Brussels concluded with plans to pledge more aid. This indicated that true development and stability were not the only, or even primary, objective of the funds.

EU officials have denied that the donor commitments were dependent on any factors. However, a leaked EU memo outlined their stance that the conference, and subsequent donor support, be conditional on an agreement by the Afghan government to repatriate rejected asylum seekers. The agreement went ahead with the approval of alternate deputy, after Sayed Hussein Alemi Balkhi, the Afghan minister for refugees and repatriation, refused to sign the deal. Criticisms from rights organizations, such as Integrity Watch Afghanistan, have pointed to casual discussions at the

Brussels conference, in which delegates were told by Afghan and international officials that the agreement was necessary in order to secure international aid.

Despite these accusations, the repatriation deal, alongside the Brussels agreement, has come into effect. Now, the question remains as to what the effects will be for Afghanistan. The nation is still highly insecure, with the Afghan government controlling only two-thirds of the population, and the Taliban controlling approximately one-tenth. Economically, Afghanistan offers little opportunity for its existing population, with unemployment rates at approximately 35%, and 400,000 young people joining the workforce each year. Additionally, insecurity in the way of suicide bombings and executions are not infrequent in the country. Returning tens of thousands of migrants in such a climate will put an unmanageable strain on Afghan institutions.

Amidst this, difficult conditions in Pakistan have prompted many of the 1.5 million Afghan refugees there to return home. Last year, the UN reported the return of approximately 370,000 refugees to Afghanistan, an influx not dissimilar to what Europe has been experiencing. Such a movement in an economically and politically unstable climate may mean setbacks for development goals in the country. European leaders are in a position to understand full well the difficulties in managing such an influx.

It remains to be seen what the effects of these decisions will mean for Afghanistan in the long term. What is certain, however, is that the country is still experiencing conflict, instability, and economic strain. The forced return of migrants from Europe not only may exacerbate these issues, but it may undermine development goals set by the international community, and undo progress made so far. (CC)



*Tara is a first year Master of Global Affairs student at the University of Toronto and holds a BSc in Environmental Science from the University of Calgary. Her interests lie in the intersection of human rights and migration, international law, sustainability, and the interplay between conflict and climate change.*