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We would like to thank our partners and sponsors as well as a special thank you to Dr. Sara Dorman, for her continued support.
Welcome,

I am thrilled to present to you *Leviathan*’s second issue of the academic year, ‘Belief’. The theme for this issue was decided upon because of its applicability to every facet of humanity. A belief can be an opinion, a perspective, an ideology, a conviction, a moral standpoint, an assumption, or a religion. Beliefs can motivate or repress, catalyse or prevent, accelerate or hinder; they assist in explaining how and why the status quo exists, while also explaining what causes a diversion from it. Beliefs can be both explanatory and provocative; in order to understand the geopolitical landscape of today, we must discern the underlying belief systems that are at work. The articles within this issue seek to explore the beliefs that form the foundations of international and domestic politics. We have reintroduced Regional Profiles in this issue to bring several individuals to your attention, who we find thought provoking and captivating.

The cover photo for ‘Belief’ depicts a vigil at the Place de la Republique in Paris shortly after the Charlie Hebdo attack. The phrase, ‘we are not afraid,’ made its way around the world on social media and news outlets in January 2015, and again in November of the same year. The solidarity and compassion expressed with the statement reverberated around the world and united the citizens of Europe against the threat of terror.

Despite this display of unity and proclamations of courage, many of the articles in this issue outline a shift to the right of the political spectrum that suggests, as Maria Gharesifard explores, that perhaps we are afraid, and politicians are capitalizing on that fear. Those supporting ‘Prevent’ legislation in the United Kingdom, Donald Trump in the United States, Front Nationale in France, and the Dutch Party for Freedom in the Netherlands have utilised fear to further their aims and blame immigration for the woes of their nation. Merle Jungenkrüger analyses growing support for Donald Trump while Savannah Moss explores polarisation of the Republican party at the hands of the right-wing extremists of the Tea Party. Samuel Phillips discusses the incompatibility of the idealistic Afghanistan Mohammed Ashraf Ghani imagines and the radically different country he governs. Andrea Valentino illustrates the echoes of xenophobia that reverberate in Lebanon today, handed down from Pierre Geyamel decades ago.

Despite the worrying trend toward, and increase in support for, far-right political parties and their troubling rhetoric, people all over the world are making progress that bears testament to the cover photo and the expression, ‘we are not afraid.’ Agnes Steil explores Angela Merkel’s unyielding ethical convictions and her position as a champion against xenophobia. David Kelly discusses Pope Francis’ non-traditional attitudes toward Catholicism in the LGBT community. Molly van Niekerk discusses the election of Liberia’s first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is a fierce advocate of human rights and gender equality. Niall Spencer outlines changes to the delicate balance between Taiwan and China now that the former has elected its first female president, Tsai Ing-Wen. Rafael Rosales explores the success of the ‘new majority’ in Venezuela’s parliament that demands transparency from President Maduro; while Hannah Markay outlines the dissatisfaction of Peruvians with their current government and the use of the Inca as a symbol of Peruvian determination. The articles in this issue are both humbling and inspiring, and they allow us to analyse the rudimentary beliefs that so heavily influence the world we live in.

‘Belief’ garnered a record-breaking number of submissions, eliciting 51 articles in total. I would like to thank our talented contributors, dedicated staff, and enthusiastic readers. I would also like to extend thanks to Dr. Ailsa Henderson, the Edinburgh Political Union, and the University of Edinburgh’s Politics and International Relations Department for their continued support. I must express my gratitude to Sarah Garmston and Nicholas Pugh for their vital work in the production and editing of the journal.

I am pleased to announce that our third and final issue of this academic year is ‘The Individual’. The deadline for submissions is midnight on 9th of March; I encourage you all to submit an article. Further details about the next issue can be found on our website.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of *Leviathan*.

Sincerely,

Jessica Killeen
Editor in Chief
Jessica Killeen  
**Editor in Chief**
Jessica is a third-year student of Sociology and Politics. Having lived in London, Paris, Los Angeles, and Nashville, she was the youngest-ever Editor in Chief of her high school newspaper. Before being elected as Editor in Chief of *Leviathan*, she served as the regional editor for North America in her first year, as well as *Leviathan*’s Chief of Production in her second year. Jessica was also elected as the University of Edinburgh’s 2015-2016 Disabilities and Mental Wellbeing Liberation Group Convener. Her passions include furthering women’s empowerment and education and mental health and disability activism, among others.

Nicholas Pugh  
**Deputy Editor in Chief**
Nick is a third-year student of International Relations at the University of Edinburgh and in his second year, he was *Leviathan*’s Africa Editor. He has grown up on both coasts of the United States, but calls North Carolina, Hawaii, and Germany home. In addition to his work at *Leviathan*, Nick is involved in the Edinburgh Political Union and the Cross Country and Cycling clubs. He is currently working to start the ’Brothers in Arms Initiative,’ an intercultural communications program that aims to bring together the children of the men and women who have served together in combat and reconnect veterans to their ‘brothers’ in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Agnes Steil  
**Treasurer**
Agnes is a second-year student of International Relations and was a member of *Leviathan*’s Production Team last year. Born in Berlin, she also lived in France, Italy and Belgium and now excited calls Edinburgh her new home. Agnes is very interested in all sorts of media and enjoyed her opportunity to intern this summer at the editorial office of a political talk show, produced by the German national TV-channel. Next to media and politics, she loves travelling and took a gap year to intern at a European Union liaison office in Brussels and the German Centre for Venetian studies in Venice.

Sarah Garmston  
**Chief of Production**
Sarah is a fourth-year Graphic Design student at Edinburgh College of Art. Her passion for typography and editorial design has brought her to *Leviathan* as the Chief of Production this year. Sarah wants to not only show that the production side can be a fun process, but that we can achieve a professional standard in the design of the journal. During her final year, Sarah has set up a student-led design agency as a part of her studies and continues to work with clients across the university.

Larissa Sterchi  
**Digital Director**
Larissa is a fourth-year joint honours student in History and Politics. She has lived in Zurich, Dubai and now Edinburgh, and is striving for an international career in politics. As a co-host of a weekly radio show called ‘Angles’ she enjoys discussion and debate, and providing people with new perspectives and playing the devil’s advocate. At the University, she is also the Committee Leader for Peer Support at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, whilst teaching German to four year old kids on Saturdays. In her spare time, she cycles, spends hours on design softwares and loves watching Iranian films.

Valentina Paradiso  
**Fundraising Director**
Valentina is a second-year student of Sociology and Politics. Born and raised in Northern Italy, she cultivated a passion for international cooperation and social enterprise during her early high school years. Valentina served in the International Red Cross for 4 years and worked in the Event Management sector of an agency based in Milan. Last June she was awarded with the University of Edinburgh Principal’s Go Abroad Fund, which gave her the opportunity to volunteer for a local NGO in Phnom Penh and cooperate with Unicef Cambodia over the summer. In her free time, she enjoys yoga, learning new languages, travelling, and stealing people’s secret recipes.

Charlotte Gower  
**Africa Editor**
Charlotte is a second-year student of History and Politics at the University of Edinburgh. She grew up in London and now lives in Suffolk. She has spent significant amounts of time working in Sierra Leone and Malaysia for UNHCR affiliated organisations, which prompted her interest in international development and politics. In addition to her role at *Leviathan*, she is a Lead Consultant for FreshSight and enjoys volunteering for Edinburgh Marrow. In her spare time, she enjoys travelling and sailing.

Nishad Sanzagiri  
**Asia- Pacific Editor**
Nishad is a third-year student of International Relations with Quantitative Methods at the University of Edinburgh. Born in India, he has done most of his schooling in the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. During the first two years of university, he worked for The Independent, interned at the Daily Telegraph and Times of India, and blogged for The Guardian. In addition to his work at *Leviathan*, he is also the Vice-President of the University of Edinburgh Society for Quantitative Research and is involved in the Badminton and Gliding clubs. In his free time, he can usually be found with a book in one of Edinburgh’s many quaint cafés.

Samuel Phillips  
**Europe & Russia Editor**
Sam Phillips is a first-year International Relations student here at the University of Edinburgh. He is originally from Seattle, Washington, and enjoys the similar weather and landscape in Edinburgh. Sam’s research is focused on the politics of the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact, specifically the nature of political parties in those countries. He is currently involved in a project to determine to what extent political parties enable democracy in Uzbekistan.

Jessica Killeen
Kanzanira Thorington

Kanzanira is a third year student of Law and International Relations from Connecticut. As a second year, she was a member of *Leviathan*'s Production Team and is also a member of the Edinburgh Political Union. This summer she worked as a student law clerk for the Connecticut State Treasurer where she was able to further her interests in sustainable development and international investment law.

Anna Sears

Anna is a second year postgraduate student in the International Relations of the Middle East with Arabic programme. After spending the summer studying in Palestine, she is now starting work on her dissertation, which will explore the relationship between neoliberal aid and changing ideas of political legitimacy in the Levant. Anna completed her Bachelor’s degree in International Relations at Wesleyan University in the United States with concentrations in Middle Eastern Studies and Hebrew. She looks forward to working with writers this year to find new and creative ways of addressing the issues facing the Middle East and giving a platform to student ideas.

Barbara Wojazer

Barbara Wojazer is a second year student of Russian and Politics. Originally from Paris, Barbara chose Scotland because of the greater freedom that students have in choosing their classes and building their degrees, and more generally in getting involved in whatever they find interesting. She speaks German, Russian, and some Spanish. This summer, Barbara interned and published for French Newspaper, Le Monde, in the International Politics section.

Betzy Hänninen

Betzy Hänninen is a Norwegian first year International Relations student. Betzy has a broad background, with experience in many different types of media production. In high school, she specialized in digital and printed media formats and last year, she worked in the media department of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters as a member of the Royal Norwegian Air Force.

Victor Yip

Victor is a third year student of Sociology. Originally from Hong Kong, he lived in Bangkok for 15 years, before moving to Edinburgh. As well as being a long time member of his high school Model United Nations organization, he was also involved in running the group "Dreams We Believe In", aimed at promoting empathy towards those affected by HIV/AIDS locally. He has also interned in the daily national newspaper, The Bangkok Post, covering social and economic stories on the ASEAN region.

Merle Jungenkrüger

Merle Jungenkrüger is a first year International Relations student. Born in Hamburg, she is now excited to call Edinburgh her new home. Merle was a part of the student-run café at her school and used to be a youth leader in church-based youth work. She is now also involved with Model United Nations at the university.

Jack Gray

Jack is a second year student of History and Politics. He hopes to continue the tradition of *Leviathan*'s high quality design, and will help to ensure each writer’s article gets an appearance worthy of its content. Jack has contributed to *Leviathan* before, and is happy to help aspiring writers as well.

Sara Myers

Sara Myers, a California native, graduated from the University of California, San Diego with a degree in International Studies: Linguistics and Psychology. Currently, she is a second year postgraduate student with the School of Social and Political Sciences earning her MSc in International Relations with Arabic. This summer Sara spent three months in Egypt and has plans to return immediately after graduation. While her dissertation topic is constantly changing, she has a keen interest in international security, especially concerning the United States and the Middle East.

Darya Gnidash

Darya is a third year student of International Relations. Originally from Ukraine, she has a passion for Eastern European politics and the topic of rising nationalism. Having previously interned at various international think-tanks, Darya is hoping to use the acquired knowledge to achieve reconciliation of the Donbass region. She is also the Director of Communications for the Edinburgh Political Union. Darya is a polyglot and so far she is able to speak in 7 foreign languages.

Connor Hounslow

Connor is a first year undergraduate student studying International Relations. He grew up in Westborough, Massachusetts. Outside of coursework, he volunteered around the community, participated with the Democratic Get-Out-To-Vote campaign, and was a part of the High School choral groups and soccer team. He is ecstatic to be a part of the Leviathan team, especially after serving as blogger and avidly reading academic journals around the world. Connor is also a member of the University's think tank, the Buchanan Institute.
In recent years, the African continent has witnessed great successes, yet this year, both novel and deeply embedded issues threaten to undermine the continent’s progress, particularly in light of a turbulent 2015. The priorities for Africa this year will be to manage economic shocks, sustain domestic growth, support human development, and expand African trade to keep the continent on its current rising trajectory.1

All of these topics are heavily engrained in different beliefs and belief systems. From deciding courses of action to determining social norms, beliefs play an integral role in African politics.

In this issue of Leviathan, the contributors draw on a diverse range of topics surrounding various belief systems and political agendas. Molly Van Niekerk profiles Africa’s first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, also known as Liberia’s ‘Iron Lady.’ Sirleaf illustrates that as a leader, Sirleaf has been instrumental in defining social norms and challenging belief systems, particularly, the deeply internalized inequalities associated with gender roles.

Sam Taylor looks at whether Tunisian people have affirmed their belief in ‘new politics’ in light of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution or whether they continue to look at Tunisian politics as a failure of Western ideals rather than the glimmer of democratic progress that it represents within the region.

While African communities have been plagued with tumultuous revolutions and oppression in the past, articles in this issue of Leviathan delve into the root causes of such inequalities and analyse the potential for future development.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

MOLLY VAN NIEKERK analyses the successes and challenges that have faced the ‘Iron Lady’ of Liberia.

In November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf made history as Africa’s first female head of state when she became the President of Liberia.1 Instead of voting for the glamorous international footballer George Weah, Liberia backed a matronly World Bank technocrat who had lived most of her life out of the country:2 Sirleaf inherited a war torn country that had been subject to 25 years of violence and two civil wars.3 Since her election, however, she has used her experience as a development economist to help Liberia begin the healing process and in 2011 Sirleaf won a Nobel Peace Prize for her success in promoting peace, democracy, and gender equality.4

Sirleaf was born in the city of Monrovia, under a political system run by the dictator William Tubman.5 She entered the political world in 1972, and by 1979 she was serving as Liberia’s Minister of Finance, where she introduced measures to curb previous government’s mismanagement of finances.6 Since 1847, when it was founded by repatriated American slaves, Liberia has been subject to much turbulence.6 More recently, in 1980 the political situation in Liberia was shaken by the assassination of its president William Tolbert by Samuel Doe, who installed a violent military regime.7 As a result of this coup, Sirleaf was imprisoned for her role as a vocal critic of Samuel Doe’s government. However, she eventually managed to escape into exile.8 After her imprisonment, Sirleaf was active on the international political scene, working in Washington D.C. as the Senior Loan Officer at the World Bank, and subsequently joining the United Nations Development Programme where she became director of its Regional Bureau of Africa.9

However, Sirleaf’s love for her home country was not so easily forgotten, and in 1997 she returned to Liberia to run for president – only to lose to Charles Taylor.10 Originally, Sirleaf lent Taylor her support, an act that has since drawn heavy criticism because Taylor’s regime was eventually characterised by terrorism, rape, and the exploitation of child soldiers.1112 Meanwhile, Sirleaf continued to fight for justice in Liberia from abroad and, in 2003, intervention from the United States helped depose Taylor and set up the National Transitional Government of Liberia.13 Sirleaf was selected to serve as Chairperson of the Governance Reform Commission and helped lead the anti-corruption reform.14 In 2005, her commitment to pulling Liberia out of civil war won her the presidency, whilst Taylor was sent to the Hague accused of war crimes.

Over a decade later, the Liberia that Sirleaf presides over is at peace, and growth and development have slowly returned. On the international stage, she has successfully generated development assistance, helped to negotiate a forgiveness programme for Liberia’s massive debt,15 and helped to implement an 80 million dollar agreement with the U.S. Agency for International Development targeting education, health, infrastructure, and economic growth.16 Monrovia now has electricity, and enrolment in school has gone up by 40 per cent.17 Sirleaf has also developed a campaign to stigmatise rape and has been a constant figure of protection and support for the female population of Africa as a whole.18 Most recently, she dealt with the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak in the disease’s history that penetrated through West Africa. Under Sirleaf’s leadership, Liberia mustered a coherent response, and was ultimately declared Ebola free.19 The accomplishments listed here are only a few of the many steps Ellen Sirleaf has taken to reunify Liberia and restore international confidence in its progress.

However, Sirleaf, like any other high-profile political figure, is not without critics. She has been accused of allowing rampant corruption in her government, and of nepotism as a result of placing her sons in high positions.20 However, she has had to balance the challenge of national reconciliation with having a clean government, while working in a political context where corruption and patronage are embedded in the system. Despite her critics, she has been instrumental in stopping the trafficking of drugs through Liberia, and has without a doubt improved the country.21

In many ways, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has demonstrated the power of the African woman. She has given women political legitimacy and has started a trend of female political and economic leadership in Liberia.22 Out of a terrible history I think, defined by inconceivable horrors, she has become a unifying figure with international stature.23 She has been able to come in and stabilise a very fragile situation, and out of this has given Liberians hope for a peaceful future. Looking forward to the next elections in 2017, where Sirleaf will have to step down, there are few candidates that have her stature and record. Many worry about the future of Liberia without her.

Molly Van Niekerk is a second year student of Economics and Environmental Studies.

Tunisia: How Revolutionary?

SAM TAYLOR asks whether Tunisia has affirmed its belief in ‘new politics’ or whether it remains restricted by enduring political forces as the Jasmine Revolution and resignation of President Ben Ali reaches its fifth anniversary.

On the 14th of January, 2011, Tunisia spoke with a conviction never before witnessed in the nation’s short history. President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali’s departure after an undivided rule of 23 consecutive years signified an unprecedented shift towards a new political system wanting to develop the principles of civil liberty and social justice. In the five years since, this ‘lantern’ of democratic spirit has appeared to burn
brightly, especially in light of free elections and a functioning multiparty system. However, only partial reform of the public system in which parties, actors, and beliefs exist has deprived Tunisia of a wholly successful transition to an effective democratic system. The ‘just order’ so imagined under the Ben Ali regime has only been slightly realised, and its completion will not be easy.

If one is to wind the clock back to the events immediately following January 14th, it is easy to understand why Tunisia was deemed the Arab Spring's greatest success story. After the signing of a new constitution in 2014, observers believed Tunisia's political outlook to be the most progressive in the Arab world; United Nation Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon claimed Tunisia acted as a model to other peoples who are seeking [progressive] reforms, as the principles of women's rights and religious freedom have been enshrined in Tunisian constitutional law. The Speaker of the Tunisian Assembly, Ben Jafaar, proclaimed that Tunisia had a ‘rendezvous with history’ in building a democracy based on consensus, rights, and equality. To contextualise, at a similar time in neighbouring Libya, Islamist parties elected their own prime minister to challenge the legitimate Council of Representatives after the Libyan parliament was relocated from Tripoli to Tobruk. Contrastingly, Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution seemed to have created a political space in which previously taboo political topics could be discussed, and in doing so, a new political vision could be realised. Belief in liberal democratic processes, such as the drawing of a new constitution, was endemic.

With a new Tunisian constitution and free elections, a face value analysis of the 2011 election results suggests that Tunisia has begun to orientate itself towards a secular, modern, and Westernised political system. In parliamentary elections held in October 2014, the secular Nidaa Tounes party uniting secularists, liberals and trade unionists emerged as the largest parliamentary bloc with 85 seats, whilst the main Islamist party, the socially conservative Ennahda, won 69 seats. The presidential elections a month later followed in a similar vein, as Nidaa Tounes candidate Beji Caïd Essebsi emerged victorious in the second round of voting. Finally, a unity government led by Nidaa Tounes and including Ennahda, with six and three government portfolios respectively, was approved by 166 of Tunisia’s 217-seat parliament in February 2015. The election of a secular president overseeing a secular-led but inclusive coalition government suggests Tunisia has evolved into a democracy that emphasises a wider integration of pluralism and competition into its political institutions.

Perhaps the most apt analysis of Tunisia’s troubles since 2011 is that of commentator Amira Yahyaoui, whilst the revolution has toppled authoritarianism ‘by removing its head, it has yet to get rid of its system.’ Political nepotism, opportunism, and power seeking are going through a proto-renaissance inside of Nidaa Tounes, an accountable and legitimate party. In attending the inaugural Nidaa Tounes congress on the 9th of January, President Essebsi broke Article 76 of the new Tunisian constitution by engaging in partisan political affairs. Preventing instances inextricably linking between party and political state, as Ben Ali’s Democratic Constitutional Rally party. and the state institutions were pre-2011, is the reason why Article 76 passed unanimously through the constitutional assembly in 2014.

The reason for which Essebsi chose to involve himself in the congress and, in doing so, broke Tunisian constitutional law was to appoint his son, Hafedh, as Nidaa Tounes’ Secretary General. A political unknown prior to his appointment, the upsell of Hafedh’s uninspiring political vision represents a blatant power-grab and career push at the expense of Tunisia’s political stability. As Yahyaoui, director of non-governmental organisation watchdog Al Baswala emphasises, the Prime Minister Esaid’s recent cabinet reshuffle has rewarded seasoned senior advisors with institutional links to Essebsi. Essebsi’s recent actions highlight that much of the agent-based belief system framing Tunisian politics has not shifted, despite applied constitutional and governance-based change.

Essebsi’s actions are ultimately symptomatic of a larger and more complex political issue. Tunisia, unlike Libya, decided to allow pre-revolutionary political officials from participating in politics. Ben Ali’s ‘Old Guard’, or Tunisian officials in office prior to 2011, are able to participate in the political system despite holding public office under Ben Ali’s authoritarian regime. Depending on where you stand, this is either a constructive idea or one that underlines the principles affirmed by the Jasmine Revolution. Arielle Viehe at the Centre for American Progress believes the former – the Tunisian system allows for political officials to clean the slate – operating without using political connections to provide transparency and accountability. However, this begs the question of whether the Revolution’s ‘uncontrollable urge’ for national dignity and greater civil freedom can be achieved using old ideas and old minds. The retention of personnel complicit to Ben Ali within the new political system makes reform all the more difficult, and the knock-on effects risk producing regressive convictions. Counter-revolutionary discourse asserting conditions were ‘better before’, especially in light of Tunisia’s growing economic and security challenges, may jeopardise the progressive ideas of 2011 and its institutional outcomes.

Tunisia requires new thinking, new actors, and new networks to wholly overthrow the shadow of its authoritarian past. In this sense, it is a real worry that youth disenfranchisement from politics remains high, as a 2014 Pew Research Centre poll found that 30 per cent of Tunisian youth believe government ‘doesn’t matter.’ In light of figures such as these, it is difficult to gauge from where novel thinking, actors, and networks will emerge. It would appear laudable that change can only be produced through, put simply, retaining belief in Tunisia’s constitutional and institutional achievements since 2011. Patience is key and, as Yahyaoui argues, expecting extensive change in the Jasmine Revolution’s immediate aftermath is both naïve and fallacious. As long as a space for political dialogue and discussion of public issues remains open, Tunisia will retain some ability to self-reflect and induce political change, both legislatively and administratively.

There are seeds of the aforementioned political character beginning to emerge, particularly within Nidaa Tounes in reaction to President Essebsi’s actions. Since November 2015, 32 Nidaa Tounes lawmakers have resigned from the party in protest at what has long appeared to party members to be a hereditary transfer of power and a clear affront to democracy. The problem with such a significant number of Nidaa Tounes members nobly resigning from parliament is it leaves Nidaa Tounes without the largest share of seats, creating political uncertainty when a degree of assurance is most needed to fight economic slowdown and increasing terror. However, it seems clear that a calculated assault on the hard-won principles of the Jasmine Revolution will not be tolerated by leading progressives, and this represents a beacon for new politics in Tunisia. Pockets of belief in the new political and ideological institutions seem to be developing.

The Jasmine Revolution of 2011 has succeeded in constructing a political space in which dialogue has opened, debate has occurred and discussions over Tunisia’s past and future has been wide reaching. It is indeed the case that old political ideas and minds have restricted the extent to which Tunisia has been able to realise a new political reality, and rather undermine its reformist constitution and power-sharing arrangement between progressive and socially conservative parties. However, what is important is that ‘Tunisia is celebrating the anniversary of the end of silence,’ and as Chomiak asserts, the irreversible effects of the Jasmine Revolution have allowed for renewed belief in free-thinking, critical analysis of political and modern ideologies, all of which seemed inconceivable before 2011. Ironically, current discussion around the future of Nidaa Tounes and President Essebsi embodies the proactive and discursive spirit of the revolution. This is ultimately a bright evaluation of what I’m sure are uncertain times in Tunisia, but on an anniversary there does seem room for belief in what has been achieved since January 14th 2011.
The role of ‘beliefs’ in the Asia-Pacific region cannot be discounted – norms and values characterise decision-making at every echelon of civil and political society across the sub-continent and surrounding areas - may that be sociologically negotiated attitudes towards politics, sustained religious philosophies, or entrenched and conflicting dogmas.

In Japan, the intimate liaison between government and faith has historically been a significant determinant in shaping the concept of religion – up until 1947, when a new constitution was enacted for postwar Japan. As one writer in this issue observes, the history of the association of state and religion in Japan can be traced back to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. From the end of the nineteenth century, much of the Japanese population buttressed a kind of militant and radical nationalism – during the ‘dark valley’ period – when the country descended into conflicts and, ultimately, military aggression due to their incontrovertible belief in the Emperor.

On the other hand, Tsai Ing-wen, president-elect of Taiwan and the leader of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was able to unite the liberal and democratic ideology of the nation’s electorate with the overwhelming angst of the Taiwanese public against Chinese expansionism into one election-winning manifesto.

Lastly, a solitary figure stands tall within a squall of rampant corruption and crony capitalism in Afghanistan: President Mohammed Ashraf Ghani. But will Dr. Ghani’s belief in a principled technocracy and his staunch stance against corruption and patronage networks hamper the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan – which fundamentally depends on pacifying the numerous warlords and clans that control huge chunks of territory? Only time will tell.

Mohammed Ashraf Ghani: A Foreigner Returns Home

SAM PHILLIPS discusses the difficulties faced by Afghanistan’s Western-educated President Ghani.

The current President of Afghanistan, Mohammed Ashraf Ghani, has spent more of his adult life outside of his country than he has within it. The morning of the 27th of April, 1978, when several battalions of soldiers surrounded key areas of Kabul, including the Presidential Palace – Ghani was eating dinner in his dorm room at Columbia University in New York City. The Republic of Afghanistan then fell within hours of contained fighting. President Daoud was killed in a shoot-out with soldiers and, while Ghani slumbered thousands of kilometres away, a new wave of oppression washed over his homeland. His family members and friends were imprisoned, tortured, and killed for their connections with President Daoud and former King Zahir Shah. When Ghani awoke on April 28th, he would discover he had been made a persona non grata in his mother country.

Mohammed Ghani was anything but idle during his exile from Afghanistan, first receiving an MA and PhD from Columbia University in 1983, and then going on to receive teaching positions at prestigious American universities such as University of California and Johns Hopkins University. He engaged as much as possible with his country – becoming a frequent contributor to news programs and publications focused on Afghanistan – but the distance, political and geographical, between the United States and the new Communist government of Afghanistan impeded any efforts to get an on-the-ground sense of his nation.

After eight years immersed in American academia, Dr. Ghani decided to use his skill set to improve a world he had watch crumble from a distance, joining the World Bank in 1991. Yet, while he worked to understand the problems his country faced, Afghanistan sunk further into chaos. By Ghani’s second year of graduate study, the Communist government was so unpopular that it was barely able to control Kabul. Later that year, the Soviet Union invaded to prop-up the Communist rule. From this point, throughout his doctoral program and into several years of his teaching career, Ghani could only watch as his country descended into bloodshed – as every person he knew was killed and every political institution he understood was destroyed, either by the Communists or the Mujahideen.

Perhaps it was seeing this devastation that motivated Dr. Ghani to do more for his country, to no longer feel like a helpless bystander. His expertise was greatly appreciated at the World Bank, where he became respected as a fiercely intelligent man and a skilled administrator. However, when the events on September 11th, 2001, brought his country to both the front of his mind and the front every newspaper in the world, – though he had been nominated as both the Head of the World Bank and Secretary General of the United Nations – Ghani again felt a bystander.

During his exile the Afghan situation had deteriorated deplorably. The Taliban – an Islamic student movement expounding a brutally violent version of Islam mixed with notions of traditional justice – had taken Kabul in 1996 and controlled all but the far northeast of the country by 2000. After the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent North Atlantic Treaty Organization invasion of Afghanistan, Dr. Ghani decided that after years away, he needed to return to improve his motherland. Later that year he moved to Kabul at the request of the interim government led by Hamid Karzai; the Afghanistan he came back to was radically different than the one he left in the Summer of 1977.

Once back in Afghanistan, Dr. Ghani quickly made himself an important part of the reconstruction process. His reputation preceded him everywhere, and, as one of the few Afghans with an American education, he was catapulted to high-level positions. He jumped from advising interim President Karzai to working as a special advisor on the UN mission to restore democratic elections – becoming a key member of the team which drafted the Bonn Convention which organised the process – to a position as Finance Minister under the interim government in late 2002. During his time as the Finance Minister, Dr. Ghani served with dignity and a puritanical opposition to the corruption rampant in the Afghan government.

Yet as surely as these traits made him beloved by Americans and other internationals with an interest in Afghanistan, they earned him the ire of the vast majority of his Afghan colleagues, many of whom threatened vengeance after Ghani fired them for corruption. What was seen as the sort of stance of against corruption needed by the Western officials supporting the interim government, was tactlessness to Ghani’s fellow ministers, who uniformly detested him. The feeling was mutual, with Dr. Ghani developing a distinct dislike for Hamid Karzai, ultimately refusing an offer to re-join the Cabinet after Karzai’s official election in 2004. Disgusted by the
thought of working alongside the corruption embodied by President Karzai, Dr. Ghani returned to his old home of academia, becoming Chancellor of Kabul University, a position he held until 2009.18

When President Karzai’s first official term came to an end in 2009, Dr. Ghani had decided that he could not stand by as the current government plundered the country he had returned to rebuild. Dr. Ghani entered the race, giving up his American citizenship to do so,29 campaigning on a platform of economic relief and eradication of the country’s issues through poverty reduction, economic growth, and anti-corruption.31 His campaign speeches clearly displayed his professional background, using the same language as many of the dozens of foreign organisations also attempting to fix Afghanistan. He lost severely, gaining a paltry 3 per-cent of the vote.22 His Western dress, lack of regard for local customs, and refusal to cooperate with militias had hurt him in the election, making him appear more like a foreigner than a proper Afghan. For the next five years, Dr. Ghani tried to shed the characteristics which had so clearly marked him as an outsider in the 2009 election, making a push to become comfortable with traditional Afghan clothes and customs – considering his childhood in the royal city and his long period of exile in the West, it is distinctly possible that ‘traditional’ garments and customs were as alien to Ghani as to any Western diplomat. His work paid off. In 2014, he was elected modern Afghanistan’s second President.23

Though he is both a child of Kabul and the current leader of Afghanistan, Dr. Ghani remains an outsider in many respects. His trappings and manner speak more of a Swiss or British economist than an Afghan, and many have noted his lack of charisma around other elements of the Afghan government.24 This is largely unsurprising in many ways, as the country of Ghani’s birth and youth no longer exists. The civil war during his long absence killed or displaced huge swathes of the population, and the modern political system is unrecognisable from that existing under King Zahir Shah or President Daoud. Under 5 per cent of the population was at the age of maturity when the Saur Revolution toppled the Republic of Afghanistan;25 less than one person in twenty is likely to have memories of their country overlapping with those of the president. Everyone else has inhabited an entirely different country, one characterised by conflict, instability, and the intense poverty that follows. Although his attempts to cope with the culture shift are valiant, Dr. Ghani’s obvious distaste for the new Afghan political culture and the post-war system of societal relations inhibits his ability to effectively govern the country.

The disconnect between Dr. Ghani and his people is reflected in his presidential policy, which reflects the beliefs of an international and incorruptible technocrat, utterly ignoring the modes of governance in contemporary Afghanistan. Looking at his resume, Dr. Ghani would be the obvious choice for President, with a strong background in development economics, rich knowledge of Afghan anthropology and history, important connections with international and Western partners, and an incorruptible moral fibre.26, 27 Unfortunately these are the exact traits that cause him so much trouble as a politician. Sadly, the quality of administration in modern Afghanistan has declined to such a degree that for policies to be implemented at all – let alone effectively – the networks of patronage, which control the country, need to be utilised.28 Dr. Ghani is both unable and unwilling to do this. Dr. Ghani’s long exile has left him with practically no connections within Afghan government, and his cold business-like demeanour and puritanical refusal to tolerate corruption have made him few friends among Afghanistan’s – insanely corrupt29 – political elite.30 Even if he did have significant pull with the Afghan administration, Dr. Ghani’s particular distaste for the high level corruption that characterised the administration of President Karzai limits his ability to interact with the informal cliques that control the on-the-ground situation in Afghanistan.31 Perhaps what is more dangerous is that President Ghani’s experience in development and accomplishments in academic anthropology endow him with a self-confidence in his ability to navigate these situations, leading him to prefer his Western education on how Afghanistan should work to the assistance of his fellow Afghans, who understand how the country does work.

Right now the stability and success of the Afghan state requires appeasing – at least temporarily – the warlords and special interests that control large swathes of the country. If President Ghani’s policy of reform progresses too rapidly it may endanger the state by prompting warlords allied with the government to switch sides,32 reasoning that they extract more resources from the population without the state and its new anti-corruption stance. The administrative debacle in Kunduz Province foreshadows many of the conflicts that may emerge from President Ghani’s high-minded policies in a country on the low road. In Kunduz, President Ghani purged the corrupt officials – nearly all high-ranking figures employed there – and replaced them with Western-educated Afghans untainted by corruption, throwing in a mix of Pashtuns and Tajiks as advised by his anthropological knowledge of the regional power balances.33 Angry at not being consulted, and that the new governor – whose modernising suggestion to disarm their militia groups and cut down on bribery directly threatened the continued power of the warlords – had come from outside the dominant cliques, many paramilitaries sided with the Taliban and associated groups. Even groups without a particular interest in the Taliban aided them against the government, because at least the Taliban did not threaten them with modernity or innovation.34 President Ghani’s application of what he ‘knew’ to be correct – the fight against corruption and the ethnic politicals of Balkh – had conflagrated a new wave of insurrection in the North, the disconnect between the Afghanistan that Ghani imagines and the one he governs is vast and threatens the country’s future stability. Despite possessing all the qualities of a modern and dynamic leader: knowledge of the principles of development and conflict resolution, blind determination to modernise and uplift his country, infallible morality, President Ghani may restart his country’s unravelling by its reform. Mohammed Ashraf Ghani may be the President that Afghanistan deserves, but it is not the one it needs right now.

The Taiwanese Election: An Uncertain Future

NIALL SPENCER discusses the future of the relationship between Taiwan and China after Taiwan has elected its first female president.

Belief is a powerful weapon if it is utilised correctly. Such is the case in the recent Taiwanese election. Tsai Ing-Wen, leader of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was able to draw together the liberal views of the electorate while galvanising the public against Chinese imperialism. It was a huge success. Her party won with 54 per cent of the vote and won the first election against Kuomintang (KMT) since Chiang Kai-shek fled to China in 1949.1

But how did Tsai Ing-Wen achieve such a landslide victory? Some discussions have centred on the domestic economy, pointing out that her economic policies
to combat issues such as stagnating salaries or housing prices, helped increase her popularity. While this aided her party's performance at the election, the major issue for Taiwan instead rested on relations with China.

Some of the sound bites from Tsai Ing-Wen's campaign reflect the increasing nationalist awakening which was occurring at all levels of society. Tsai Ing-Wen commented that 'the greatness of this country lies in how every single person can exercise their rights.' Firstly, this makes use of the recent, but proud, democratic tradition in Taiwan – it is the only Chinese country with universal suffrage and democratic elections. Secondly, it draws on fears of Chinese imperialism by pointing out that in Taiwan 'every single person can exercise their rights,' providing a direct contrast to the human rights record of China. Taiwan is a country that is moving away from its Chinese heritage to carve out its own Taiwanese identity. There is no clearer evidence for this than the occupation of parliament by the 2014 'Sunflower Movement', in response to a trade agreement with China. Indeed, a study produced by National Chengchi University claims that 60.6 per cent of respondents viewed themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese.

Despite this surge of democratic belief in Taiwan, the garden is not all rosy. In response to the election result, China has begun running military drills on the coastline facing Taiwan. China has never ruled out military intervention if Taiwan were to claim independence. But Xi Jinping has other resources at his disposal before this is necessary. Xi Jinping could hamper the Taiwanese economy by restricting the flow of tourists from China – last year four million Chinese people visited Taiwan. But this would not endear him to a Taiwanese public, which already views him, and the communist party, as untrustworthy.

Some Chinese citizens have also commented on the Taiwanese election over social media. Tsai Ing-Wen received hostile messages over Facebook from Chinese nationalists, one user wrote: 'Taiwan is such a poor and backward place, do you still have any face to talk? What is the use of talking about this without any power? Do you have a say in the international community? If you have guts, declare independence.' Responses from Taiwan were no less entrenched in ideology, one person wrote 'We have freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and personal freedom. You people have none of that.' This shows how the recent election results have reverberated at all levels of Chinese and Taiwanese political life, often exposing deep, ideological disagreements. It is not just the respective leaders of each country who will be anxious to see what happens next, but members of the public as well. This makes the situation even more difficult for Xi Jinping and Tsai Ing-Wen, who will have to balance nationalist support against pragmatic policy making, all without losing their hold on power. There is, however, an opportunity to find a solution – but perhaps not one that will remedy the ailments of either nation fully. For China, who wants to see Taiwan incorporated into the republic, the last eight years of KMP rule had been a marked success. Ma Ying-jeau, the leader of the KMP and ex-president of Taiwan, also needs to tread carefully so as not to force a situation even more difficult for Xi Jinping and Tsai Ing-Wen, who will have to balance nationalist support against pragmatic policy making, all without losing their hold on power. There is, however, an opportunity to find a solution – but perhaps not one that will remedy the ailments of either nation fully. For China, who wants to see Taiwan incorporated back into the republic, the last eight years of KMP rule had been a marked success. Ma Ying-jeau, the leader of the KMP and ex-president of Taiwan, met Xi Jinping in Singapore in the first meeting since Taiwan broke away from China. Therefore, China needs to try and restore this level of friendship. But, in order to do this, Xi Jinping cannot harm the Taiwanese economically or militarily. If he does, he risks losing any remnants of belief the Taiwanese public has in returning to China.

On the other hand, the pro-independent DPP, under the first female president of Taiwan, also needs to tread carefully so as not to force a response from Xi Jinping. Tsai Ing-Wen has already appealed to Chinese leaders claiming that she views Sino-Taiwanese relations as 'based on dignity and reciprocity.' However, exactly how reciprocal this will turn out to be is yet to emerge.

The Taiwanese election should be viewed as a brave step into the unknown by a modern democracy. The beliefs of the Taiwanese electorate, and the ability of their leader to synthesise these into an election-winning manifesto are impressive. Yet, there is much work to be done. While, as Tsai Ing-Wen highlights, the ‘values of democracy are already deeply in the blood of the people of Taiwan,’ there is still an uncertain future with China ahead.

Did the Birth of Modern Japan mean the End of ‘Authentic’ Religious Beliefs?

PHOEBE BOSWALL asks whether the Meiji restoration led to the end of ‘authentic’ religious beliefs in Japan.

The close relationship between the state and religious beliefs throughout much of Japanese history has had a significant effect on the notion of ‘religion’ in Japan. Most famously, during the 1930s, extreme nationalism and veneration of the Emperor as the supreme symbol of Japan led to Japanese military aggression and to the country's entry into the Second World War. During the Allied occupation of Japan following the Second World War, a new constitution put an end to any fusion of state and religion, and the current Japanese constitution affirms a complete separation of the two. To gain a better understanding of the history of the relationship between the state and religious beliefs in Japan, this article will examine the legacy of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, a period often referred to as the beginning of ‘modern’ Japan.

From the offset it is essential to note that, ‘[v]iewed from a Western perspective, from which most definitions of religion derive, a discussion of Japan’s “religion” is problematic.’ In short, the Japanese religious complex is made up of two main elements: Buddhism and Shintō. However, Shintō and Buddhism have not existed throughout history as two separate entities, as is sometimes suggested. Indeed, ‘Japanese traditions tend to be mutually syncretic, rather than mutually exclusive.’ The Shintō establishment today describes Shintō as the indigenous religion of Japan, having existed continuously throughout Japanese history. This view was strongly challenged by the historian Kuroda Toshio in 1981; he argued that Shintō cannot be described as a religion that existed independently at any point in Japanese history before the Meiji period. Indeed, cults of kami (the spirits or phenomena that are worshipped in Shintō) of diverse origin existed within Buddhism in the ancient period, and the interdependence of Buddhism and Shintō is very apparent in the medieval period; in fact, ‘many shrines, priestly lineages, kami beliefs and rites do display a remarkable degree of continuity over very long periods of time.’ This article will explore both Shintō and Buddhism's role in the early Meiji years and will endeavour to determine in what ways the socio-political functionality of religious beliefs can limit the very concept of ‘religion.' By examining the Meiji Restoration of 1868 in Japan, it will be argued that the Japanese statesmen at this time completely overlooked, not out of ignorance, but intention, the religious traditions in Japan in order to pursue their political agenda of creating a state religion to be used as a nationalist ideology.

The Meiji era (1868 to 1912) marks the remarkably transformative period when Japan began to develop into a modern nationalist state with the Emperor as its figurehead. Japan had witnessed the West’s – notably Britain’s – military strength in its defeat of China during the First and Second Opium Wars. In part, inspired by a defiance to not allow the treatment of China at Western hands to be Japan's fate too, the
Meiji rulers overthrew the feudal Tokugawa system, which had ruled Japan since 1600. They had a revolutionary vision for the future of Japan; not only did they envisage significant restructuring of Japan’s society in order to strengthen it, but they also aspired to create an ideology ‘to secure the cooperation of the people through the rigours of economic development and international expansion.’ The Great Promulgation Campaign was launched, which aimed to create a state religion, and was the first of many attempts to come up with an ideology for modern Japan. In its quest to find an ideology to suit Japan, ‘religion’ was, in fact, not a concern at all, nor was maintaining the customs and rituals of the previous Tokugawa rulers. As Fujitani explains:

‘During the Tokugawa period [...] people [were] separated from one another regionally, with strong local, rather than national, ties. [...] the common people’s knowledge of the emperor, potentially the most powerful symbol of the Japanese nation, was non-existent, vague, or fused with folk beliefs in deities who might grant this-worldly benefits but who had little to do with nation.’

It is thus clear why an ideology was sought to inspire and unite the ‘scattered sense of identity as a people in the direction of modern nationalism.’

The Great Promulgation Campaign of 1870 to 1884 was composed of three main parts: the Three Great Teachings, the Great Teaching Institute and a corps of Evangelists. The purpose of the campaign was to create a religious creed, in order to unite sectarian differences under one state religion. The invention of such a creed, however, is surely completely artificial since, problematically, it was not rooted in any popular faiths or practices. The Three Great Teachings that were decreed were: respect for the gods, love of country; making clear the principles of Heaven and the Way of Man; reverence for the emperor, and obedience to the will of the court. However, as Hardacre explains, ‘[u]nfortunately, these tenets had no basis in popular thought and were so vague even to the Evangelists that chapbooks on how to preach about them had to be issued.’

Another problem the Institute encountered was the differing opinions and theological differences of Institute staff. This highlights once more the Campaign’s tendency to ignore the plethora of variations of ‘the way of the kami’ and instead impose on its people an artificially created creed, thus ignoring the dynamism of Japanese religious culture. The Institute had such a lack of consensus concerning doctrinal variations and thus such little action was carried out, that government bureaucrats mocked it with names such as the ‘Bureau of Indecision’ (injun kan) and ‘The Siesta Office’ (hirune shō). These are merely two examples of the Campaign’s, and thus indirectly, the Meiji state’s, initial experience of difficulty in creating a state religion, due to the decentralised and diverse nature of Shintoist and Buddhist doctrines and rituals, and its unwillingness to accommodate this reality.

The Meiji bureaucrats’ attitude towards, or perhaps lack of clear opinion on, what exactly this new state religion should entail suggests an almost opportunistic approach to religion; religious doctrine and creed were selected to suit an agenda, whilst, on the whole, traditions and variations of that religion were disregarded. Prior to the Campaign, in 1868, the state had attempted to separate Buddhism and Shintō. However, after failed initiatives such as the 1871 attempt ‘to institute universal shrine registration in the place of the former Buddhist temple registration system,’ this effort was dropped, and instead the Great Promulgation Campaign began in the spirit of joint Shintō-Buddhist proselytisation. Joint Shintō -Buddhist proselytisation ended in 1875 because it became clear to Buddhist priests that the Campaign now planned to exclude Buddhism and establish Shintō as the sole religion of the state. This back and forth between separating Buddhism and Shintō, promoting syncretisation, and reverting to the disregard of Buddhism from the state religion characterises the state’s approach to religion as one of manipulation, with no apparent reflection on the implications of such a functionalist approach to faith. A particular example, which clearly illustrates this indifference to traditional religious customs and rituals, is the 1868 edict which required Shintō priests to carry out Buddhist funerals. To summarise, traditionally, Buddhism was a religion that explained death and the afterlife, whilst Shintō, or veneration of the kami, and its rituals dealt more with the current life. Further, as Hardacre explains, ‘[f]or Shintō clergy, funerals were problematic because death pollution notions created an obstacle to a priest performing a parishioner’s funeral and then, for example, re-entering his shrine, bringing the pollution of death in contact with deities enshrined there.’ This forced transfer of the funeral, which was traditionally a Buddhist ceremony, to Shintō displays the state’s disregard, and in this case even disrespect, for the traditional religious rituals being practiced at this time.

The Great Promulgation Campaign, therefore, was foremost an experiment in the quest for a new ideology in order to gain support for the state’s self-reinvention. Religion proved not to be conducive to this new ideology. In fact, the religious aspect had been dropped entirely by the end of the Great Promulgation Campaign. In the end, it was decided to secularise Shintō, thus making State Shintō ‘a matter of rites rather than creed.’ This creation of a state religion was so out of touch with any popular religious practice that, once the Evangelists had abandoned the Campaign to promote their preferred sects, ‘[t]here was no one left who could weld the state-authored creed into a religion with any mass following.’ The ideology that, in the end, came to fruition, is today known as tennōsei ideology and has been seen as the ‘product of the modern emperor system,’ beginning during the Meiji period. Whilst religion was, in the end, not used as the ideology of Meiji Japan, the Campaign did, however, effectively create State Shintō. As Kuroda explains, ‘Shintō achieved for the first time the status of an independent religion, distorted though it was. [However], while acquiring independence, Shintō declined to the state of a religion that disavowed being a religion.’ The fact thus remains that the Campaign is a clear example of how a state can make futile the concept of religion by defining, in this case, State Shintō’s sole function as a blatant ideological agenda as opposed to ‘in any sense a spontaneous expression of the populace.’ It is thus undeniable that during the Great Promulgation Campaign of 1870 to 1884, the Meiji state completely overlooked, not via ignorance, but through intention, the religious traditions in Japan in order to pursue its political agenda of creating a state religion to be used as a nationalistic ideology. The socio-political functionality of religious beliefs thus surely can limit the very concept of religion.

To conclude, it is not the intention of this article to directly link the nationalist ideology and its horrific consequences of the 1930s to this ideological experiment of the 1870s and 1880s that is the Great Promulgation Campaign. However, as an examination of the relationship between the state and religious beliefs in Japan at one moment in history, the Great Promulgation Campaign certainly demonstrates a fascinating attempt by the Meiji state to inculcate its people with a carefully selected and blatantly politically motivated set of beliefs. One could perhaps imagine a pattern beginning to emerge, suggestive of a dangerous desire on the part of the Japanese state to convince the Japanese people to revere the Emperor without question and carry out any act in his name.

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Angela Merkel

AGNES STEIL writes about Merkel’s belief in morality and the sense of responsibility which defines her response to the flow of refugees.

In January 2016, around 3,000 refugees crossed the German border in Bavaria daily. These new arrivals add up to a total of 1.1 million people who fled to the Federal Republic in 2015.7 That such a high number of asylum seekers will be a social, political, and economic challenge for Germany seems self-explanatory. What does not seem so evident is the refugee policy of Angela Merkel, Germany’s political leader for over 10 years. In September 2015 – after about 274,000 refugees have arrived in Germany8 – an increasing number of experts and citizens began to demand that the borders be closed. 9 But Merkel put an end to these discussions by explaining that the ‘right to asylum does not have a ceiling limit’ and that the borders will remain open. She defended her position vehemently against voices from her own party and did not let herself deter from her belief in the existence of a German ‘welcoming culture.’10 To understand where her idealism and this driving belief in a responsibility to welcome refugees stems from, one has to look closer at the chancellor’s biography.

Angela Merkel was born in 1954 in Hamburg, but her family moved to a small town in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) days after her birth.11 Her youth was characterized by ideological tensions on the one side, a socialist state, claiming that religion is ‘opium for the people,’12 and on the other side, a family that actively practices the Protestant belief. The GDR openly opposed religion and tried to diminish the impact of churches as its Marxist-Leninist state ideology favoured the achievement of an atheist society.13 In Merkel’s teenage years, as the GDR began to collapse, her Protestant education and influence of her father, a pastor, clashed with the socialist regime’s ideals. Instead of participating at the Youth Consecration, usually a compulsory step in GDR childhood, she was confirmed in 1970.14 Although Merkel claims today that this lack of harmony between the ideology of the state and the work of her family has not been a burden, she confirms she had the stigma of ‘pastor-daughter,’ giving her a hard time with regime-loyal teachers.15 She states that because of this upbringing, Christian values such as tolerance, humility, and empathy positively shape her political ideology and conduct.16

Merkel studied Chemistry and Physics, first in Leipzig and later in East Berlin, where she met her second and current husband, the chemist Joachim Sauer.17 One might expect that as a Protestant and a pastor’s daughter, Merkel would openly oppose the Socialist United Party of Germany SUPG or join the Church’s growing opposition-movement in the 1980s, but after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 she actively starts to oppose the socialist regime by joining the group ‘Democratic Awakening.’18 This belated reaction to the societal and political changes and her thereby adopted wait-and-see attitude would later on characterize Merkel’s political conduct.19 In a unified Germany, Merkel joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), to the astonishment of many friends who would have predicted her participation in the left-wing parties.20 In the CDU, she pursues an ambitious career and, after being press-spokeswomen, becomes Minister of Women and Youth, Minister of Environment, and finally the party’s general-secretary; the perfect springboard toward the office of Chancellor.21 On the 22 of November 2005 Merkel becomes the first female Chancellor of the Federal Republic.

Merkel’s political ideology has been shaped in times of a social and political turnaround, the real-socialism of the GDR, and the free-market economy of the FRG. Merkel’s upbringing in a Protestant household and the social norms of these very conflicting social systems are a catalyst for her decisions-making.22 Since her inauguration, Merkel’s policy has been risk-adverse and prudent.23 Usually, rationality and a scientific way of thinking define her behaviour, hence the nickname ‘the physician of power’24 However, in November 2015, Merkel opened the German border for Syrian refugees without the consent of her party and thus risked losing support in the coalition and among voters.25 Instead of cautious pragmatism, she now voiced her societal convictions and campaigned against ‘seclusion in the 21st century.’26 Merkel sees it as her duty to protect the post-Cold War German ‘liberal-minded and multiracial society.’27 The decision to open the borders without setting a quota stems from her indisputable faith in the ‘German identity to be apt to achieve great things.’28 Here, Merkel refers to the times of the German-German integration, a step that was difficult to tackle after the reunification of the country, when two fundamentally different mind-sets and societies had to assimilate into one. Merkel, an East German, became the leader of a conservative party that had a golden era during the West German ‘economic miracle’ and is intensively associated with capitalist and Western ideas.29 This personal experience triggered Merkel’s faith that a German welcoming-culture30 could make the integration of asylum seekers possible. The chancellor believes in the country’s abilities and confidently affirms ‘We can do this.’31 As her childhood as a ‘religious outsider’ taught her, she now stands up for her personal ideologies. Looking at Merkel’s conduct during the refugee crisis, one can easily draw parallels, as she seems to be unable to put her ethics and ideological convictions aside. In fact, as she herself certifies, Protestant discipline has spurred her parents to do what was necessary with all possible strength.32 In her opinion, the Germans have to take responsibility and actively participate in the solution process of the refugee crisis.33 Even after a terrorist attack resulted in the deaths of 130 people in Paris, Merkel continued to stand up for the defence of ‘humanity’ and ‘tolerance’ against what might be, from an objective point-of-view, the best for
her country. But, as the numbers of refugees continued to increase and problems started to accumulate, the political pressure in Germany also increased; the CDU's sister party; the CSU, now openly criticises Merkel and urges her to close the borders, saying that the protection of German lives and freedoms is more important than moral convictions. The CSU leader Horst Seehofer even threatened to sue Merkel for her lax policy at the German constitutional court.

Ten weeks before the elections in the South-West of Germany, an incident threw Merkel's staunchly normative policies out of balance. On New Year's Eve, a sexist mob of several thousand men assaulted, aggressed, and robbed hundreds of women in Cologne, Hamburg, and Stuttgart. These men have been reported to be asylum-seekers of 'North-African and Arabian' nationalities, and thus put the Chancellor's idealistic sense of responsibility and morality into question. As the violence has clearly been targeted against Western women, Merkel could no longer square her resolute defence of a 'right to asylum without ceiling' with her duty to protect the state of law and civil liberties. Coming from a country where oppression and control dictated almost every part of people's lifestyles, Merkel cannot permit that fear will again affect the freedom of the population. She is in a situation where her beliefs clash; on one side, her Protestantism and experience in the GDR lead her to oppose any form of quota for refugees, but on the other side her valuation of civil liberties and security, stemming from this same biography, push her to increase the supervision of people wishing to get German asylum. In the end, her political responsibility wins over her theological and moral ideology. Merkel is able to put her starry-eyed idealism into question and in early January 2016, she finally agrees that in order to protect German basic law, the rules of removal for criminal asylum seekers must be revised. Further, although she continues to reject a ceiling limit for refugees, she now openly sees the decrease of refugees in Germany. For the first time since the beginning of the crisis in autumn 2015, a majority of the population (51 per cent) disagrees with Merkel's optimistic slogan: 'we can do this.' In December 2015, only 46 per cent of the populations stated opposition to Merkel's refugee policy; the number of opponents among voters increased to 60 per cent in January 2016. 44 MPs of her own party asked her in an open letter to restructure her refugee policy.

Merkel's youth as a Protestant in the GDR and her early years as a politician in the slowly merging Germany; have constituted her ideology. Merkel's obstinacy in this crisis might endanger her own position and disenfranchise her voters. In the coming months Merkel will have to respond to the various critiques of her chosen path and re-think her idealistic belief that there is no limit to Germany's intake of refugees.

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Europe of the Peoples?
Perspectives on Integration

ANTHONY SALAMONE explores the relationship between the elitist nature of European integration and public perceptions of the EU.

European integration has long been characterised by its incremental and progressive nature. The path from the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s to the European Union of today was paved by the gradual and sectoral transfer of competences from the Member States to the European level. Major events, such as the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty (which created the 'European Union' as opposed to the European Communities) or the adoption of measures in response to the Eurocrisis (including the Fiscal Compact), stand out as particular moments where integration was more prominent. However, most of what we recognise as the present EU was built up over time through long-term processes.

As these processes have developed and the EU has accumulated greater powers, the European project has become increasingly influential on its states (if not its peoples). It has also fundamentally changed how policymaking works at the national and subnational levels. We often refer to Europeanisation, the adaptation to European integration, to explain these changes and their impacts. However, different conceptualisations of Europeanisation persist, with each focusing on particular levels, actors, and avenues involved in institutional transformation.

If we take an institutionalist approach, alterations to the terms of policymaking inherently generate an impact on the actors engaged in the policy process. The creation of new institutions (i.e., rules, norms, values) embeds actors into these new modes of thinking and operating. Indeed, we often speak of the resocialisation of policy actors to European norms.

By definition, this resocialisation is confined to political elites – and, further still, only to particular subgroups. National diplomats stationed in Brussels, who spend more time in the EU organisations and build up relationships with other national and European counterparts, are more likely to experience deeper resocialisation than national ministers, who fly in to Brussels once or twice a month, negotiate deals, and then return home. Perhaps not surprisingly, Members of the European Parliament, who have dedicated at least part of their careers to EU policymaking, are more likely to adopt European rules and norms than national and subnational legislators, many of whom try to avoid contact with EU legislation. While less true today, sending politicians 'off to the European Parliament' has been deployed as a tactic to maroon unwelcome figures from national politics.

As these notions of isolation imply, national political elites themselves view the EU as a distant entity. Nevertheless, they broadly support European integration, as the continued development of the EU has demonstrated. What about national publics? The initial reaction to integration was one of apathy. In European integration theory, we speak of a 'permissive consensus' which developed between publics and elites. Citizens delegated their influence on decisions about the EU to national leaders due to a lack of interest in what seemed to be a very technical process that did not have much relevance to them.

This consensus came to an end with the Maastricht Treaty in the 1990s, which changed the EU's structure and brought a number of new policy areas into its competence. Public realisation that the EU was in fact important and influential served as a catalyst for the politicisation of European integration. The result was a 'constraining dissensus' under which political elites feared repercussions from their electorates over European integration and accordingly avoid direct engagement on the issue in national debates wherever possible.

Both national and European political elites have recognised a need to bring the EU closer to its citizens. Different measures have been put in place to address this issue, none of which has achieved particular success. The European Citizens' Initiative was designed to allow voters from across Europe to bring petitions to the EU. However, few petitions have met the requirements and none has yet resulted in significant policy change.

In the 2014 European Parliament elections, an attempt was made to link voting for MEPs and the selection of the new European Commission president. The argument ran that voters could indirectly choose the next president when they voted for their local MEPs (who stand on the basis of national political parties) because most national parties are part of European political parties (most of which had a presidential candidate). By convention, the Commission president comes from the European party that has the greatest number of MEPs in the preceding election. Instead of national leaders choosing the president themselves, as the EU treaties state, these parties would already have their designated candidates ready to be nominated. This process was unofficial, contested, and did not, as its proponents hoped, increase voter turnout which in fact marginally declined.

For most people across Europe, the EU remains complicated and distant. They have never been involved in European integration to the same extent as political elites. It is far from unexpected then that this mismatch would lead to differences in perceptions of the EU. Political elites and publics are operating from very distinct vantage points. However much national leaders may extol the virtues of European cooperation, it is difficult to expect people to believe in something they know little about, feel is remote, and are unsure whether or not they benefit from it.

This perception divide is a major source of the EU's legitimacy problems. In this
The Rise of the Right

MARIA GHARESIFARD discusses the political gains of the Far Right in Europe in relation to the on-going refugee crisis.

Voting is the principal way that citizens influence the quality of government. When citizens place votes in a ballot box, they express their collective preference for a political party or figurehead through elections. The majority vote represents who citizens would trust to adopt policies they believe in. But how does a voter decide which party to vote for? Europe has experienced a trend of far right political parties increasingly gaining seats, from Front National in France to the Dutch Party for Freedom in the Netherlands. Right Wing populist parties promote the idea that immigration, particularly the influx of Muslim refugees, is the most pressing matter for Europe. They promote these ideas by portraying Islam as lacking in democratic values. Their consequent electoral success proves that this is something people are concerned about. Thus the recent rise of far right parties and right-wing populism in Europe can be linked to the on-going refugee crisis. However, these parties advocate authoritarian policies that restrict individual freedoms, and are therefore inherently anti-democratic, despite claiming to speak for the people.

Since 2015 Europe has experienced a massive influx of refugees, largely as a result of the Syrian Civil War. In less than a year the number of refugees to Europe has more than tripled. Demographically, Europe is undergoing a massive shift, as it has not faced refugee flows of this scale since the Second World War. In correlation with the influx of refugees, Europe’s political scene has experienced increasing political polarisation. The growing support of populist parties can be evidenced in recent elections. In 2015, 25 out of the 28 EU member states had at least one populist party that received enough votes to gain seats in its national parliament, and seven of these groups are considered right wing. In total, in 11 EU member states, at least one-fifth of the population voted for populist parties, some of which fall on the far right of the political spectrum.

So what can explain this rise of right wing populist parties? The myriad citizens of the European Union have come to believe in certain European ideals, including women’s rights, a culture of non-violence, and individual freedoms, all of which are displayed through the EU’s commendable human rights track record. As such, there is a fear shared among a great many Europeans that Islam is not compatible with democracy, a vital European ideal.

Far-right political parties claim that immigration is a ‘social threat’ and, in order to avoid being considered racist, they emphasise the social, economic, cultural, and security threats that an increase in the Muslim population would create.

International threats, such as Islamic extremism, give parties an opportunity to capitalize on fear. A common claim of by parties such as UKIP is that immigrants diminish the rights of the local population, whether it be through increasing healthcare expenditure or by causing a rise in unemployment. Viktor Orbán, the current prime minister of Hungary and leader of the conservative party Fidesz, is one of many European leaders taking a strong and controversial stance on the refugee crisis. He is seen as a ‘poster child’ of right-wing populists recently stating that refugees entering Europe are akin to an army. His policies are popular among the electorate, as his personal approval ratings have risen with his ‘anti-immigration campaign’ and ‘razor wire border fence’. As such, Orbán’s success supports the argument that anti-immigration rhetoric has furthered the success of far right parties and politicians.

While public opinion is skewed by populist rhetoric, not all fears held by European citizens are entirely unfounded. Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland and Norway are all facing terrorism threats as a result of radicalised youth. The vast majority of those who turn to radical ideas are second-generation Muslim immigrants who find themselves disillusioned with society. Therefore it is easy conclude that policies should be changed to allow for fewer refugees, and this increases far right populist support. The attacks in Paris, in both January and November, inevitably caused a surge of fear, because radicalisation is now a local, not remote, problem. Furthermore, it is argued that a shift in Europe’s demography will cause a crisis of national identity. There is a concern that if society is not ethnically homogenous, it will weaken the nation at a whole.

These concerns stem from the voices of respected members of communities. According to Lim, ‘Many political leaders, commentators, religious leaders, and even professors have argued that Islam is inherently anti-democratic, although more than 600 million Muslims reside in democracies. Although ‘the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief’ is a law under EU guidelines, the practice of Islam is perceived as anti-democratic in nature. The sudden surge of nationalism in liberal European societies doesn’t stem from togetherness, but rather from fear of the alien, ‘anti-democratic’ faith of Islam.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Denmark’s Prime Minister prior to 2015 and leader of the Social Democrats, once stated that Denmark was not a multi-ethnic society. This comment invalidates those 600,674 Danish citizens who are immigrants and their descendants. Today the populist rhetoric of Marine Le Pen’s Front National ‘normalises racism’, as her speeches contain underlying xenophobic tones. This is condensed because populist parties use ’legitimisation techniques’, wherein a political party implies that undemocratic action is needed in order to avoid a worse alternative. Far right rhetoric claims non-democratic policies may be necessary to ‘prevent instability or promote welfare’.

This is dangerous because normalising such views increases anti-immigration violence in Europe, with the terrorist attack committed by Anders Breivik in Norway in 2011 as the most striking example. In Sweden, people are distributing leaflets encouraging the assault of refugees, and Germany has experienced a ‘wave of attacks against refugee centres. The repression of difference and dissent excludes the rights of minorities, and such political monism rejects basic democratic values, the same values of which Europe is supposedly so proud. Populist parties claim to be the ‘vox populi’, but by treating cleavage and ambivalence as illegitimate, far right parties weaken the democratic process and are a detriment to European values.

The rise of far right parties in Europe can be linked to the influx of refugees, which is in turn linked to the conflicts in the Middle East. Europe’s inundation of refugees has increased support for political parties on the far right side of the spectrum that propagate xenophobic propaganda: ‘We all know how it goes: the left wine because of hope, the right because of fear.’ Putting aside the beliefs of refugees is a breach of basic human rights under EU and UN conventions. But this is the precisely the agenda that far right wing parties promote through the encouragement of fear. Refugees legally have a right to ‘seek asylum from persecution’ and this is a right that has to be respected. Far right parties are inherently anti-democratic as they place minorities, such as refugees, in an inferior position and directly attack their right to reside in Europe.

Therefore it is easy to conclude that the sudden surge of nationalism in liberal European societies doesn’t stem from togetherness, but rather from fear of the alien, ‘anti-democratic’ faith of Islam.

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The political ideology of Latin America in the 21st century has largely been associated with the ‘pink tide,’ a social movement led by leftist governments and characterised by its socialist values and anti-Americanism. The trend started with the 1999 election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and within a decade left-wing parties won elections in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Bolivia. While the charismatic leaders of the early 21st century, such as Chavez and Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, won the support of the people, their handpicked predecessors have proved to be less popular, and thus less effective leaders. This predicament, coupled with growing economic hardships, an increase in narcotics-related activities and other criminal violence has resulted in widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo.

In response to these various issues, people are taking action. This past November, neo-liberal candidate Mauricio Macri won the Argentinean presidential election, and in December Venezuelans voted for a big part of the population.

**Mauricio Macri**

**JULIA HERMELIN** argues Mauricio Macri’s attempt to revive the countries economy will have severe consequences for a big part of the population.

S kyrocketing inflation, huge government debt, and zero growth. This is the inheritance Argentina’s newly-elected president Mauricio Macri accepted when he was sworn into office on the 10th of December 2015.1 Who is this man who put an end to twelve years of ‘Kirchnerismo’ by defeating his opponent Daniel Scioli, in what came to be Argentina’s first run-off election in history?2

The race for the entry to the ‘Casa Rosada,’ Argentina’s pink equivalent to the US White House, was closely-knit. Only 2.8 per cent separated the former mayor of the city of Buenos Aires’ result from that of his opponent’s, the previous governor of the same province,3 Scioli, ex-President Cristina Kirchner’s chosen successor, is a fellow member of the Peronist party. The Peronists have ruled Argentina continuously since the end of the military dictatorship in 1983. Their politics are characterised by ‘generous welfare spending, high employment and an assertive international profile,’ which explains their popularity among the people. However it was the growing dissatisfaction with Kirchner’s heated manner of politicking, and reports of rampant corruption among her cabinet ministers that allowed for Macri’s unanticipated success.4 He is the first centre-right leader to come to power since Argentina returned to democracy.

Macri was born in 1959 into one of the country’s richest families and studied civil engineering in Buenos Aires and New York.5 By age 24, the experienced businessman was already signing deals in the family name with US tycoon Donald Trump.6 He was equally well connected inside Argentina and therefor was elected as president of one of Argentina’s premiere football clubs, Boca Juniors. He presided the club in the course of one of their most successful runs, from 1995 until 2007.7

However, his life took an unexpected turn in 1991, when he was kidnapped and kept hostage for twelve days by a gang of corrupt policemen. Released from captivity, after a multi-million dollar ransom changed hands, he decided to enter politics.8 In 2005, he created the centre-right wing party Propuesta Republicana (PRO), gathering around him proponents of the country’s most liberal spheres.9 As a neo-liberal, one of Macri’s goals for the country is to become a member of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade agreement among twelve countries to promote economical growth. By lowering trade barriers such as tariffs and establishing mechanisms that grant an investor the right to use dispute settlement proceedings against a foreign government, the participant countries hope to stimulate their economies.10 The treaty has been criticised among trade unionists mostly for its expansive scope and because of the secrecy in which the negotiations were held.11

The PRO is first and foremost a party supported by entrepreneurs and the bourgeoisie,12 and under the pretext of rationalising the economy, Macri has taken measures in favour of transnational companies and to the disadvantage of middle sized and small companies.13 One of his main aims is to boost the export of agricultural products, which is why on the 14th of December he eliminated export taxes on agricultural products such as wheat, beef, and corn.14 He also reduced taxes on soybeans; Argentina’s biggest export goods.15 Two days later, Alfonso Prat-Gay, the new finance minister, lifted currency controls, allowing the peso to float freely. It then fell by more than 30 per cent and stabilised around thirteen pesos to the dollar.16 While this step increased exports, it also caused actual wages to drop significantly. The devaluation has also pushed up the inflation rate, already more than 25 per cent when Macri took office, and currently ranging at 26.9 per cent.17 Yet, despite the rising inflation rate, businesses have welcomed Macri’s removal of export taxes, coupled with the removal of foreign exchange controls that had hindered trade and financial transactions.

In addition to his primary aim to revive the country’s struggling economy, Macri also plans to improve Argentina’s relationship with other governments around the world – especially the United Kingdom. President Kirchner’s devotion to the Falkland Islands has caused a strained relationship with Britain in recent years, even once referring to the the UK as ‘a coarse and decadent colonial power.’18 The outreach over the disputed territories was one of the President’s several plans to improve his country’s position on the stage of world affairs. Although his tone differs from his predecessor’s, Macri nevertheless made it plain that he would continue to press Argentina’s claim to sovereignty on ‘Las Malvinas.’19

At the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, the President expressed his wish to deal with holdout foreign creditors, something...
Kirchner had failed to do. His ideal plan for the next few years includes arriving at a single-digit inflation rate. In order to normalise the economy, he had to lay off more than 10,000 state workers in his first month of government — many of them Peronists. This stands in sharp contrast to targeting ‘zero poverty’, a task he emphasised during his campaign. He has been fiercely criticised in and outside the country for issuing a succession of controversial presidential decrees sidestepping congress. In this manner he appointed two new justices to the Supreme Court and revoked Kirchner’s media law, which she had drawn to keep the media conglomerate Clarín in check. 

Argentina is used to hardship and they have witnessed different types of government come and go. Battling poverty and crime being one of the main issues during every presidency. At this time, around one in every two households in Argentina receives government support of some kind. Kirchner introduced a universal child benefit plan that ‘boosted school attendance and reduced poverty’. Macri’s more conservative politics aim at fighting poverty and social hardship with economic liberalisation rather than through a welfare state. People objecting his reforms to social spending like Milagro Sala, who has become the first political prisoner under Macri’s government, have accused him of criminalising protests. On his Party’s (PRO) website however, Macri promises not to touch the benefit plan and to battle poverty head on. Furthermore it states that his politics stand for ‘an education that prepares young people and their families for the century they’re living in.’ This statement stands in contrast to his opposition to legalise abortion – something his predecessor had also refused. Additionally, the Vice-President he appointed, Gabriela Michetti, was very vocal about her opposition to a change in the law in July 2010, which allowed same-sex couples to adopt children.

While campaigning, Macri told his voters that he wanted a democratic country where no one person accumulates all the power. This is definitely a step in the right direction, considering the country’s past. However, it is debatable whether this can be achieved through issuing presidential decrees and repressing social protests. His aim to resuscitate the struggling economy and put Argentina back on the map of world politics is admirable, but it should not be prioritised over fighting corruption and making it possible for people to make a living in their own country.

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Revolution or Unity

RAFAEL ROSALES explores Venezuela at a crossroads, after opposition wins a landslide two-thirds majority in the National Assembly.

After seventeen years under mostly hegemonic rule by the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), a party founded by the late President Hugo Chávez, Venezuela’s parliament will now be the main arena for political clashes in the country. Under Chávez, Venezuela’s previously apolitical society became increasingly engaged and polarised: forced to choose between a mentality that supports the PSUV government and its Bolivarian Revolution or one that opposes it. Venezuelans have become accustomed to divisive vocabulary that has painted all government opponents broadly as ‘the right’ and as ‘anti-revolution,’ even though the opposition, Democratic Unity Coalition (MUD), is composed of 27 parties across a broad political spectrum. Leaders in the MUD have admitted in the past that the main cause holding them together is their wish to lead the country away from what they see as the cause for the country’s current political and economic crises – PSUV’s policies. For this reason, it is actually incorrect to define this new parliament as a victory for Venezuela’s ‘right wing,’ as it will likely lead to continuity in the established welfare system. Nonetheless, the election results of December 6th have now changed the country’s political arena and have presented an opportunity for the opposition and all of its component parties to portray themselves as alternatives to ‘Chavismo’ from a position of legitimate power.

Campaigning in Venezuela has been very emotional and omnipresent since the rise of Chávez and in the run-up to the December 6th election. The MUD pursued the ideas of ‘Change and Unity’ whilst the PSUV campaigned for the maintenance of government programmes and loyalty to both Chávez and Venezuelan historical hero Simón Bolivar. Protection of the Bolivarian Revolution has always been the ruling party’s catchphrase, and this ‘protection’ has been the focus of its policies put in place during the last seventeen years.

Recently, Venezuela’s economy has faced rising inflation, increasing scarcity of basic products, a worsening security situation, and a black market exchange rate that was rapidly decreasing the value of the USD-pegged Bolivar. These various issues led to protests on a national scale in 2014, a second major spark in tensions between political groups in Venezuela as these protests were fuelled by economic and ideological factors.

In the midst of these protests, one of Venezuela’s most prominent opposition politicians, Leopoldo López, was arrested and placed in a high-security prison for ‘inciting violence,’ after he made a public call for Venezuelans to take to the streets. After already spending more than a year in detention, he was sentenced to fourteen years in jail in September 2015. Opposition leaders see this, and many similar arrests made since, as intimidation attacks from the PSUV towards any dissenters, and for this reason have placed an Amnesty Law at the top of their political agenda. Similarly, a recently-passed law that would give property titles to beneficiaries of state housing programmes has shown the clear divide between PSUV and MUD deputies in the new parliament. What PSUV sees as one of its flagship policies is being placed under scrutiny due to housing quality and the lack of legal protection for beneficiaries. However, PSUV claims that this scrutiny is simply a smoke-screen and that the MUD seeks to ‘privatise’ social programmes, and now claims that if a MUD law proposal is codified into law, the government will halt construction of new housing under the affected programme.

It was not until Chavez came to power that political divisions in Venezuela became more apparent. Politics in Venezuela after 1998 began to enter social circles to the extent that political affiliations began to divide regions, states, communities and even families. Chavez once claimed his wish to remain president until 2031, but already, during his last election victory before his death, the margin between his candidacy and that of his rival, MUD candidate Henrique Capriles, was closer than in previous elections. The 2012 Presidential Election yielded a 55 per cent victory for Chavez compared to Capriles’ 44.3 per cent electoral result. Capriles later described Venezuelan society as divided between two visions, something that proved very true after Chavez passed away and new presidential elections resulted in even closer results. It appeared that followers of ‘Chavismo’ believed in and trusted Chavez, but
that ‘Chavismo without Chavez’ would not be so easy to trust in. Hand-picked candidate Nicolás Maduro only managed to win the 2013 Presidential election by a 1.59 per cent margin. Two years later, the economic and social issues that were previously mentioned were only worsening: scarcity, the Bolivar’s value, and prices in the country have distorted the economy so much that Venezuelans have adapted by inventing new vocabulary. Polls showed that ‘85 per cent of Venezuelans are dissatisfied with the direction the country is taking’ due to issues related to the economy and security, something which was reflected in the final results for the December 2015 parliamentary elections, in which MUD achieved a two-thirds ‘supermajority’. Without even a month since its inauguration, the opposition’s ‘New Majority’ has faced many political and media challenges. Even before the elections, the ruling party began a process to appoint new Supreme Court judges that would otherwise have begun under the new Assembly. After the elections, this process was sped up and even included the nominations of PSUV candidates to the Assembly who lost their seats – countering the requirement that judges be free of any political affiliation. Confrontation between the two political groups appears to be inevitable, as one attempts to rein in the benefits of its electoral victory whilst the other is doing all it can to prevent any changes to the system it has had nearly two decades to shape in an almost free rein. Whilst the previous assembly would regularly rubber-stamp most government proposals and gave both President Chávez and his successor, current President Nicolás Maduro, legislative capabilities referred to as Enabling Laws that could bypass parliament, the ‘New Majority’ is calculating how it can use its authority to demand more accountability from the government. Its first course of action involved forcing the Assembly’s inauguration ceremony and the President’s ‘Memoria y Cuenta’ – the Venezuelan equivalent of a State of the Union Address – to be broadcast on all radio and television stations in the country, contrary to previous policies of excluding non-state media. Furthermore, Assembly regulations were changed to allow non-discriminatory access to all public and national media, whether national or foreign. Transparency was already a clear difference between the groupings, but the absence of important ministers to a parliamentary meeting that would have determined the approval of a new Presidential Enabling Law to allow for changes to the economy may have been the first true victory for the MUD. President Maduro’s Enabling Law was described by the PSUV as a necessary mechanism to solve the current economic crisis. Nevertheless, the MUD majority refused to approve any extension of powers without knowing the real proposals and policies that the PSUV intended to implement with them. This will have been the first test for the opposition as both political groupings fight for influence and power in the country’s political system, and the struggle for power between pro and anti-PSUV ideologies still has a long way to go. Chavismo still has strong influence in many of the state’s institutions and very cult-like support from millions of Venezuelans, but recent events have made it clear that neither side has absolute control of the situation. Both claim strong societal support for their policies and beliefs, but, simultaneously, all have much to lose if they are unable to find solutions to the country’s current political and economic situations.

IncAs Against TPP

HANNAH MARKAY examines a new sense of Peruvian nationalism in the face of the TPP agreement

In the cultural heart of Peru’s Sacred Valley, numerous protests have converged into one under the banner of imminent presidential elections. Cusco’s Plaza de las Armas often becomes a beehive of shouts, Andean colours, banners, and even baby alpacas. The most vociferous groups are the nations of Paucartambo, Quispicanchis, Canchis, Acobay, Uruamba, and Anta, dressed in every colour of the rainbow, protesting against the mines that threaten to further encroach the sacred pilgrimage site of the Sanctuary of the Lord Qoyllur Rit’i. In a close-second come the bellowing ‘preachers’ shouting exposés of what they believe to be the four main presidential candidates’ true motives. However, there is a more silent, yet persistent protest that lives in the banners and signs in a side tunnel of the Plaza de las Armas: the Peruvian protest against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement seems to have mirrored the silence of the posters that now adorn the side tunnel of Cusco’s Plaza de las Armas. TPP negotiations have been underway – and largely out of the public eye – for the last seven years. The agreement was drafted on 5 October, it was signed on 4 February by twelve countries of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, US, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. However, this deal is far from the beneficial free-trade agreement it proclaims itself to be. Critics from both inside and outside of the country have denounced the deal. Presently activists groups such as Peruanos Contra TPP (Peruvians against TPP) in Peru have taken matters of awareness and social justice into their own hands as seen in the recent coordinated protests between Santiago, Buenos Aires, and Lima on the 22nd of January, in which protesters held posters reading: ‘cuando la prensa calla, las calles informan’ (when the press is quiet, the streets inform). Some international voices are fiercely advocating for a more transparent agreement, and they have been cited and welcomed by the Peruvian protesters. In a letter of admonition to the Peruvian government and negotiation team in October 2015, Nobel laureate in Economics, Joseph Stiglitz, and Senior Economist at the Roosevelt Institute, Adam Hersh, strongly advised against the agreement. They cautioned that TPP was merely designed to ‘lock’ developing countries into unequal trade relationships with other more advanced economies. They stated that since Peru already has free-trade agreements (FTAs) with six of the TPP member countries (including its second largest trading partner, the USA), it has little to gain and much to lose from the agreement. Instead, Stiglitz and Hersh urged the negotiators to bear in mind the consequences that the deal would have on all aspects of Peruvian life and politics. They claim that the agreement will leave the wages of Peruvians ‘in the pockets of global corporations’ and the Peruvian government in a state of stalemate, unable to protect its citizens health, safety, environment, resources, or economic stability. Other economists such as Jan Kleinheisterkamp, a prominent Economist at the London School of Economics (LSE), states that while the gap between developed and developing countries might be widening, the gap between the private sector and the state sphere is become ever narrower. The culprit in the bridging of this gap is the Investor-State-Dispute-Settlement (ISDS), the ever-lurking elephant in the room of the 6,000-page TPP agreement. Additionally, Ian Gustafson, a Research Associate at the Council of Hemispheric Affairs, warns that the ISDS could lead to ‘unrestricted and predatory behaviour’ on the part of large

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corporations, if they felt that the state was threatening their growth or gains. However, the shaky balance between private and state interest is not the only thing in jeopardy. Gustafson views TPP as simply pursuing ‘Washington's global and political ambitions.’ He argues that TPP threatens to follow in the tracks of its relative, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), ‘kicking away the ladder’ between developed and developing countries. The Peruvian activists carrying banners of national and Incan pride and independence believe that, when it comes to FTAs in the region, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.

Economists are not the only worried party. In the Statement by Médecins Sans Frontiéres (MSF) on the conclusion of the TPP Negotiations, MSF called TPP no less than ‘the worst trade agreement for access to medicines in developing countries.’ They estimated that TPP would leave 500 million people in the world – including Peruvians – without access to medicines. One of the posters in the Cusco square contextualised the statistic by adding that this was more people than Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot had killed combined. They warned that the damage would not be limited to the twelve APEC countries involved in the agreement. TPP could serve as a ‘dangerous blueprint for future agreements.’

The consequences on public health are not limited to access to vital medicines. As the TPP threatens to raise intellectual property rights (IPR) protection, Stiglitz argues that the ‘knowledge gap’ separating developed from developing countries will be harder than ever to bridge. Stiglitz and Hersh give the warning call that ‘Peruvians will be sending ever big checks to the US every year, until the end of time, for using that knowledge – even if it is based on stealing genetic material from the Peruvian Amazon.’ The gap would continue to widen until Peruvians would effectively have to pay for the rights to use patented medical remedies discovered in their backyard. To illustrate this danger, Peruanos Contra TPP have created the cartoon: ‘If you believed that the seeds were yours...Watch out! TPP is coming to approve the Monsanto Law’ demonstrating that the TPP could threaten all that is believed to be part of Peruvian ancestry and heritage.

Activist slogans in Lima and Cusco read: ‘TPP, An Agreement for World Domination,’ or ‘Quiero a mi Perú desarrollado, pero nunca atropellado’ (I want my Peru to be developed, but not trampled on). Perú is no stranger to foreign involvement. Last October 5,000 Peruvians protested against three big forces: the TPP, the World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which seem to create, rather than take down, barriers to national profits gained from natural resource extraction. The protests were a clear sign that in the lives of many Peruvians, TPP was a step too far, and too far from home. Peruvians marched for the belief that there was still a Peruvian essence to defend from external involvement.

In a rare statement on the agreement in October 2015, the Peruvian President Ollanta Humala welcomed TPP, stating that the deal would open the doors for growth and diversified production. He maintains a rather positive opinion of the agreement’s Intellectual Property Clause, declaring that this is the first time that the US has incorporated traditional knowledge and genetic material concerns into a formal agreement with Peru. However, the Peruvian activists who marched against Lima on the 8th of January 2016 have another view of the agreement. The Red Peruana por una Globalización con Equidad (RedGE or the Peruvian Network for a Globalisation with Equity) expose a different perspective and reality of the statement. Their overarching motto against the TPP agreement is ‘Nuestra vida es no negociable’ (Our life is non-negotiable). They identify five main areas that TPP would affect: the access to generic medicines, the price of water, the prohibition of the GMO label, controls over the media, and near immunity for companies contaminating the environment. Peruvian activists are united by the belief that Peruvian rights and the pace of globalisation should not be decided by international interference, but, rather, by Peruvians, thus emphasising the belief that Peru is ‘non-negotiable.’ There is, however, an even more unifying and defiant belief in the activists’ posters in Cusco’s main square, the idea that there is still an ‘Inca’ in Peru that still fights against international dominance.

As Peruvian presidential candidates face the first of two possible rounds of elections, only one has spoken out against the agreement: Verónica Mendoza. The four most probable candidates prefer to adopt the silence that has accompanied every stage of the TPP negotiations. The favourite candidate, Keiko Fujimori, daughter of the imprisoned ex-President, and leader of the Fuerza Popular, has preferred to embrace ambiguity and silence. Her relationship with the former president, convicted of embezzlement and numerous human rights violations, and her connection with Japan, one of the other TPP member states, has left some activists in Cusco worried for the future state of Peru’s politics. One activist stated, ‘Peru does not live in the past or in the eyes of foreign investors, we have a rich history and environment that we need to protect. We deserve a greater deal of political transparency.’ Peruanos contra el TPP are fighting for the belief that there is an autonomous Peru that can be distinguished from ambiguous political practices.

A central banner in Cusco’s Plaza de Las Armas reads: ‘Perú potencia mundial y tumba del capitalismo; el Inca vuelve a tomar el poder,’ meaning ‘Peru, a world power and the tomb of capitalism; the Inca regains his former power.’ In the light of TPP, World Bank, and IMF policies, Peru has resorted to an image of former glory and international importance: the Inca. A Spokesperson of Peruanos contra TPP expressed concerns that even the presidential candidates would have little power in the face of the deal as the fate of the agreement is now in the hands of the Peruvian Congress. ‘Here we are, the people, trying to push an agenda from below. The social movements in this country are driving this topic much further than any of the politicians.’ Amidst fears of being a pawn on a global chessboard, the image of the strong and internationally significant ‘Inca’ provides a bold contrast that is woven into protests and displays of Peruvian pride.

The Uruguayan author, Eduardo Galeano, gives a rather powerful definition to free-trade. He defines it as a ‘narcotic drug’, prohibited in rich countries and passed off like a hot potato to the poorer countries of the world. The image of the Inca could represent past glory, accomplishments, and a firm belief that Peruvians should have a say in their own country’s political decisions. For countries like Peru, FTAs can be an addictive and ever-present drug that take more than they promise to give. Will the image of the Inca be enough to rally the last line of defence, Congress, to make the best decision for the future of Peru? Will Peru really become the ‘tomb of capitalism’?

The anti-mining protests in Cusco’s main square, activism against international agreements, and the evocation of the image of the Inca portray the belief that inequality is, as Joseph Stiglitz suggests, a ‘choice’, rather than the immutable ‘result of inevitable economic laws.’ The awareness campaign against TPP carries the intrinsic belief that Peru is merely passing through a state of inequality. The image of Inca portrays the belief that Peru is worth, and up for, the fight.

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Looking at the Middle East through the lens of ‘belief’ is useful because it allows us to parcel out the religious, cultural, and political ideologies that have shaped the region. In this issue, articles highlight the dynamic reality of beliefs in the Middle East. It is fascinating to see how and why ethno-religious beliefs are salient when discussing one issue, but completely irrelevant with another. For those interested in the Middle East, it’s necessary to understand the balance between ideologies forged over centuries, like Islam, versus modern beliefs that have emerged since the rise of the nation-state, like rentierism.

Andrea Valentino profiles the influential beliefs of Lebanese politician Pierre Gemayel and their long-term effects on Levantine politics. Taking into account that the territories of the Arabian Peninsula were for many thousands of years regarded as one unit, the analysis of nationalist movements like Gemayel’s gives pertinent insight into how age-old beliefs can be co-opted and re-interpreted for new ends.

As tensions rise between Iran and Saudi Arabia, many people are rushing to avenge the conflict to a Sunni-Shia rivalry. In her article, Paola Tenconi dispels this idea and explores the way that alliances are actually being formed between the major players in the Middle East. While religious differences cannot be overlooked, ascribing the causes of this conflict to one aspect reduces the influence of important factors like economics, the Arab Spring, and relations with the West.

The final article in this region discusses how Christian Zionism ignores Palestinian Christians by portraying the Arab-Israeli conflict as an issue of Judaism versus Islam. The ability for Christian Zionists to influence United States foreign policy is a testament to exactly how influential beliefs can be on a global scale.

The Haunting of a Nation

ANDREA VALENTINO explores how Pierre Gemayel’s xenophobic policies are still influencing Lebanon today.

In 1982, Pierre Gemayel declared that the war his Maronite militia was fighting was not against his compatriots, but a ‘subversive fifth column’ of Palestinian refugees, intent on destroying Lebanese independence. In January of last year, the respected Lebanese newspaper Al-Nahar published an editorial criticising the presence of Syrian refugees in Beirut, lamenting that some areas of the capital no longer felt recognisably ‘Lebanese.’ This similarity is not coincidental. Indeed, it is a measure of how much Pierre Gemayel has impacted Lebanese society that his xenophobic views have retained significant popularity and influence even three decades after his death.

This is perhaps not surprising given how long Gemayel dominated Beirut’s political scene while still alive: for 50 years his razor blue eyes and gaunt features were a constant fixture of Lebanese television and newspapers. Born to a distinguished Maronite Christian family in 1905, Gemayal came to prominence in the 1930s when he founded his political party, Kata’iβ (another Maronite extremist) proclaimed that ‘the Palestinians are a commercial enterprise’, saying that they were a threat to Lebanon’s economic interests. Gemayel became known in English as the Phalange – a nod to General Franco’s fascist ideology. Seeing the 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in the wake of the Israeli Occupation, as the highroad to ‘[the dissolution] of Lebanon into the Arab world’, Gemayel advocated the wholesale expulsion of Palestinians from Lebanese soil. For his part, the journalist Robert Fisk has noted the ‘parallel’ between this policy and those of the Nazis.

Lebanese antipathy towards Palestinians in the 1970s and 1980s can be pertinently compared to Lebanon’s contemporary worries about Syrians. For instance, a recent poll found that 62 per cent of Lebanese believe Syrians cannot be trusted, while only 50 per cent would be comfortable working with Syrians. Not that the link with today should be overstated: after all, Lebanon has taken in 1.2 million Syrian refugees, many of whom are treated well by their Lebanese hosts.

Nonetheless Michael Young, opinion editor at the Beirut-based Daily Star, directly links current Lebanese unease with Syrians to the negative view many Lebanese have of Palestinian refugees. This is a position in no small part promoted by Gemayel and his allies. Remarking that there was ‘no difference’ between the Kata’iβ and his own organisation, Etienne Saqr (another Maronite extremist) proclaimed that ‘the Palestinians came to Lebanon and destroyed my country.’

This influence is not only rhetorical: Gemayel’s legacy can also be seen in terms of specific policy. For example, Lebanon refused to sign the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees at the insistence of the Kata’iβ, a move at the time aimed at preventing Palestinian refugees from integrating into Lebanese society. Syrian refugees now also find themselves disadvantaged as a consequence of this policy. For instance, because the UN is forbidden from establishing formal refugee camps in Lebanon, Syrians are obliged to fend for themselves piecemeal.

More generally, according to Dawn Chitty, the former director of Oxford University’s Refugee Crisis Centre, anti-refugee ‘scaremongering’ of the sort peddled by Gemayel in the 1970s is to blame for a new policy banning visa-free entry into Lebanon for Syrians fleeing their civil war. Another new rule that makes it more difficult for Syrian refugees to renew their residency permits in Lebanon can also be seen as a legacy
of Gemayel’s chauvinism, particularly given that similar laws were also propagated against the Palestinians. 17

Given one of the main consequences of Gemayel’s policies towards refugees – a civil war that bled Lebanon dry for fifteen years – the Lebanese would do well to carefully examine the inheritance of one of their most influential political figures. 18 Already, tension between refugees and locals has spilled out into violence several times. 19 If drastic improvements to the lot of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are not made soon, Pierre Gemayel’s xenophobic tendencies risk haunting Lebanon far into the future.

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Saudi-Iranian Relations: Sectarian by Accident?

PAOLA TENCONI observes how the appeal of identity politics, regional instability and the misguided interference of regional powers are unleashing latent sectarian tensions.

In light of the recent escalation in hostilities between the two powers, it has become popular to attribute the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran to sectarian differences. Specifically, such attribution has displayed a tendency to place this sectarianism in a historical framework that dates back to the seventh century. Belief-based legitimation does play a role in the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East, but pinning Saudi-Iranian tensions on religious differences alone is an oversimplification that risks further entrenching notions of the Middle East as ideologically backwards. More importantly, it fails to correctly address the actuality of the current sectarian threat in the region. A more nuanced explanation of the conflict should go beyond sectarianism, and acknowledge that despite its role, religion is not the prevailing dynamic driving the power struggle between Riyadh and Tehran. The Saudi-Iranian feud is a distinctly political one, and should be seen as competition for influence in the region rather than a historical squabble over the succession of the prophet. Although modern sectarianism is very much a reality in the region, its causes are more complex than the theological Sunni-Shi’a division, and are as much political as they are religious. With regards to Iran and Saudi Arabia, as one reporter aptly remarked, ‘the sectarian difference is largely coincidental.’ 10 However, somewhat inadvertently, this power struggle has exacerbated latent sectarian sympathies, the uncertain results of which we will witness as their on-going proxy conflicts continue to play themselves out.

The roots of the current strained relations between Tehran and Riyadh go back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and Ruhollah Khomeini’s criticism of the legitimacy of US-supported Islamic monarchies. 20 Iran’s new government did not promote the revolution in expressly Shi’ite terms, but instead presented it as a model of government widely applicable throughout the Muslim world, seeking to broaden the potential for the revolution to spread. As a monarchic, pro-Western government whose precocious claim to authority is founded on religion, Saudi Arabia was deeply threatened by the Iranian Revolution. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia, one a Shi’a theocracy and the other a Sunni theocracy, have framed their legitimacy in religious language: Iran’s very existence thus directly undermines Saudi authority, as it proposes an anti-monarchic model of [legitimate] Muslim leadership. 21 Iran and Saudi Arabia alike have mutually exclusive claims to leadership of the Muslim world 22 yet they advocate for contrasting ideologies and policies. This is not because Iran identifies as Shi’a and Saudi Arabia as Sunni, but because they endorse different forms of government: one seeking to undermine monarchy, and the other to preserve it. Ideological differences aside, relations were strained but mostly civil between the two discordant governments in the years following the revolution. However, the combination of increasing Iranian interference in regional affairs, especially in Lebanon and Iraq, and the absence of another power to step in and counterbalance its influence has forced an increasingly wary Saudi Arabia to fill that role and adopt a more assertive foreign policy. 23

Riyadh’s decision to step into regional conflicts and seek Tehran’s influence in check has resulted in the present dynamic of proxy wars that symbolise a larger struggle for regional control. This sets a precedent for a bi-polar conflict in the Middle East where ultimate authority is decided in the battlefields of weaker states: interventions in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Syria have characterised the Saudi-Iranian struggle for power. Saudi insecurity vis-à-vis Iranian influence plays a major role in the continued hostility, and unfortunately for Saudi Arabia, Iran has continued to have the upper hand in these regional interventions. Tehran’s close relationships with the Iraqi leadership; Hezbollah, still a relevant force in regional politics; the unyielding Assad government in Syria; and the Houthis in Yemen, have all bolstered Iranian regional influence. 24 Meanwhile, the Arab Spring has brought significant drawbacks to Saudi aspirations: the ousting of Mubarak, ‘Riyadh’s most important regional partner—a fellow American ally that shared Saudi worries about the spread of Iranian influence’ was seen as a major loss. Saudi Arabia, feeling vulnerable after a series of diplomatic defeats, thus saw the Syrian Civil War as a prime opportunity to counter-balance Iranian power. 25 Saudi Arabia has become the foremost proxy conflict in which Iran and Saudi Arabia are competing for influence in the region, an interference that has ‘reshuffled regional alignments alongside unprecedentedly clear-cut sectarian lines.’ 26 However, this reshuffling has not been the result of an overtly sectarian policy by ‘regional actors’ such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. 27 Although sectarianism has been exploited on occasion to further the political agenda of both nations, the struggle for power, the alliance system, and the proxy conflicts that characterise this feud are not sectarian in character.

A quick look at the current alliances surrounding the Syrian conflict, and to a greater extent the Iranian-Saudi power balance, is good evidence of this: both nations have ‘crossed the sectarian fault line in seeking regional allies.’ 28 Whilst Iran has periodically exploited its Shi’ism to mobilise support — as is the case with Hezbollah, a relationship in which the shared sectarian identity has proved useful — other alliances were strategic and only sectarian by accident — for example Iranian support of the Shi’ite Assad government. 29 Building alliances solely on a sectarian basis would ultimately disadvantage Iran, as Shi’ites are a regional minority. 30 Saudis too have played their part in manipulating sectarian identities to mobilise support, but their potential to build a strong Sunni alliance to counterbalance Iranian influence has been hampered by intra-Sunni discord. As suggested by analysts, if alliances were built on logic alone we would be seeing an alliance between the Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Muslim Brotherhood to keep Iranian influence in check. 31 However, intra-Sunni ideological differences concerning the ‘proper political role of Islam’ 32 have thwarted the potential for a unified Sunni axis, thus undermining the argument that we are currently seeing a region-wide Sunni-versus-Shi’a struggle based on an ancient historical dispute. Therefore, as alliances are not built on either sectarianism or political stratagem alone, academics have proposed that relationships are more likely based on shared identity or ideology. For Riyadh, regional alliances are based on whether or not another nation’s model of government undermines their own legitimacy. 33 Saudi Arabia, although no stranger to enabling sectarianism, has not based its regional strategy on it: its failure to reconcile differences with the Muslim Brotherhood 34 and its preference to support monarchies and ideologically compatible powers such as Jordan and Morocco 35 or
Gen. Al-Sisi in Egypt throughout the Arab Spring, demonstrate Riyadh’s inclination to value political compatibility over shared sectarian identity.19 Although some of the sectarian spill over from the Saudi-Iranian feud has been inadvertent, both states have at times deliberately manipulated latent sectarian identities to further their strategic agendas. This is not to say that sectarianism matters to either from a strictly ideological standpoint, but rather that both parties are adept at exploiting it to mobilise support, use it as a pretext for regional intervention, or to legitimate foreign and domestic policy. Iran, for its part, has found sectarian identities useful to forge alliances and procure military support, as ‘Shia networks have proved to be its most reliable vehicles of influence’.20 In fact, Shi’ite groups often seek out Iranian support and not the other way around, thus ‘inviting [Iran] into their own domestic conflicts’.21 Saudi Arabia exploits sectarianism on both a domestic and regional level: locally, to subjugate the demands of the Shi’ite Saudi minority, and regionally, as useful rhetoric to incite opposition against Iranian influence in the Middle East and in proxy conflicts.22 That ‘shared sectarian identities make political alliances easier’ holds true for many of the geopolitical relationships in the Middle East today.23 Even so, it ultimately boils down to political expedience as far as Tehran and Riyadh are concerned. Iran, as part of a Shi’ite minority in the larger Middle East, cannot rely on Shi’ism alone, and has thus ‘refrained from officially embracing a sectarian narrative’24 and ‘tried to downplay sectarianism in its media’25 in order to widen its potential for influence in the region. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, has moved away from alliances based on shared Sunni roots in favour of secular ones, exemplified by the fact that in the Syrian conflict, Riyadh has avoided overtly sectarian language, often opting to ‘frame its policies in terms of Arab and Pan-Islamic legitimacy’.26

Despite its artificial nature as a tool for Saudi-Iranian regional influence and policy, sectarian rhetoric has ‘ended up fuelling a dangerous form of identity politics’ and is becoming a reality in weak states that have seen Saudi-Iranian interference in their affairs.27 The conditions in these states are often propitious for the re-emergence of latent sectarian identities: the collapse of state structures and factors such as socioeconomic frustration can cause populations ‘to divide themselves along some tribal line’.28 Furthermore, the advent of social media has allowed sectarian narratives to be regionally harnessed on an unprecedented level.29 Specialists agree that while largely politically constructed, these identities often come to be perceived as real amongst local populations and can become ‘self-sustaining and internalised’.30 Herein lies the danger of sectarianism being exploited from above: identity politics can be a powerful dividing line, and the sectarian violence experienced over the past few decades will not be easy to forget for the local populations whose beliefs were manipulated to fuel a gratuitous power struggle.

The recent increase in sectarian polarisation has little to do with religion, and virtually nothing to do with the historical origins of the Sunni-Shi’ia split. It should instead be viewed as a result of the appeal of identity politics during periods of instability, exacerbated by the political manipulation of regional powers. The present role of sectarianism should be neither overemphasised nor dismissed. Sources insisting on an archaic, quasi-Orientalist approach to explain the regional conflict should abandon the illusion that politics in the Middle East are founded on religion. Others that systematically deny the importance of sectarianism would do well to appreciate the increasing salience of identity politics in the region, and acknowledge the risk of these sectarian divisions. Rather than viewing sectarianism as the source of antagonism between Iran and Saudi Arabia, we should recognise it as a consequence of their regional interference, and address it as such, acknowledging its potential to aggravate regional instability.

Christian Zionism and Palestinian Christians

ÓLÖF RAGNARSDÓTTIR evaluates the sources of conflict between Palestinian Christians and Christian Zionists.

Zionism began as a political movement in the late nineteenth century that sought a national homeland for the Jewish people.1 Today Zionism has transformed into a global phenomenon that has gained support among many other communities – most notably, the Christian community in the United States. Originally, Zionism was a mostly secular socialist movement with the aim of establishing a Jewish homeland in an undecided location.2 However, the main focus of religious Zionism today is on rebuilding the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and returning to the glory of pre-Roman Jewish culture in the Holy Land.3 According to Constance Hammond, the restoration of the temple is essential to religious Zionism, both Jewish and Christian.4 Some Jewish Zionists believe that rebuilding the temple on the Temple Mount in the old city of Jerusalem is necessary in order to gain complete control of the land and for the Messiah to appear. Similarly, for many Christian Zionists, the rebuilding the temple will lead to the Second Coming of Christ.5 As Hammond states, it is critical to note that in order for the rebuilding to take place, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, some of the holiest sites in Islam, would have to be removed.6

Robert Smith defines Christian Zionism as a ‘political movement implemented and justified by Christian commitments with the aim of ensuring Jewish rule over the area that today is Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories’.7 The theologies of Christian and Jewish Zionism share many of the same politics and ambitions — they see the establishment of Israel as fulfilling a divine prophecy where the Jews are God’s chosen people who have the right to seize the land, even if by force. As Hammond states, one can argue that this view is troublesome for the Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims, as well as problematic to a peaceful resolution of ongoing conflict in the region.8

Furthermore, according to Stephen Spector, some Christian Zionists support religious Zionism out of latent guilt from the Holocaust.9 In his book, Spector recounts conversations with Christian leaders who said that it was Satan who provoked the Holocaust to destroy God’s plan of redeeming the world through the Jews, and he is doing the same now through the Arabs and Muslims.10 In addition to this religious conviction, some Christian leaders also see Israel as their ally in the battle with Islamic extremists. Therefore, the support for Israel from Christian Zionists usually is twofold, religious and political.11

According to Hammond, in 1967 the number of Christian fundamentalists in America was around sixty million people, but by 2007 this number had multiplied and became more visible in society and politics. More importantly, the financial and ideological support of Israel from these groups also became much more prominent.12 Although Christian Zionists in America have realised that their country will not be the ‘New Israel,’ they have found a new way for America to be involved in God’s plan of redemption — through providing full and unyielding support to the state of Israel, thereby allowing them to imagine themselves as inherently linked and almost interchangeable with the Holy Land.13 Because these American

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Christian Zionists believe that God's approval of them is directly linked to America's position towards His chosen people of Israel, their political conviction must be unwavering.14

John Hagee, the National Chairman of Christians United for Israel (CUFI), is one of the most prominent American Christian Zionists. For Hagee, preserving the special status of America in God's plan means supporting and protecting Israel.15 Consequently, CUFI feels it is incumbent upon them to be directly involved in American politics. For example, in the Republican primary of 2012, the organisation initiated a campaign called 'Defend America, Vote Israel,' urging voters to link their support of Israel with God's continuing protection of the United States.16 Similarly, Christian Zionists insist that it was due to their pressure that the Bush administration changed its policy toward Israel during the Al-Aqsa Intifāda in 2002.17 They launched a massive campaign of rallies, phone calls and emails in order to push President Bush to support Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, calling Bush a hypocrite for not helping Sharon in his fight against terrorism.18

WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS?

According to an estimate provided by the United Nations, there were approximately 150,000 Arab Christians in Palestine in 1947.19 After the 1948 war, about 110,000 of them fled to the West Bank, and many went on to Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon or the West. Moreover, it is estimated that in 1967 there were only 11,000 Christians living in Jerusalem, down from 30,000 in 1947.20 Today, it is estimated that Christians in the Occupied Territories make up about 2 per cent of the population or around 50,000 people, while they are believed to be approximately 14 per cent of the Arab population within Israel (the internationally recognised 1948 border or the Green Line).21

According to Betty and J. Martin Bailey, the Christians in the Holy Land are now a 'double minority' due to their marginalisation in both Jewish and Muslim communities.22 The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is broadly portrayed in the Western media as a struggle between Jews and Muslims, with the Palestinian Christians generally sidelined and their voices silenced. Although Palestinian Christians are native to the land they are sometimes seen in the East as converts and puppets of the West. At the same time, they are also neglected to a certain extent by their Western counterparts due to their Eastern culture.

The unique societal position of Palestinian Christians means that they suffer unique hardships in their daily lives as a consequence of the Occupation.23 According to Donald Wagner, Palestinian Christian communities are frequently ignored both by tourists and their fellow Christians around the world. Therefore, Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land often miss their chance to get to know these communities while focusing more on buildings, places and monuments.24 As the indigenous Christian population in Palestine constantly decreases and Christian pilgrims increasingly visit sites rather than people, Bailey and Bailey fear that the holy sites may turn into symbols of an ancient religion rather than a living faith.25

The Christian community in Palestine was traditionally spared from some of the worst economic effects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and therefore are now characterised as being better educated and better off compared to the general population of Palestine.26 As educational and job opportunities become scarcer in the Palestinian Territories, Palestinian Christians are more able to seek those opportunities somewhere else; as a result, twice as many Christians than Muslims have fled Palestine since 1945.27 In addition to the higher rate of exodus compared to Muslims, the exaggeration of incidents of Muslim violence against Christians has influenced the discourse of Christians being persecuted by Muslims in Israel-Palestine.28 Furthermore, Arab Christians also deal with administrative challenges specific to their religious identity. For example, the Israeli government has hardened its policy towards Christian communities by denying the renewal of visas and permits for religious workers, enforcing new taxes on Christian charity organisations, appropriating land from Christian families, surrounding church properties with the Separation Wall, thus creating a division between the churches and their parishes.29

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND CONSEQUENCES FOR PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS

According to Smith, the division between Palestinian and Western Christians is wide, as Palestinian Christians have felt for years that their fellow Christians neither respect nor acknowledge them.30 The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) was established in 1980 by Evangelical Christians in Palestine (many of whom were not Arab) with the aim of supporting the people of Israel and following the theology of Christian Zionism.31 However, on the part of the Palestinians, it is the Christian churches in the West Bank and Jerusalem who criticise ICEJ the most.32 They encourage Christians to not accept grants or collaborate in any way with ICEJ. According to Wagner, he has knowledge of three different Palestinian churches or organisations that were suffering from financial shortages but still did not accept grants from ICEJ, as they strongly objected to their portrayal of Christian Zionism.33

Animosity towards Islam is the main motivation for many Christian Zionists and, over time, Western Islamophobia has led to the denigration of Christians in the East.34 Since the Palestinian Christians cannot be truthfully depicted as oppressed and persecuted by Muslims, they must be regarded as their allies and thus not valid associates with the American Christians.35 In an interview with the Electronic Intifāda, the British Anglican Reverend Stephen Sizer remarked that there is no room for Palestinian Christians in the theology of Christian Zionism apart from being ‘servants and carriers of water’.36

The article goes on saying that many Palestinian Christians feel that Christian Zionist theology has no room for the indigenous church, and that it turns a blind eye to the oppression and suffering of the Palestinians. According to Munther Isaac, the director of the bi-annual ‘Christ at the Checkpoint’ conference and the Vice Academic Dean at Bethlehem Bible College, Christian Zionism ignores the Palestinian Christians because they pose a threat to their narrative about the relationship between the United States and Israel; he explains that when asked about the status of Palestinian Christians, usually Christian Zionists reply by saying that it is ‘unfortunate’.37

CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that Christian Zionism is a threat to the existence of Palestinian Christians because it is preferable for them to portray the conflict as one of Judaism versus Islam, or the struggle of the chosen people of God against the Muslim Arabs. Therefore, Palestinian Christians are often either ignored or depicted as the allies of the Muslim enemy. Moreover, Christian Zionists are heavily involved in the US foreign policy and have been very successful in advancing their interpretation of events. This influence creates skewed perspectives on the very sensitive topic of the Arab-Israeli conflict by erasing the identity of some of its most important participants.
As the United States of America enters an election year, beliefs have been increasingly brought to the fore by candidates vying to rally people to their cause. Influenced by a massive field of Grand Old Party (GOP) candidates and the surprising persistence of Donald Trump’s Presidential Campaign, the American electorate seems to be polarised between a radical left propelled by outsider Bernie Sanders and an incoherent right driven by conservative outsiders. This shift towards right-wing discourse was a theme throughout this issue, and articles in other sections have outlined a similar transition to conservative populism around the world. However, what separates the articles in this section is the lack of faith in government by the American people.

In concert with a shift to the right in discourse, American voters seem to have also developed a loathing for establishment politics. In this section, Merle Jungenkrüger looks into the how ‘The Donald’ has climbed to the top of the polls – asserting that he was able to do so by capitalising on the belief that American politics are fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, an article by Linus Younger shows that outside of politics, some Americans have grown so discontent with the system that they have taken up arms against ‘government tyranny.’ Younger analyses the motivations behind recent events, and reveals how anti-government activists use fervent patriotism to justify their stand-offs with police they fundamentally distrust. Finally, Savannah Moss details the rightward shift of the Republican Party as a whole in response to the more radical conservatism of the Tea Party. Each analysis raises interesting questions about whether the ‘establishment’ will prove capable of weathering the storm of outsiders that have beset it, and how the trends discussed in this issue might continue to affect American politics even after the election.

Yes, I Can

MERLE JUNGENKRÜGER unravels Donald Trump’s puzzlingly successful run for candidature.

When this profile is published, the probability of the United States electorate inaugurating Donald Trump President will likely be either incredibly close or a not-too distant memory. Yet whatever the outcomes of the caucuses and primaries might be, Trump’s potential Grand Old Party candidacy has already dramatically influenced the beliefs of American voters and the tone of the Republican party’s debate. Some have even started to ask whether the incoherence of the Republican Party that has allowed Trump to come to power might be the end of the party.1,2

Trump, who has been consistently ridiculed by the mainstream media and whose success was widely unpredicted by the political elite,3,4 has not only gathered Tea Party sympathisers, but has also converted potential Democratic supporters.5 His success with right-wing populist and extremist statements has pushed other Republican candidates to ever more extreme positions as well.6 Moreover, Trump’s campaigning, whether it proves fruitful for him or not, will have a lasting affect on the policies of whoever becomes the nominee.

But what has contributed to Trump’s success? How did he amass his supporters? Why do people believe that he is the voice of the ‘silent majority’7 and why do political professionals even fear him and his ideas? Many news outlets and magazines have tried to unravel this, what some might call, phenomenon, during the course of the election season.

What many have dismissed as a flaw, might be one of Trump’s biggest advantages: he is not a career politician. Most importantly, Trump does not have to think about the impact of his presidential race on his professional future—he will simply go back to being Donald Trump, the controversial entrepreneur. As such, he can say whatever he wants without worrying about damaging his career while many other candidates still have a seat in US House and Senate to retain. Mistrust of Washington has been a common theme for Republican Party candidates who are not easily able to ‘out Trump’ Trump when it comes to being anti-Washington.

Donald Trump’s ability to invoke populism comes naturally to him, by skillfully exaggerating the results from polls and the reaction from his supporters at rallies. His statements have gotten more extreme during the past months: initially, he only called for stopping illegal immigration; then for a wall at the border to Mexico; and finally for a ban on all Muslims in the United States.8 As a result, in a recent poll 35 per cent of Republican voters whose biggest concern is immigration, would vote for Trump.9 Furthermore, the typical Trump supporter is white, male, and does not have a college degree.10 The demographic which is profiting the least from the issues such as immigration, and therefore support Trump, a man who is vehemently against such trends.12

Additionally, 49 per cent of Republican voters and 39 per cent of swing voters prefer ‘strong leaders’ and studies have shown that Trump resonates particularly well with this group of voters.13 He ‘articulates his answers with authority’ as one psychologist said, and they are delivered in amanner easily understood by the common voter.14 Though many of the actions Trump proposes are not feasible and some of his statements simply untrue, none of this appears to matter, as long as they ‘sound right.’15 Moreover, Trump’s proposals are undeniably provocative but he presents himself as the person, who ‘says what no one else dares to say’ which again, enables him to profit from being the ‘outsider.’

Trump benefits immensely from media coverage surrounding his campaign. Politics aside, everything from his hair to his relationship with his daughter has been thoroughly discussed by every major news outlet, magazine, and TV show. The fact that so many of these journalists sem baffled by his success leads to increased coverage and analysis of his methods—the headlines write themselves.17 According to German newspaper Der Spiegel, the major US networks have devoted more time to Trump than to all of his opponents combined.18 And since Trump likes to discredit the press (at his rallies, media representatives are being isolated in metal pens and booted at by the crowd),19 his supporters refuse to believe the media anymore when they point out his flaws.

Furthermore, after a two-term presidency, Americans tend to prefer the candidate that is least like their current president.20 Current President Barack Obama profited from this sentiment during his campaign, and now by virtue of being the ideological opposite of Obama, Trump is now benefiting in the same way. Unlike Obama, Trump, with his fourth-grade vocabulary (according to some research),21 has been forced to run a smear campaign against minorities and ‘political correctness’ to get his fifteen minutes of fame22.

Finally, Trump’s extreme financial success makes his success almost unsurprising. Trump never tires of highlighting his own financial position,23 particularly in comparison with his rivals,
both Democratic and Republican, who depend on super PACs (Political Action Committees) to finance their campaigns. From his rhetoric to his spending, Trump has exercised ‘free speech’ to its limits, cultivating an image of being a candidate who will do and say whatever he wants to, without owing anything to anyone but himself. So how has Trump been able to make such controversial, illogical and sometimes blatantly false claims while retaining the lead in the polls? Simply put, people like him and are thus willing to ignore his gruffness. It is alarming that the American people have responded so passionately to Donald Trump’s extreme personality despite the fact that he has offered up to very little in the way of tangible policy proposals. This combination of passivity and disinterest with the political system at large, is causing American voters to turn towards a candidate who seems proud to be a businessman rather than a politician.

As such, perhaps the most interesting characteristic of the typical Trump supporter is that they are the ones most fed up with politics. The crucial question, therefore, is whether Trump will be able to convince his loyal Trump fans to become Trump voters.

Pride and Prejudice … and Patriotism: The Rising ‘Patriot’ Movement in the United States

LINUS YOUNGER explains the link between patriotic fervor and anti-government sentiment in the U.S.

The United States faces a rapidly growing trend of anti-government sentiment, manifesting in an ever-expanding, right-wing ‘patriot’ movement. The Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC) recently reported that the present number of civilian militias in the United States stands at 276, compared to 202 in 2014 and just 42 in 2008. Additionally, the SPLC has recorded that the number of anti-government groups, including militias, has increased to 1,274. As a report from the anti-defamation league notes, almost all of these groups share conservative and libertarian values similar to those of the Tea Party wing of U.S. conservatism. However, these anti-government groups differ in that they advocate a different approach to achieving their political goals: armed confrontation. Take the ‘Bundy Standoff’ of 2014, which began as a dispute over unpaid grazing fees between rancher Cliven Bundy and the Federal Bureau of Land Management. The dispute quickly escalated into an armed standoff between U.S. Federal agents and three different armed militias, which fortunately ended before shots could be fired. More recently, another standoff occurred in early January of this year, when an armed anti-government group led by Ammon Bundy, the son of Cliven Bundy, illegally occupied and fortified a federal building: the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County, Oregon. Ignoring calls from law enforcement to surrender themselves, the militia remained entrenched within the refuge, and for weeks engaged in a tense, and tragically fatal, armed standoff with Oregon State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Only in the past few years have anti-government groups such as these demonstrated a dangerous willingness to use lethal force to achieve their goals. However, it is not a hatred of the United States that compels these groups to act against the government, but the patriotic beliefs of those in the anti-government movement that leads them to defy the government.

Firstly, it is important to define what the anti-government movement is, as well as the patriotic values that it holds in high esteem. Keith Schneider of the Herald-Journal notes that the U.S anti-government movement consists of a ‘diverse mix of groups ranging from tax protest organisations and rural westerners angry at federal resource agencies to self-styled citizen militias and loose confederation of white supremacy groups in the Midwest and Northwest.’ In fairness, it should be noted that the beliefs of some groups, especially those of white supremacy groups, are in no way universal throughout the anti-government movement, as organisations such as the SPLC and Reuters classify white-supremacist groups as ‘hate groups,’ which separates them from ‘anti-government groups.’ However, what appears to be a universal characteristic of the anti-government movement is an emphasis on patriotism, leading the SPLC and the media to term these groups ‘Patriot groups.’ The patriotic values particularly espoused by the movement are ideals heavily associated with the early United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights: freedom, liberty, and constitutional rights. This inherent sense of patriotism within many anti-government groups is demonstrated in a variety of ways, particularly through their names. For example, one of the armed militias that arrived to aid Bundy’s group in Oregon called itself the ‘Pacific Patriot Network.’ Another active anti-government militia, the ‘Three Percenters,’ takes its name after the supposed 3 per cent of Americans that fought in the War of Independence. In fact, the original armed group that began the Oregon standoff called themselves the ‘Citizens for Constitutional Freedom.’ The patriotic beliefs of these groups are further entrenched by their tendency to adopt symbols and iconography from American history and culture. In Oregon, for example, militia members possess insignias with a variety of patriotic symbols: some bearing the American flag, and others bearing the rhetoric of patriots like John Henry and Thomas Jefferson. Yet, the most important way that anti-government groups demonstrate their nationalism is through their visible reverence of revolutionary America, demonstrated by their continuous invocation of revolutionary symbols and figures, such as the Gadsden Flag. This is important, precisely because it is this reverence for the American Revolution, combined with the anti-government movement’s intense patriotic belief, that compels its members to use force to settle grudges with the federal government.

Considering the level of reverence that anti-government groups hold for revolutionaries such as Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and other figures praised as heroes for defying their government, it is unsurprising that those militias would be inspired to defy the current U.S. government as a means of achieving their political goals. Resulting from the almost mythologized legacy of the American War of Independence, members of the anti-government movement see themselves within a narrative alike to the original revolution. They believe themselves to represent a second American Revolution, in which they play the roles of patriots and freedom fighters fighting the tyrannical government. The power of this narrative gives militias and armed groups justification for their attempted use of force. Evidence of this existing in the minds of anti-government group members is best shown by their attitudes and actions against their three, seemingly greatest enemies: The White House, the United States Military, and the
United States Federal Government.

The anti-government movement, as a whole, has exhibited a defiant and distrustful attitude towards the Obama Administration. This is evidenced by the aforementioned SPLC report, which noted that there has been a sudden and meteoric rise in the number of American militia groups in correlation with the election of President Barack Obama.14 Meanwhile, the efforts of the White House to pass gun control legislation has led to greater anti-government sentiment in the general population, as citizens and even law enforcement officials have stated a preparedness to defy government authority to defend what they believe to be a Second Amendment right.15 Efforts to pass gun laws have infuriated prominent, heavily armed anti-government groups, such as the ‘Three Percenters,’ a militia that expresses the sentiment of most anti-government groups. They have claimed it is their patriotic duty to resist gun control legislation, while using anti-gun legislation as justification to brand the U.S. government a tyrannical state, intent on disarming the American people.20 Thus anti-government groups feel they are duty bound as patriots to defy government authority on gun control.

Just as anti-government groups fear the U.S president as a potential tyrant, so too do they fear the U.S Armed Forces as a potential occupying force. This fear induced hysteria in Texas when it was announced last year that U.S military forces would be carrying out training exercises in the state.21 Many locals living near the proposed training site voiced a variety of far-fetched concerns, such as the possibility that American citizens living nearby would be detained without warrant, or even the potential that the drills were a cover-up, and President Barack Obama was preparing to order Martial Law in order to rule without election.22 These fears and beliefs provided Texas Governor Greg Abbott the justification to order the Texas State Guard to supervise the US military forces, to make sure the exercise, ‘does not impinge on Texans’ freedom.’23 This action exhibits a deep-seated distrust in any entity associated with the national government. It is precisely this distrust of the government held by ordinary citizens, and even government officials, that fuels the belief of anti-government groups that they are doing a duty to their fellow citizens by defying government authorities.

Finally, anti-government groups do not just have a bone to pick with the White House or he U.S Military, but with the whole Federal Government. In an interview with the National Journal, Carolyn Gallaher, a professor at American University, noted that the two armed standoffs spearheaded by the Bundy family protested the large tracts of land owned by the Federal Government in the western United States.24 However, this frustration over the ownership of lands by the Federal Government has its roots in patriotic concern: the Bundy family and their supporters genuinely believe that the existence of federal lands in the West is a violation of the United States Constitution, as well as their rights as Americans.25 This was expressed by Ammon Bundy, who led the recent Oregon occupation and standoff until his arrest, when he justified his actions by claiming that the government was failing to abide by the Constitution.26 The belief that ranchers are fulfilling a patriotic duty by is further demonstrated by the self-professed motives of those involved in present standoff. Lavoy Finicum, a member of the Oregon militia, described himself on Twitter as a, ‘rancher, [who] loves freedom and willing to fight and die to defend it,’ before he was killed during the standoff.27 The Bundy family, and the anti-government groups aligned with them, are motivated by a belief that they are fulfilling a patriotic duty to the United States and its Constitution by defying, and in some cases fighting the U.S. Federal Government and its agents.

Ironically, the anti-government movement is home to some of the most patriotic individuals in the United States, yet it is this very patriotism that compels them to ignore or defy the government’s authority at every almost every turn. Like many conservative citizens and politicians in the United States, the members of the anti-government movement believe that the Federal Government is too large and its authority is too great. However, unlike the vast majority of conservative politicians and voters in the United States, they do not seek change through a legitimate and peaceful political process. Instead they look to how the most admired American figures, the ‘Founding Fathers,’ affected change: with a revolution. Heidi Beirich of the SPLC, summed up this problem best: ‘This country was founded on overthrowing a tyranny… This revolutionary fervour is kind of embedded in the U.S. – this idea that if you don’t like the government, you grab guns and overthrow it.’28

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Tea Party vs. Establishment: The Ideological Crisis of the Republican Party

SAVANNAH MOSS details the ideological crisis of the Republican party

The far-right beliefs of the Tea Party have infiltrated Congress, and now the GOP leadership needs to find a way to unite a party deeply embroiled in a messy ideological debate.

The conflict between the ‘outsider’ candidates, like Donald Trump, and the ‘establishment’ candidates, like Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush in the lead-up to the American presidential election, is a reflection of what has occurred for years within the Republican Party. Since the election of several Tea Party-endorsed candidates in 2010,29 the Grand Old Party (GOP) has faced an enormous task: to unite the far-right wing movement with the established Republican leaders in Congress. However, despite the Party’s best efforts, a war has raged between the two, with the establishment often having to face extreme opposition to their policy agendas from a movement that demands a more libertarian, conservative, and occasionally evangelical approach than what is being proposed.30 This war has resulted in many skirmishes, and the continued lack of unity has greatly weakened the GOP’s position within both Congress and the country. The establishment needs to regain control over what has become an unruly mess of a party and allow Congress the return to the standard war between parties, rather than the civil war within one.

The Republican Party has historically supported a specific set of conservative values: limited government, traditional values, free market capitalism, and personal freedom.31 However, since the election of President Barack Obama, Congressional Republicans have made most of their decisions not based on these beliefs, but on a far more partisan basis. More specifically, they oppose anything the Democrats favour.32 This partisan
decision-making is at least partially due to the backlash faced by any member who leans towards the centre or tries to negotiate with the Democrats. Republican who compromise are often labelled RINOs, or ‘Republicans In Name Only.’ Regardless of what exactly caused it, this lack of independent ideas from the mainstream Republicans in Congress has given way to the rise of a new, ideologically-driven far-right wing movement within the party: the Tea Party. The Tea Party offers frustrated Republican voters a way to fight against the established GOP leaders, who they view as having become too much like typical Washington politicians, wheeling and dealing their way through Congress to increase their own power without any regard to the opinions of their constituents. In the 2010 midterm primary elections, GOP voters accepted this offer and voted in favour of several Tea Party candidates rather than the Republican incumbents. This effect is also seen in the popularity of the non-Washington candidates in the current race for the Republican nomination for president. Republican voters, mainly those that are older, white and middle-class, have come to feel that the Tea Party candidates better represent their beliefs than the current mainstream GOP leaders in Congress. As such, the induction of the new Tea Party supported members of Congress has led to a deep divide between the moderate congressional Republican base and the extremely conservative far right group.

One event that perfectly showcased the conflict between the two aforementioned sides was the spectacle surrounding the resignation of the Speaker of the House. On September 25, 2015, John Boehner, the Republican Speaker of the House since 2011, announced that he would be resigning from the Speakership and retiring from Congress. This announcement sent shockwaves through the House of Representatives, though it could not have been entirely unexpected due to the well-documented clashes he had endured in recent years with members of the Tea Party movement. One of his biggest opponents was the House Freedom Caucus, the 36-member far-right group whose goal has been to push the Republican leadership in the House rightward on certain fiscal and social issues. 26 of its members, or 72 per cent, rode into power on the wave of Tea Party support in and after 2010, which demonstrates the success of the movement in instilling the change it wanted in the GOP. Because the Republicans hold a 247 seat majority in the House, compared to the Democrats’ 188, the Republican leadership does not have a strong enough majority to pass bills or elect a new speaker without the House Freedom Caucus. The Freedom Caucus’ refusal to cooperate with either party on the issues that mattered most to them has caused years of turmoil within the House Republican Conference, which Boehner referred to as a ‘band of renegades.’

After Boehner’s announcement, there was questioning over who would become the next Speaker. The obvious choice was Kevin McCarthy, the House Majority Leader and traditionally next-in-line to the Speakership. However, the unpopularity of the established leadership among Republicans, not only in Congress but across the country, called into question his ability to garner enough votes to be elected Speaker, especially considering the House Freedom Caucus’ dislike of Boehner and his disciples. But after a scandal involving McCarthy’s remarks about the House committee investigating Benghazi, he was out and the question arose again, who would be the next Speaker of the House? For weeks this was what everyone was asking. Nobody wanted the job, those who did want it couldn’t get enough necessary votes, and the one man who could unite the party and actually get the votes needed repeatedly stated he didn’t want the job. This man was Paul Ryan, former Vice Presidential candidate and Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He had seen what Boehner went through as Speaker and he did not want to put himself through more of the same. However, after much cajoling from his colleagues, he finally agreed to run for the Speakership, on one condition: that he receive the support of the House Freedom Caucus. This demonstrated once again that the House Freedom Caucus has ability to hold the House Republicans hostage; it also shows the power of the Tea Party ideology in Congress. While unable to receive the official endorsement of the caucus—requiring 80 per cent of membership to support him—Ryan was able to obtain 70 per cent of their members’ support. Contrary to his earlier claims, Paul Ryan officially ran for the Speakership and, on October 29, was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. While the Tea Party may not have won this battle outright, it showcases how their uber-conservative beliefs have changed how the Republican party works in Congress, and how it has made the lives of the congressional Republican base infinitely more difficult.

It has become clear that Congress can no longer operate with what is essentially a three-party system. This ideological crisis within the GOP between far-right conservative libertarians and the moderate centre-right conservative base cannot sustain an effective political organisation. The battle over the Speakership is just one of many cases of how this civil war has severely affected Congress’ ability to legislate; other cases include the government shutdown of 2013 and Senator Ted Cruz’s filibuster of the Affordable Care Act. Currently, the GOP is deadlocked, between the extreme right and the moderate left, and it is unable to distinguish itself from either one. Republican leaders need to find a way to take back their party, and the first step towards reclaiming the GOP is defeating Tea Party candidates in the Republican primaries. For far too long the GOP has relied on empty rhetoric, and the Tea Party came to power because conservative voters began to notice the void. Only when Republicans are able to conclusively define their platform and beliefs—and more importantly, perhaps, how they will put them into effect in Congress—can they regain supremacy within their party.
One of the important conclusions of social constructivism is that due to our beliefs not being set in stone, radical changes in our socio-political systems are possible. This strikes a cord in our globalised world: problems of worldwide importance are internationally debated. Thus, opinions differ, but evolve internationally.

The list of potential topics is endless, but this issue will cover some of them. Bernard Jurevicius examines ethics of information gathering, and the challenges posed by the internet. David Kelly analyses the power and future of the Catholic Church, and its attitude towards homosexuality. Globalisation also gives an opportunity for voices to be heard through new means of communication. Governments and members of the civil society can use new technologies, with different levels of impact, in hopes of influencing our perceptions and values.

‘Who am I to Judge?’ Homosexuality, Pope Francis, and the Future of the Catholic Church

DAVID KELLY analyses the continental shift in power changing the face of Catholicism.

Rarely have five little words provoked such an instantaneous global firestorm. It was the summer of 2013, and an elderly, bespectacled Argentinean man dressed all in white was having a rather innocuous conversation on a plane headed for Rome.

The discussion touched on everything from his frustration with the banks to his love of long walks until, suddenly, one of the reporters asked the man dressed all in white about the rumoured ‘gay lobby’ in the Vatican; an alleged cabal of homosexual priests and officials holding high level positions in the Catholic Church, an institution which had preached for centuries that their sexuality was – as both of his high level positions in the Catholic Church, an institution which had preached for centuries that their sexuality was – as both of his predecessors put it—‘intrinsically disordered’.1

Pope Francis, in the job only mere months after the shocking abdication of the increasingly frail and weary Benedict XVI, was holding an informal press conference on his way back from the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.2 References to contraception, divorce, monogamy, pornography, and homosexuality—staples of Papal appearances for decades under both Benedict and John Paul II—were conspicuous by their absence.3

Francis’ sermons and speeches to Brazil’s young Catholics focussed exclusively on esoteric issues of personal spirituality and political questions of economic and environmental justice.4 Talking about such issues was not new for a pope, but the press corps aboard Alitalia flight AZ 4000 was dealing with a new kind of pope; more direct, straightforward, and open than perhaps ever before.5

‘If someone is gay’, he famously answered, ‘and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him? [...] No one should marginalize these people for this, they must be integrated into society. The problem is not having this tendency, no, we must be brothers and sisters to one another.’6

Unsurprisingly, this sent journalists and commentators in the secular media, as well as conservatives and liberals in the church, into something approaching a frenzy. The world rushed to judgement on the Pope’s professed reluctance to judge. While some Catholic traditionalists were outraged, most of the Western press, and indeed Western left-liberal Catholics, excitedly and somewhat prematurely interpreted this brief comment as definitive proof of a complete upending of centuries of rigid Catholic theology.7 Generally, however, the 21st century Western media has a profoundly shallow understanding of not only the Vatican and the papacy, but of Catholicism itself.

The Catholic Church is not a corporation and the Pope is not a CEO. Unlike a powerful Prime Minister, the Holy Father cannot unilaterally reverse central tenets of the faith, even if he wished to.8 The Vatican is not a dictatorship of the high priest. Catholicism, like all religions, does develop and change, but it has only ever done so in a strictly gradual and limited manner after a relatively consensual, complex theological re-interpretation of what its leaders sincerely believe to be God’s word.9

For the optimistic and the uninitiated, Francis’ remarks heralded the beginning of a new era for Catholicism; a religion which would now, slowly but surely, progress towards a much more tolerant view of homosexuality, not to mention contraception, abortion, divorce, euthanasia and much else besides. However, Francis — although clearly much more relaxed about homosexuality than his predecessors — still appears to consider it an inclination towards sinfulness and certainly remains opposed to same-sex marriage or legally-recognised same-sex unions.10

But even if the Pope has yet to fully embrace homosexuality, many Catholics have. As Frank Bruni of the New York Times notes, ‘Catholics are leading the way’ on gay rights.11 Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay are all countries with a Catholic-majority or where the largest religious denomination is Catholic, and all have legalised gay marriage.12 Italy, Catholicism’s European heartland, also appears set to move towards permitting same-sex marriages, although not same-sex marriages.13

In Europe and North America, Catholic popular opinion has shifted dramatically. A large-scale 2014 Public Religion Research Institute survey found that around 60 per cent of self-identified Catholic Americans supported gay marriage, with just 30 per cent opposed, compared to 54 per cent and 38 per cent of all Americans respectively.14 In the UK, even 50 per cent of ‘religious’ Catholics are in favour of gay marriage with 40 per cent opposed, making them more supportive of gay rights than respondents from any of the UK’s other major religious communities.15

An overwhelming 75 per cent of Catholics in Northern Ireland, where gay marriage remains illegal thanks to the Unionist Parties’ resistance at Stormont, believe that homosexuals should be able to get married.16 In Ireland, a nation which James Joyce once wrote bitterly of as a ‘priest-ridden Godforsaken race’, same-sex marriage was legalised via a national referendum in May last year.17 Although half of the population still attends Mass weekly, nearly two-thirds of voters voted ‘yes’, delivering a liberal landslide in what was not so long ago the most socially conservative nation in Europe.18

There has even been something of a softening among sections of the European clergy. Catholic bishops in Germany voted in 2015 to relax so-called ‘morality clauses’, previously inserted into lay workers’ contracts and used to sack those who entered into same-sex unions.19 Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and the UK’s most senior Catholic, has presided over a so-called ‘gay Mass’ for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Catholics in his diocese and held discussions with LGBT activists.20

Pope Francis’ remarks have certainly changed the tone and atmosphere...
of much of the Catholic Church. Some clergy appear more willing to accept and reach out pastorally to LGBT Catholics, rather than simply condemn or demonise them from a distance. Nonetheless, the conventional assumption that Francis’ leadership, combined with increasing Western secularisation, is inexorably leading to a more liberal, eventually pro-gay, Catholic Church is deeply flawed.

As discussed above, Francis’ position on gay rights is not as progressive as many have suggested. Secondly, Francis is actively fuelling a continental shift in power within the Church which is increasing the influence over Catholic doctrine of a deeply conservative, anti-gay clergy and laity. At the very moment European and North American Catholics are becoming overwhelmingly sympathetic towards their gay brothers and sisters, power within the Church is flowing precipitously away from the liberal Global North to a traditionalist Global South largely opposed to such accommodation.

Francis’ vision is not simply of a more generous and magnanimous, less reproachful, and less severe Church, he is also using the power of the papacy to shift the global centre of Catholic gravity southwards, from Europe and North America to Africa and Asia. For centuries, European, especially Italian, congregations have been grossly over-represented in the Vatican’s corridors of power. Francis himself was the first ever Latin American Pope and one of only a handful not from Europe.

But, thanks to Francis, this imbalance of power is being corrected. He has appointed dozens of new cardinals from across the Global South, including the first-ever Catholic prelates from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Tonga. There are now, for the very first time, more non-European than European cardinals in the body who will participate in the next conclave to elect future popes.

Power is shifting primarily from Europe, where congregations are in steep decline, to Africa, site of the Church’s most rapid and continued growth. Africa’s Catholic population has grown by a staggering 238 per cent since 1980 to nearly 200 million people. Only one in four Catholics today are European and with current trends this will only continue to shrink. No longer can it be said, as the Anglo-French Catholic intellectual Hilaire Belloc once wrote, that ‘The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith.’

On economic and environmental issues, Francis and the rapidly increasing congregations and newly enfranchised clergy of the developing world are singing from the same hymn sheet. Unsurprisingly, they support his unequivocally progressive message on the need to combat global climate change and redistribute global wealth. But, unlike Francis, they want the Church to pursue a much tougher line on homosexuality. Africa is a ‘hotbed of homophobia’, perhaps even the world’s ‘most homophobic continent.’ In most sub-Saharan African countries homosexuality is illegal and the LGBT community faces severe, often lethal homophobic continent’.

Two years ago, a YouGov poll revealed that the majority of British people view the Empire with pride instead of regret. This essay will question why, in the 21st century, the Empire generally remains a source of pride among Britons, the significance of such persistence, and how this ideological inheritance perpetuates colonial legacies.

By 1900, Britain’s position on the global stage was a shining example of a formal Empire; a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational unit, ‘created by conquest and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate.’ The expansion of the Empire was particularly rapid following the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, which culminated in the partition of the African Continent into ‘spheres of influence’ (Article 34) and areas of ‘effective occupation’ (Article 35) which paved the way for later colonial rule. In 1880, 17 per cent of the world’s land mass and 22 per cent of the world’s population were colonised. In 1913, by contrast, 42 per cent of the world’s land was colonised, as were 31 per cent of the world’s population. As a result of such developments, by 1922 Britain governed a fifth of the world’s population and a quarter of the world’s total land area.

For many British people living at the time, the expansion and growth of their Empire was something to be celebrated. Primarily, it was believed to elevate Britain’s position as a global power, and further, it acted as a means of improvement for colonised peoples. Additionally, the expansion of the Empire in the late nineteenth century furthered Britain’s commercial interests, which placed it as the world’s richest and most powerful economic power. According to Hobson, British expansionist policies can be explained by the search for new fields of investment. Lenin, however, claimed that imperial expansion was motivated by furthering economic interests as ‘the monopoly stage of capitalism.’ Both of these explanations illustrate that Britain’s economic interests were at the heart of imperialism.

While it may sound strange to modern ears, the latter justification of an Empire as a force for civilisation was held most strongly. An Empire ‘presumes that different people will be ruled differently’, and this was put into practice where native, ‘disadvantaged’ peoples became subject to the ‘civilising mission’ which was carried out by missionaries and abolitionists. Other thinkers such as J.S. Mill encouraged people to see colonialism as necessary for improvement, though it would be successful ‘albeit in “benevolent” form.’

However, in reality, the ‘benefits’ of the civilising mission must be seen as such only in a late-nineteenth century context, where paternalism and racism were engrained into the wider social psyche. A contemporary illustration of this can be found in Rudyard Kipling’s poem ‘The White Man’s Burden’. The poem calls upon young men to join the civilising mission, to ‘bear the white man’s burden’ by waging ‘savage wars of peace.’ Despite this, there was some...
contemporary criticism of Britain’s Empire and thus some historians have argued that the British public were absent-minded and were unaware of Britain’s impact on the ground.48 Given these societal factors, perhaps it is not surprising that in an imperial context expansion of the Empire was generally praised.

What is surprising though, is that over a century later statistics continue to suggest that British people’s feelings towards the Empire have remained positive.49 This is surprising, given that today we live in a completely different social context, yet the statistics indicate a persistent proportionally hegemonic belief in the Empire as a civilising enterprise that gave the benefits of modern society to backwards peoples.50 When asked, ‘Is the British Empire more something to be proud of or ashamed of?’ 59 per cent of the audience answered that it was more something to be proud of, 19 per cent answered that it was more something to be ashamed of, and 23 per cent were not sure.51 Similarly, the YouGov poll of 2014 revealed that 49 per cent of the audience believed that the countries that were colonised by Britain were ‘better off’ for being colonised, compared to the 15 per cent that said colonised countries were ‘worse off’ for being colonised. These statistics suggest that in the nearly 70 years since India became the first British colony to gain independence,52 British people continue to see the Empire as something to celebrate.

The persistence in colonial pride raises important questions about British society and attitudes towards former colonies in a non-historical context. The following will analyse why British people believe that the Empire was positive. I will focus on education – or, more appropriately, a lack thereof – and how this encourages certain perceptions of the Empire. This article will also analyse the impact of politicians and their tendency to look back at the Empire with nostalgia. Finally, I will conclude by examining the role of statues and symbols to show how publically marking, and often, celebrating, a colonial past through ceremonies and statues can distort perceptions further.

British education heavily influences contemporary perceptions of the Empire and perpetuates contemporary power structures in the present. What is taught in schools about the Empire is severely limited, which implies the idea that the Empire was a force for good. Although not officially on the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) syllabuses, some positive aspects of the Empire are maintained in a ‘euro-centric canon’.53 For example, in 2007, children were taught about the abolition of the slave trade.54 While abolition was undeniably an important part of the Empire’s history, it remains uncontextualised amongst the negative aspects of the Empire which remain overlooked. Instead, history syllabuses continue to be dominated by topics such as the ‘Tudors and the Nazis’.55 ‘For better or worse (the Empire was) the most important thing the British ever did’ as it ‘completely changed the shape of the modern world.’56 Thus, to exclude the Empire from official GCSE curriculums is severely misguided. This is not uncommon, however, as education throughout history has been manipulated as a tool to construct knowledge regarding societies, as noted by Said.57

What we’re not taught undermines our ability to pass accurate judgement on the British Empire, as we are unaware of its wrongdoing. There are elements of the Empire’s past which can be celebrated, for example, the establishment of an incorrupt Indian civil service, the abolition of the slave trade, the vast investment in global infrastructure, and establishing laws and laying the foundations of future parliamentary democracies.58 However, these positives must be balanced with the negative impacts of the Empire, ‘mamnade famines, slave trading, ethnic cleansing and day-to-day violence,’ many aspects of which ‘have been rendered almost invisible.’59 We must remember that there was continuous ‘resistance to conquest, and rebellion against occupation,’ which was often followed by mutiny and revolt because British rule was not widely accepted.60 Moreover, we must be aware that the British government has in some cases ‘systematically destroyed the documents detailing mistreatment of its colonial subjects’ to ‘prevent them falling into the hands of post-independence governments.’61 This illustrates the normative claim that such things should not be forgotten, and that by expressing uninhibited pride in Britain’s imperial past and ignoring the long-lasting negative implications of British dominance, we are painting a false picture of the realities of the Empire.

It is not just the education in Britain that encourages a one-sided perspective on the Empire. In some ex-British colonial states, many have been taught to believe that the British did more good than bad in their country.62 This links to Fanon’s theory of ‘the colonisation of minds,’ as Britain has now challenged indigenous people’s beliefs about their country’s role in the British Empire.63 One could argue, for example, that development policy in Africa acts as a means of covering colonial legacies or that it ‘primarily functions to mobilise and maintain political support; that is to legitimise rather than to orientate practice.’64 In Sierra Leone, for example, people generally see Britain as a close ally, as it is helping the country to grow in a time of need as its largest bilateral donor. Over a decade ago, this was illustrated by the upsurge in schools and monuments being named after British politicians, particularly Tony Blair who Sierra Leoneans particularly admired.65

Politicians also continue to look back at the British Empire with nostalgia, which equally adds weight to the notion of the Empire being a force for good.66 British politicians, of all agendas, have great influence in perpetuating beliefs about the legacies of colonialism. Whilst Tony Blair made a public apology for the Empire’s early involvement in the slave trade, labelling it a ‘crime against humanity’ in 2006,67 he also claimed that the British Empire should be subject to ‘neither apology nor hand-wringing’ but a tool to further Britain’s global influence.68 David Cameron has taken this optimistic approach further69 when, on a trip to India in 2013, he refused to make a formal apology for the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, where the Empire’s representatives killed 379 Indians who were peacefully protesting against British rule.69 However, more recently, Jeremy Corbyn has undermined this consensus, having turned our attention back to the Empire’s negative legacies, which still play a role in world politics today. For example, he cites that understanding the crisis in Iraq requires ‘unravelling a century of Imperialism.’70 Corbyn also has promised, if appointed as Prime Minister, to oversee the history of the Empire rewritten to teach in schools that the British Empire developed ‘at the expense of people.’71 By refusing to ‘reach back into history,’72 whilst encouraging the public through the media to see the coloniser and colonised as sharing culture, language, and history, leaves a large part of history exempt.73 Encouraging the Empire to be ‘celebrated’74 for ‘what the British Empire did and was responsible for,’ urges us to have a narrow-minded perception of the Empire.75

Just as politicians commemorate the Empire, statues equally celebrate colonial figures, implicitly encouraging people to take pride in the past through their symbolism. Through selectively elevating the position of former colonial figures, we are encouraged, literally and metaphorically, to look up at them and see them as men worth glorifying. The ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ campaign last year brought to the fore the debate that symbols not only continue to commemorate colonialism, but also reflect power relations and ideology in existing societies where scars of former colonialism, such as underrepresentation, remain.

Ultimately, it is impossible to place a conclusive label on whether we are right to believe that the Empire was good or bad. We must, however, challenge the beliefs that are institutionally placed before us, and to look beyond what we are taught to be reminded that colonial legacies remain in the 21st century despite the independence gained by states.76

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Morgenthau and the Surprising Ethics of Political Realism

NICHOLAS PUGH argues against the commonly held belief that Realism is an amoral and bellicose doctrine.

According to Max Weber, realism ‘recognizes the subjugation of morality’ to the ‘demands of [a] human nature’ in which the ‘insatiable lust for power’ is paramount. This claim has led many to label realism as an amoral and bellicose doctrine. Yet while ‘inconsistency among realist theories’ may lend truth to claims of amorality and bellicosity among other strands of realism, this essay examines the realist morality outlined in the works of Hans Morgenthau. It will argue that Morgenthau’s realist doctrine is neither amoral nor bellicose because it is informed by a set of utilitarian ethics that ‘rationally direct the irrationalities’ of human nature and aim to prevent major conflict. This essay will begin by defining realist morality according to Morgenthau and will follow by addressing critical arguments based on perceived flaws in his moral argument. The essay will conclude with a question concerning the significance of realist ethics to Weber’s ‘moral problem’ in International Relations.

Hans Morgenthau was one of the most influential realist theorists of all time, and his arguments are fundamentally based in a ‘stern, utilitarian morality.’ Morgenthau’s realism was developed as a ‘pessimistic critique of liberal utopianism,’ wary of the idealism of the inter-war years and intent on preventing another World War. As such, his theory assumes international relations to be at the mercy of human nature, self-interest, and an insatiable lust for power. These factors, he states, are evidence that politics ‘falls within the domain of evil’ and thus, political ethics must be the ‘ethics of doing evil.’ However, what initially seems a bleak and amoral outlook on world politics is redeemed by a moralistic caveat: though ‘the evil of politics is insurable,’ by weighing the consequences of potential political action against their perceived morality, the ‘moral strategy of politics’ can be reduced to a choice among the ‘least of evils.’

Thus, despite his focus on power and successful political action, Morgenthau’s realism displays an inherent morality fundamentally concerned with mitigating the effects of a savage human nature on world order.

Morgenthau’s strict adherence to a set of utilitarian ethics is grounded in the logic of consequences and the ethics of responsibility, in which ‘rational action’ and ‘moral action’ are congruent. Such equivalence is made especially clear by what Morgenthau terms the ‘triumph of evil’ – in which the balance of power is drastically altered and worldwide conflagrations ensue. Such failure, according to Morgenthau, can only be avoided by carefully examining the consequences of potential political action. This calculus of potential consequences, or ‘prudence,’ is the ‘supreme virtue’ by which the ethics of political action are judged, and forms the basis of realist morality. For Morgenthau, ‘rational foreign policy is good foreign policy,’ because it ‘minimises risks and maximises benefits’ and satisfies both ‘the moral precept of prudence and the political requirements of success.’ States must avoid hubris and act with prudence to maintain the balance of power, minimise international conflict, and ensure the survival of their citizens. Thus, for Realists, there can be no morality without rationality.

Realists consider hubris to be the ultimate failure of political success and morality – because it entails irrationally ignoring what is possible in order to pursue ethical perfection. This is one of the main criticisms of realism: a willingness to take actions that are not in accordance with universal morals. Yet separating ‘actual’ from ‘intended’ for the purpose of judging ethics constitutes a ‘fallacy’ according to Morgenthau. Realism does not ignore moral implications; it merely values the logic of consequences over the ethics of conviction, and weighs the consequences of political action against their perceived morality in order to determine which action represents the ‘lesser evil.’ Morgenthau states that a concern with political intentions fails to take into account the requirement for political success, and may, in fact, lead to greater injustices as a consequence. While ‘good motives provide assurance against deliberately bad policies,’ Morgenthau argues they are ineffective predictors of political success and cannot be used for the purpose of passing ethical judgment on political action.

Yet moral criticism of Realism can be found throughout history. According to Hobbes and Machiavelli, ‘the individual, by nature, is a moral being, the state, amoral.’ Thucydides, another founder of realist thought, repeatedly emphasised the subordination of morality to self-interest in politics. However, despite these claims, very few critics dispute the fact that Classical Realism is based on a set of particular morals. Morgenthau’s critics instead focus on the basis of the ethics put forward in his work, or on problems with the theory as a whole.

One of the most convincing critiques of Morgenthau’s ethics is made by Pin-Fat, who argues that – far from being amoral and dystopian – Morgenthau actually fails to ‘escape his own utopianism.’ Pin-Fat argues Morgenthau’s insistence on ‘filtering’ abstract moral principles ‘through the concrete constraints of time and circumstance’ enables the State to ‘actualise transcendent values’ according to its own interests. This, she states, in-effect paves the way for totalitarianism. Lobbél echoes these concerns, claiming that ‘cloaking interests in the guise of moral principles is… a symptom of the inadequacy of realism.’ At first, such a critique is highly convincing. If the State is the main actor in the international system without a supreme authority, then who but the State could actualise abstract moral principles?

However, while Pin-Fat is correct in assuming Morgenthau’s realism renders States capable of manufacturing their own morality, his utilitarian ethics compel statesmen – whatever their motivations – to ‘act through the lesser evil’ and minimise negative political and moral consequences. Also, Pin-Fat’s points, at best, concern the State at the domestic level and thus deal with a separate morality; Morgenthau is fundamentally concerned with the morality which governs actions between States not that which governs actions within States. A State can ‘concretise’ its own morals; however, there is a caveat to this. According to Morgenthau, to pursue policies, which do not ‘pursue the lesser evil,’ is to risk objective political and moral failure. Thus, while Pin-Fat does put forward a valid critique of the ‘epistemological inconsistencies’ of Morgenthau’s theory and succeeds in proving the ‘over-abstraction’ of his moral claims, she fails to convincingly argue his ethics as ‘irrelevant.’

Modern theorists have criticised realism for ignoring the role intent and ideology in determining foreign policy. However, Morgenthau’s marriage of morality and rationality does not ignore decisions made following the ethics of conviction, but rather labels them unreliable predictors of moral and political consequences, and thus insufficient for determining the ethics of political action. An individual can object to taking action that does not conform to his norms; however it must be recognised that he does nothing to halt violations of the norm by others. He falls victim to hubris by believing his actions will lead to anything more than his own ethical perfection and ignores political consequences. In the words of Morgenthau, while the individual might say ‘fiat justitia, pereat mundus,’ or ‘let justice be done though the heavens fall,’ the State is compelled to take actions which – though seemingly unjust – ensure a policy that ‘pursues the lesser evil.’

For all of the ‘stern morality’ of Morgenthau’s classical realism, other strands of realism are sometimes used to justify bellicose ends, which would be viewed by classical realists as ‘imprudent.’ This is especially true among Neo-realists. Where Morgenthau sees anarchy as a tool that enables States to influence the balance of power in the international sphere, Neo-realists see it as the capacity for States to wage wars against one another and become obsessed with security. Thus, while other realist doctrines might be described as bellicose because they assume violence to be the norm,
Morgenthau instead accepts the inevitability of minor violence as a price to be paid to prevent major ‘paradigm-shifting’ conflict. Yet, by ‘acting through the lesser evil’ and heeding the utilitarian ethics of ‘prudence’ Morgenthau’s realism demonstrates a stern morality fundamentally concerned with prevention of the ‘triumph of death’ and major State-on-State wars.\textsuperscript{34} As such it can be described as neither ‘amoral’ nor bellicose, and even Morgenthau’s critics concede that ‘questions concerning the morality of international politics’ are ‘central and constitutive of his form of political realism.’\textsuperscript{35}

Regardless of which strand of realist thought is being examined, the realist ethics defended here raise an important question. Namely, which is more moral: the ‘perfectionist ethics’ of liberalism, which do not want evil at all; or the ‘utilitarian ethics’ of realism, capable of ‘filtering’ universal morals and pursuing the lesser evil?

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The Friend of My Friend is My Enemy

BERNARDAS JUREVICIUS provides an examination of ethics in surveillance and information gathering.

It is safe to say that 21\textsuperscript{st} century economics pose new challenges and avenues for intelligence gathering organisations worldwide. A far cry from phone tapping in the Cold War, the web has created increased concern for agencies such as the National Security Agency (NSA) and Federal Security Service (FSB) in its sporadic growth and poses the difficulty of regulation and decentralised structure.\textsuperscript{1} The internet is a phenomenon that was both unprecedented and dismissed by old guard spymasters. Russia itself had come into the information age at the tail end of the Soviet Union, using it to establish itself as a new and independent nation, as well as to undermine political tradition. The coup d'état attempt in August 1991\textsuperscript{2} showed not only Russia, but the world, that the internet could be a powerful political tool. Relcom, a Russian communication network, was used to work against state-censorship: it reported everything that was left unsaid on TV, effectively handicapping Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) usurpers in their attempt to take control.\textsuperscript{3}

Faced with the challenges of a new and wild frontier in information distribution, agencies have been forced to evolve in order to protect homeland security. However, as was seen with the NSA leaks of 2013, the execution had raised controversy. The most famous example in the Western world is PRISM, described by the whistle-blower Edward Snowden as a way to organise, collect and observe meta-data.\textsuperscript{4} Meta-data is the background information surrounding communication exchanges, and can include everything from phone call details (duration and participants) to emails and internet search history. Needless to say, the reach of such initiatives is very wide, and shows a fervent effort to optimise information gathering in the West through automation.\textsuperscript{5}

However, homeland security has always been a thorny issue due to the inevitable fundamental principles of liberty against detainment: whether it’s right to treat law-abiding citizens as potential criminals. Issues of equal importance are those aimed at international relations. As brought forwards by the Snowden leaks, US governmental jurisdiction has been in a grey area both within and outside its borders, due to the systematic collaborative exchange of information with foreign bodies such as the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ).\textsuperscript{6} A recent and particularly diplomatically damaging scandal was the monitoring of the communications of foreign ambassadors and government officials during the 2009 G20 summit.\textsuperscript{7} The political storm that followed this leak revealed that information was still as much of a tug of war on the international political stage as it was during the Cold War. A former member of the ruling cabinet expressed tacit understanding about summit surveillance: it was, according to him, ‘always assumed that everyone else did it at such meetings.’\textsuperscript{8} The backlash from other prominent European intelligence gathering agencies further proved this. The French and German Secret Services (DGSE and the BND, respectively) were also outraged at the GCHQ tapping allegations during the G20 summit, but their refusal to comment on their own collaboration with the GCHQ in fibre cable tapping\textsuperscript{9} helped create a much more cut-throat picture of the Western intelligence community. Rather than instituting a collaborative effort to exchange resources within constitutional boundaries, these sorts of hostile exchanges recall inter-agency rivalries such as the tensions between the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the 20th century.\textsuperscript{10}

In spite of all of this, the key issue at the core of Western intelligence is that of systematic exploitation: using legal loopholes and automated services in order to mechanise information gathering. Current practices rely instead on pooling as much information as possible with the least amount of effort, with software such as XKEYSCORE doing the heavy lifting.\textsuperscript{11} Other programs such as the Unified Targeting Tool require only one operator to set some parameters in order to have the system sift through data automatically, and select information. Very little government oversight is required, and the system operates almost entirely in-house. This is authorised by court rulings, which exempt it from requiring individual warrants for investigation. The system works through a laissez-faire legal loophole along with an intuitive and mechanic process designed to be effortless. Operations like these empower government agents to target anyone with impunity. The only safeguard is a supervisor, but even then, only 51 per cent confidence is required to approve an operation.\textsuperscript{12}

In contrast, Eastern surveillance inherently features direct governmental control and oversight. Russia, being one of the most important players in global politics, provides interesting insight into this difference in surveillance methods. Stalinist procedure serves as the foundation for the modern FSB: the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NVKD), one of its predecessors, was tasked with simultaneously developing new forms of surveillance and information control as instructed by the ruling party.\textsuperscript{13} To do so, it benefited from a large amount of resources. Scientists held in sharashkas, research camps, were given means with which to propose new facilities and projects, as long as this would serve the party’s goals. They were tightly controlled, but had otherwise unlimited resources.\textsuperscript{14}

In spite of all the progress made by government agencies in Russia to strategically distribute responsibilities between them following the fall of the USSR,\textsuperscript{15} tactics employed by the FSB bear a resemblance to those employed by the KGB, namely in dealing with perceived threats as quickly and as ruthlessly as possible. In contrast to the layers of interconnected networks deployed by Western powers in the pursuit of information gathering, Russia’s System for Operative Investigative Activities (SORM) is much simpler. The current iteration, SORM-3, has advanced far enough so as to be able to monitor individual phone numbers, IMEI (International Mobile Station Equipment Identity) numbers, MAC (Media access control) addresses as well as IP (Internet Protocol) addresses, and many more remotely through a ‘black box’ device installed in a manner similar to that of a radio tower bug.\textsuperscript{16} These boxes are deployed at communication hotspots, usually within telecom centres, and collect information locally to be sifted through later by an authorised FSB agent. Current legislation in Russia allows the FSB to do so without a warrant and for all communications providers to be legally required to enable SORM black boxes within their networks.\textsuperscript{17}

Although this may seem advanced, in effect, these practices have the spectre of Soviet surveillance about them. In the Soviet Union, these used to be handled through direct microphone tapping and recording by KGB officers.\textsuperscript{18} Jamming stations were widely spread to suppress foreign radios
too,19 and these services were as ubiquitous and as important to the ruling party that these operators were paid almost twice the salary of a scientist.20 In effect, the only difference between SORM and phone tapping is what is being observed: both are handled in similar manners, be it a phone or the internet. Neither is particularly efficient in theory, since installing individual ‘black boxes’ with every ISP would be more time-consuming rather than just employing software directly like the NSA. However, due to the favour of the ruling government, they both work as well in practice as they do as a result of unilateral institutional support. These are a far cry from the bureaucratic and legal obstacles that the NSA has to combat, even after the increased permissibility that was granted to them by the Patriot Act under Section 215, which expanded their capacity for surveillance in intercepting, sharing, and using private telecommunications.21

The current state of Russian surveillance is in fine shape. Although the dissolution of the KGB had heralded a change in Russian security practices, events following the fall of the USSR did not completely get rid of old practices. Yeltsin’s reforms to split government agencies up had instead created an incredibly competitive space between the FSB and other institutions such as the Federal Agency of Government Communications and Information (FAPSI).22 This competition increased as the system became more and more oligarchic. The battle over market control enabled wealthy government officials to extend their influence.23 Thus, as the reach of the government increased, the initial power vacuum left by the dissolution of the KGB was quickly filled. Hostile takeovers became common. The freedom of the press found itself restricted: oligarchs controlled news stations and prints, and any party or independent network that they found worrisome could be quickly bought out and dismantled. Such was the case of Vladimir Gusinsky, who was arrested by the FSB after Putin came into office and promptly placed in prison, his bail amounting to the sale of his empire.24

As a result, due to corruption and oligarchic influences, Eastern surveillance practices are left hungrier and lighter rather than tied down with legislation like those in the West. In both parties, there are sufficient grounds for criticism, regarding both necessity and efficiency. The NSA’s exploitative and liberal data collection practices cast an unreasonably wide net and lump the average citizen as innocent until speculated guilty. There are silver linings, however, as the Snowden leaks have helped to push for further restrictions in the NSA’s operations under Section 215.25 Although not much is known about the GCHQ and the FSB’s SORM program, several avenues of communication prevail as a response to these systemic invasions of privacy where legal boundaries fail. The controversial Onion Router (TOR) exists as a publically available measure to completely evade government tracking, although it has faced controversy and criticism due to its anonymity being abused for criminal activities.26 However, it is reasonable to expect the average citizen of the modern world to want to exercise their right to privacy. The internet has always been a grey area in this regard, but basic forms of communication, such as Facebook, are lambasted by industry experts as an appalling spying machine.27 The current generation will be facing a crisis of belief in the coming years. An atmosphere of mistrust will inevitably lead the digital generation, who have witnessed the Internet used as a tool to topple regimes,28 to question its own belief in a government that could be willing to use their personal communication as means of pressure.

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