



A Time For

# RESILIENCE



# LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

*Dear Reader,*

We, and the world, are in limbo. We continue to grapple with the changes the Covid-19 pandemic has wrought as countries begin to transition back to something that resembles a pre-pandemic lifestyle. Our geo-politics have violently shifted and slid into new places as world leaders respond to military threats and upcoming election cycles. The climate continues to exist in peril, with its future in the hands of a select few leaders. It is for all these reasons that now, more than ever, is A Time for Resilience.

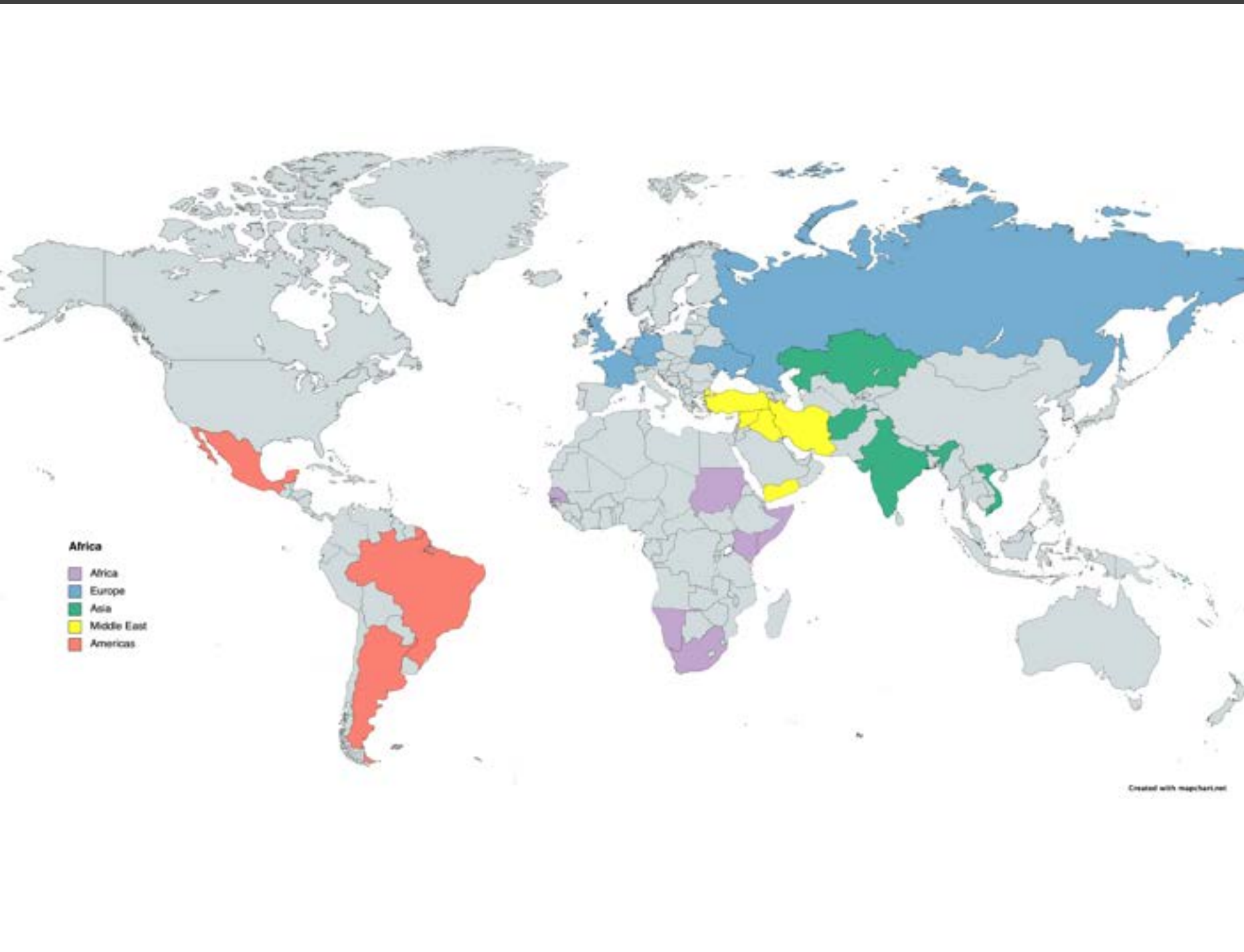
In the looming face of climate change, nations must recognize the importance of resource allocation and alternative forms of energy. Juhui Oh discusses the challenges India faces in moving towards wind energy, but highlights how these challenges can be addressed through effective government planning. Sophie Clark draws similar conclusions while writing about how artificial intelligence can promote renewable energy in the Middle East. Though the path to clean alternative energy requires funding and commitment, it must be done. Aidan Woutas emphasizes the need for this willingness in his piece on the repercussions of Germany's shift away from nuclear energy. The world's collective future rests on leaders' abilities to acknowledge environmental struggles, make sustainable policy changes, and when they make mistakes, to rectify their errors.

Global progress also bases itself in new political relationships between nation-states and how they shape reactions to conflicts in the new post-pandemic world order. Ayla Kaufman writes about the importance of nations bordering Lake Chad to form an organization to mediate and monitor surrounding humanitarian crises. By creating a method of open communication and collaboration between nations, the region can more successfully address the needs of its people. Samantha Klos builds on this idea by addressing the significance of the emerging feminist movement in Mexico and how its engagement with the government can help better address gender parity. As diverse groups begin working together, there is a greater opportunity for growth that aids people on-the-ground who are truly affected by these conflicts. This productive cooperation can be expanded to the international level, as Ben Miller addresses in his piece regarding the future of NATO in the wake of Russia's war on Ukraine. There is a greater need for collaboration amongst international actors in response to these dangerous conflicts, in order to better support communities that have been both overlooked and harmed. The resilience of these communities in the face of harm underscores the need for governing bodies to take on motifs of inclusion and proactive change.

As you can see, Reader, our world is in a state of consistent environmental and political evolution. At first glance, the consequences of the pandemic, climate change, and growing military action seem absolute, but while they are significant, they do not preclude the ability of nation-states to take positive action. In the midst of this unsteady new age, resilience will help us find our balance. Adaptability will be our strength. Durability will make us last. Our history has shown our resilience—and our future will do so once again.

Sincerely,

*Michigan Journal of International Affairs*  
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# AFRICA.



## In Sudan, a Golden Opportunity Falls by the Wayside

Zack Blumberg

On January 2, 2022, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok resigned from office, slamming shut Sudan's brief window of opportunity for a historic democratic transition. Hamdok, who first took office in 2019 as the result of a power-sharing deal reached between civilian and military leaders after the ousting of repressive dictator Omar al-Bashir. As an interim leader, his appointment represented the Sudanese people's demand for real political change. However, his resignation, under intense

military pressure, appears to conclude this brief period of popular empowerment. Sudan, which received grossly insufficient aid and support from the international community, has likely now missed its best opportunity to democratize in the foreseeable future, setting the stage for a regression back towards the brutal, undemocratic politics which characterized al-Bashir's military regime.

For decades, Sudanese politics were dominated by one man: Omar Al-Bashir. Al-Bashir, the

country's longtime president, first came to power in 1989 after leading a military coup which, upset with the government's negotiations to negotiate with rebels in the south of the country, overthrew the democratically-elected Sadiq al-Mahdi. A repressive dictator, Al-Bashir was perhaps most known for waging the brutal War in Darfur, in which he carried out a ruthless ethnic cleansing campaign against the region's non-Arab population. This campaign earned him the distinction of being the first sitting world

leader to be indicted by the International Criminal Court. The government's repression also led it to be placed on the United States's list of state sponsors of terrorism, a devastating classification which disconnected Sudan from the global economy and cut off access to most foreign aid, dramatically weakening its economy. Al-Bashir's regime was finally toppled in April 2019, when, after nearly six months of mass anti-government protests, he was ousted by his own military generals and replaced by



# Immoral African Debt

Michael Deeter

The African continent now faces a looming crisis: crushing debt due to needed pandemic-spurred borrowing. As a result of the pandemic, already struggling African countries went further into debt in order to ensure their economies' survival in the face of a stalled global economy. Currently, international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) control the future of African economies. These IFIs can either exacerbate or improve the problem on the African continent. This is a scenario that has had a close parallel in history: the conditional lending regimes, known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), of the 1980s. However, these were an overwhelming failure to alleviate economic hardship and foster an environment of sustainable growth. Therefore, western IFIs should refrain from feeding into the continued cycle of African indebtedness and offer interest-free debt forgiveness until African countries have fully recovered from the pandemic. This will give desperate economies the breathing room they need to buttress public health, expand social spending, and safeguard their economic futures. Africa has suffered for decades because of ill-fated Western intervention, and though debt-forgiveness may not be an objectively smart economic move for the West and IFIs, basic morality demands it.

Throughout the 1970s, many African economies boomed as oil and other commodity prices increased, causing revenues to jump. As a result, African economies began to borrow against their commodity revenues in order to fund robust development and infrastructure projects. Then, in the early 80s, commodity

and oil prices collapsed and interest and exchange rates rose sharply. This deadly trifecta of economic conditions mobilized IFIs to formulate the SAPs, which were highly demanding conditional lending programs. These SAPs required African countries to pivot away from their mostly government controlled economies to the free market, capitalist driven models characteristic of the West. Despite the necessity of international intervention, SAPs failed to generate a long-term economic environment conducive to growth and development. The SAPs' failure can be partly attributed to the demand for decreased public spending as an aspect of their austerity measures. Following the SAPs, African governments were required to slash their public spending which devastated public education and public health programs and resulteding in decreased skilled workforces and worsening health outcomes.

Just as Africa faced high inflation and low exchange rates in the early 80s, the continent now faces those same challenges along with pandemic-induced spending on personal protective equipment, testing infrastructure, and vaccinations. To make matters worse, African economies are incredibly reliant on international financial inflows, be it in the form of commodity revenues, FDI, development aid, or tourism, and when the proverbial tap of international financial flows was shut off, African economies froze. The only way forward was increased borrowing from IFIs resulting in the accumulated pandemic debt of the continent reaching \$547 billion by 2021. Furthermore the IMF estimates that, currently,

there is a debt financing gap of \$345 billion dollars. This figure comprises the total emergency funds provided to cover stimulus packages that jump-started African economies, bolstered national healthcare systems, and established social safety nets to insulate vulnerable communities. These emergency funds were needed because, unlike wealthier economies in the West and Asia—which were able to mobilize a cumulative \$11 trillion to insulate their economies—much of Africa was already struggling to meet their pre-pandemic debt repayment requirements.

Africa has no economic ability to repay these debts. If the continent wants to meet its minimum debt repayments, on average, countries will need to spend five times their annual healthcare budget for the next decade to dig themselves out of this financial hole. It is immoral and fundamentally unfair to require African states to put the needs of their populations on hold to service much wealthier western countries and institutions. There exists the potential argument that Africa is borrowing recklessly, especially considering the massive amounts of foreign aid that is given to the continent. However, in just 2013 alone, Kenya was required to spend \$230 million in debt repayments, which is equal to roughly 20 percent of all foreign aid it received in the same year. Furthermore, debt relief has led to genuinely positive social developments for countless African countries. In 2008, Tanzania, for instance, was able to reach a 98 percent enrollment benchmark for primary education because of savings due to debt relief that it received.

African economies have been cannibalized for decades, firstly by colonial powers, then by IFIs and their SAPst, and now by unfair debt. For example, savvy, western hedge funds are actually benefiting from African debt as there has been a rise in what's called "vulture funds." These funds purchase African sovereign debt on a secondary market where it trades under its original value; then, these funds seek to recover the original value of the debt using loopholes in international laws and debt structure rules. While this process is incredibly complex, it is also incredibly lucrative for western investors. For example, in a recent case, a vulture fund purchased \$3 million worth of Zambian sovereign debt on a secondary market, sued Zambia for \$55 million—the original value of the debt had it been bought on the primary market—and was then awarded \$15.5 million dollars as a result of the litigation that the Zbian government had to pay.

Africa is being crushed by international debt; debt that other wealthy nations did not have to take on. If the status quo of debt repayments is maintained, then the African government will have to decide between paying for necessary public services or paying back debt to wealthy lenders. The rest of the world has grown rich off of Africa for a centuries, and it is fundamentally immoral for IFIs and lending nations to demand repayment in the midst of this economic crisis. Therefore, African debt must be restructured and delayed until African nations have the ability to repay it.

a military junta, the Transitional Military Council (TMC).

However, the anti-government protesters, led by the Forces of Freedom and Change (FCC), were not satisfied with merely replacing one corrupt military leader with another: they wanted real change. The FCC continued organizing large-scale protests after Al-Bashir's ousting, and, in July of 2019, the TMC finally acceded to the FCC's demands and signed a power-sharing agreement which included a 39-month transition period culminating with the creation of a democratic government. The deal, which stipulated the creation of legitimate political institutions and the writing of a new constitution under the auspices of popular sovereignty, appointed Hamdok as caretaker president. Thanks to its strong and thoroughly-articulated provisions, the deal had the potential to be a landmark moment in Sudanese history. The TMC-FCC pact which brought Hamdok to power was extremely fragile and, thanks in large part to a lack of international support, was unable to hold long enough to guarantee the transition. Lacking meaningful outside backing, the Sudanese people now find themselves in the same situation as they did several years ago, deprived of a golden opportunity for democratization and facing a return to the military-led brutality of past decades.

In international politics, there are a select few instances in which powerful states or international institutions can meaningfully use their powers for good. Sudan's democratic transition, however, represented precisely the type of event which nations and institutions concerned with promoting global democracy should have thrown their weight behind. The agreement, signed in presence of Ethiopian and African Union leaders, represented a monumental victory for grassroots democracy and the type of pact which the global community could strengthen and legitimize. Crucially, the TMC-FCC power-sharing agreement was not a document full of vague and unrealizable

political abstractions, but instead included a number of specific and well-defined goals, culminating with a democratic election in 2023 in which members of the transitional government were explicitly barred from running. Because of the agreement's specificity, global actors such as the U.S., EU, and UN had a chance to lend their legitimacy to the democratic transition while simultaneously pressuring the Sudanese military and TMC to follow through on its commitments. Instead of taking on the overwhelming and rarely-successful task of developing a democratic state from the ground up, powers such as the U.S. and UN simply had to encourage the deal's signees to adhere to a list of already agreed-upon conditions.

Instead, the international community has largely failed to support Sudan through the transition process, providing limited support and allowing the military to renege on its various promises. In October 2020, the Trump administration removed Sudan from the U.S.'s list of state sponsors of terrorism, a move which reconnected Sudan to the global economy and granted it access to foreign aid and debt relief. While the administration's decision was nominally a response to the TMC-FCC agreement, it was primarily an incentive for Sudan to normalize relations with Israel. By tying Sudan's removal from the global terror sponsors list to an unrelated international issue, the American government effectively gave up its leverage over the peace process. In doing this, the U.S. wasted an opportunity to tie its removal from the list to a legitimate government transition and use its financial clout to encourage Sudan's transitional government to follow through on its commitments. Although the Biden administration has since frozen relief to Sudan, its removal from the list has nonetheless allowed it back into the global economic system.

The UN's efforts to encourage Sudan's democratic transition were similarly half-hearted. Although UN Secretary General

Antonio Guterres recognized the Sudanese people's "remarkable achievements," the body did far too little to actually promote the transition process. The UN's Special Representative to Sudan, the German diplomat Volker Perthes, played a largely passive role in the process until the military removed Hamdok from office in October, demonstrating their lack of commitment to the transition process. Perthes has since attempted to mediate the conflict, but frustrated protest groups have refused to meet with him, citing the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan's unwillingness to firmly condemn the October coup.

Today, Sudan's defeated transitional government serves as a reminder of what could have been. Although Hamdok was reinstated as Prime Minister late last year after signing a deal which granted the Military concessions beyond those in the initial TMC-FCC deal, he resigned on January 2nd, handing complete control back to the military. "Despite my efforts to achieve the desired and necessary consensus to give citizens security, peace, justice and to stop bloodshed, that did not happen," Hamdok said in explaining his resignation. Although Sudan's grassroots activists fought valiantly for their country, they now find themselves in the same position as they did three years ago. Meanwhile, powerful foreign actors, presented with a golden opportunity to advance democracy in Africa, appear to have squandered it away, setting the stage for a descent back to the unjust brutality of military rule.



# Cash Transfers In place of Volunteering: Giving Agency to Those in Need

Addison Egen

Whether fueled by selfless altruism or perhaps a savior complex, countless individuals flock to volunteer jobs in Africa. They detail their work as crucial, transformative, and life-saving, which it certainly can be. But however they may glorify their work, volunteers are often inefficient and, quite frankly, replaceable. As evidenced by trials in Kenya and Namibia, unconditional cash transfers provide recipients far more economic security, all without utilizing paternalistic aid structures. If Westerners are to claim a desire to help the world's poor, they must be willing to forego the volunteer jobs they romanticize, instead favoring simple, direct transfers to those who need help most.

By stripping economic decision-making away from locals, international volunteering denies recipients their agency. This results in an inefficient system in two main ways. First, volunteer work imperfectly matches recipients' needs, as volunteers are unable to maximize the welfare of those they do not truly know. This idea is derived from revealed preference theory, which explains that a consumer's observed behavior with money best illustrates their preferences. In this case, volunteers may be motivated to build schools while, in reality, the recipient town most desires and benefits from healthcare improvements. Volunteers therefore forego the optimal

choice in pursuit of their own construction desires. Medical anthropologist Noelle Sullivan notes just that, claiming that volunteers often ignore the most pressing needs of a town and can even duplicate resources, effectively providing no benefit, instead of working on crucial new ones.

Volunteer work is also often resource-wasteful because the majority of funds raised never go to the people in need. In a study examining 60 mission trips to 31 countries, management researcher Eric Anderson determined that 82 percent of those trips' costs went to travel expenses alone. Even once volunteers arrive, further resources are wasted due to

volunteer incompetence and regional misunderstandings. Volunteer workers have tended to undertake construction projects at exponentially higher costs with demonstrably lower quality than local workers, most likely because volunteers understand the local environment, economy, and infrastructure less than the people who actually live there. A team of nearly 200 American volunteers spent \$30,000 building new housing, while locals were estimated to only need \$2,000 for equivalent repairs. Another American volunteer admitted after volunteering in Tanzania, "We ... were so bad at the most basic construction work that each night the men had to take down the structurally unsound bricks

we had laid and rebuild the structure so that, when we woke up in the morning, we would be unaware of our failure."

It might be tempting, considering volunteering's tendency to strip those in poverty of their agency, to equate western altruism in Africa to an extension of colonialism and propose western isolation as the ideal solution. However, abandoning Africa forces them to build from the ground up and, slightly more bluntly, one can't be meaningfully productive while starving. Starting from so little is a slow, agonizing process. Rich nations and citizens have much to give the people of Africa. They just need to become more efficient at giving it.

A system of cash transfers provides the efficiency that volunteerism cannot. It eliminates the guessing at local needs required in volunteerism, and it significantly reduces travel and administrative costs because cash transfer programs don't require entire crews to operate. Functionally, these programs minimize because they effectively reduce the need for middlemen through their simplicity. This eliminates the opportunity for corrupt government officials and local rent-seekers to sabotage the program. Empirically, they have also been limited in size, scope, and timeline. However, the results so far have been highly promising. In 2008, the Basic Income Grant Coalition – a collection of NGOs, research institutes, and nonprofits – granted 1,000 Namibian residents in the Otjivero-Omitara area merely N\$100 a month (\$6.75) with no strings attached. By the end of the year, crime had fallen 43 percent and child malnutrition fell from 42 percent to 10 percent. The school dropout rate plummeted from 40 percent to nearly 0 percent. Destroying certain paternalistic assumptions, Namibian parents strongly valued their children's education, they simply couldn't afford it.

Better yet, these cash transfers don't solely satiate the temporary needs or desires of their recipients: they create

an environment for recipients to grow their economies. GiveDirectly, a nonprofit organization of research economists, attempted a similar cash transfer program in rural Kenya and found a fiscal multiplier of 2.6. That is, every \$1 investment grew the economy by about \$2.60, as citizens became more capable of efficient work once they had their basic needs better met. Kenyans also became more likely to start new businesses and attempted to diversify their income pools. Once guaranteed a baseline level of wealth and security, less citizens were faced with life or death scenarios when evaluating an entrepreneurial endeavor. Providing this security can therefore be a crucial step towards diversification for

often-volatile, resource-centric local economies.

By no means are volunteers unimportant. If we are to choose between a world with no anti-poverty relief and one with inefficient, yet still useful, volunteerism, the second would be the obvious choice. Volunteers still have a useful, although more limited, place under this new model maximizing the altruism of a dollar. Vaccines, for example, should probably be distributed to localities via the use of volunteers because individual African citizens cannot necessarily purchase certain technology if no infrastructure exists in their area to sell it to them. Nonetheless, the astounding success of

these programs should evoke significant action on behalf of governments, individuals, and nonprofit leads alike. Initiatives like GiveDirectly should receive subsidization, and similar programs should be rolled out to additional African localities. Extending the influence and scale of programs for the world's poorest will, at the very least, legitimize cash transfer efforts by attracting media attention and further academic inquiry. If first-world altruism is to make a meaningful impact, it should do so not through the confines of paternalism but instead through the trusting, considerate provision of unconditional cash transfers.







# Lake Chad: A Way Forward from Humanitarian Crisis and Resource Conflict

Ayla Kaufman

Lake Chad is the fourth largest water basin in Africa, bordering primarily Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria. Although its size should provide abundant natural resources, the lake basin is facing extreme drought. While Lake Chad's waters once had the potential to underpin a thriving economy, political and ethnic skirmishes over water and land have instead become the norm. In an effort to counter shrinking water supplies, a plethora of region-wide institutions have emerged to encourage sustainable management of transboundary water resources, preserve the Lake's ecosystem, and bolster regional security. Despite the efforts of regional institutions, Lake Chad's growing humanitarian crisis reveals a failing dispute resolution policy. One way forward is by expanding the mandate of the Lake Chad's Governor's Forum to clarify and centralize Lake Chad dispute resolution.

Drought in Lake Chad is a decades old problem deriving from climate change and population growth. On one hand, climate change has diminished available water supplies as water evaporates due to rising temperatures. The effects of limited water are then magnified by erratic rainfall patterns, leaving natural replenishment of the lake unpredictable and infrequent. While water availability has deteriorated, demand has splurged following population growth. By 2025, the Lake Chad basin area will have experienced a 13 million inhabitant increase, further stressing water needs. Together, the simultaneously declining water supply but rising demand has created an economic mismatch and a water crisis in the basin, with 90 percent of Lake Chad's water vanishing over the last four decades.

These water shortages have had drastic repercussions, generating a widespread humanitarian emergency. Regional economic activity depends on Lake Chad water for agriculture, livestock herding, and fishing—the primary means of income. Water is essential for irrigation, cattle's drinking water, and ecosystems for fish, leaving swaths of lakeside residents unemployed when water flows fall short or are unreliable. The loss of water has left over a third of Lake Chad's 30 million inhabitants in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance, three million people facing food insecurity, and half a million children suffering malnutrition.

Alongside famine, poverty, and unemployment, Lake Chad's humanitarian crisis has been marred by resource conflicts. With residents forced to compete for dwindling water resources, inter-community resource conflicts have consequently grown common. For instance, in Nigeria, over 37,500 Nigerians have died in the last decade following communal conflict between herders and farmers. In 2018 alone, the death rate was six times higher than Boko Haram related terrorist attacks. And as the herders are largely Muslim and the farmers largely Christian, violence has formed along religious fault lines.

But religious tension is not the only aggravating factor in Lake Chad's violence as violence is coupled with cross-border disputes that breed nationalist strife. Infrastructure development projects, jurisdictional claims over emerging islands in the former lake, and water withdrawals have created ample grounds for bordering countries to fight over claims on water. Even four decades ago at the beginning of declining water levels, Nigeria and Chad's disagreement over territorial rights to emerging islands caused 84 deaths in 1983. Claims and counterclaims over water and continued withdrawals and diversions have since erupted in an escalating cycle of nationalist violence across the lake.

Lastly, religious and nationalist animosity have been exacerbated by communal pressures. When land becomes economically inhospitable, residents are forced to migrate in search of economic viability, creating an exodus of internally displaced persons and refugees. When migrations occur across borders or tribal areas, new demand for water resources are met with sometimes violent resistance from pre-existing residents. Chad and Cameroon's border area works as a case in point. There, a series of conflicts have occurred between migrating tribes; just last year, 12 died in conflict between the Shuwa Arab and Musgum communities, two died in conflict between the Shuwa Arab and Kotoko communities, one died in conflict between the Kanura and Chuwa Araba communities, and dozens more were injured in each disagreement. Migration has thus induced tense interactions between communities that have spilled over into violence.

While a dispute resolution policy exists to manage such resource conflicts, jurisdictional ambiguity prevents mediation. The Lake Chad Basin Commission is the foremost body responsible for regional collaboration in the basin and its charter instructs parties to bring unresolved conflicts "before the competent regional and sub-regional authorities." However, Lake Chad falls between West and Central Africa, each of which are governed by different regional economic communities. In West Africa, Niger and Nigeria participate in the The Economic Community of West African States whereas in Central Africa, Chad and Cameroon are part of the Economic Community of Central African States. Each economic community follows separate water and natural resource policies, normative policy regimes, and dispute resolution methods, making harmonization and coordination across economic communities challenging and ambiguous. Historically, countries have brought cross-regional conflicts in front of separate bodies, rendering mediation impossible. Attempts at reconciliation remain inadequate and

unenforceable when both parties are not present, nor legally bound by an organization's ruling for which they are not both members.

Instead, assigning jurisdiction over Lake Chad dispute resolution policy to the Governor's Forum would clarify the dominant dispute resolution body for all stakeholders and cross-regional conflicts. The Governor's Forum is a body established in light of Lake Chad's Regional Stabilization Strategy, a five-year strategy which aims to connect the variety of communal, local, sub-national, and national parties. The Governor's Forum convenes the eight Lake Chad national governors, African Union, United Nations Development Programme, international partners, and sub-national stakeholders (e.g. local, communal, and indigenous residents) in continuous dialogue over transboundary projects.

While current disputes go unresolved because the appropriate dispute resolution mediator is unclear, the Governor's Forum comparatively provides a singular site for collective bargaining. The Governor's Forum serves as a unique opportunity to combine the central and west African economic communities under one transregional body not ridiculed by state sovereignty or jurisdictional issues. Moreover, civil society and local representatives also have seats at the table in Governor's Forum dialogues, enabling dispute resolution reflective of both national and communal interests. Until all countries, local communities, and multilateral actors are connected under a shared framework for dispute resolution, preventing inequitable water withdrawals and violence as well as coordinating disaster management will remain a pipe dream. Shifting and consolidating dispute resolution policy under the Governor's Forum thus offers a path forward to create more participatory governance of Lake Chad, enforce negotiated settlements, and reduce ethnic violence.



# Respecting Self-Determination for Spanish Africa

Spain and Morocco's competing colonial pasts complicate territorial disputes and diplomatic relations—but a tiny sliver of North Africa may present a roadmap to peace.

Kenny Larson

Nestled among the Strait of Gibraltar and Mediterranean coast, two Spanish cities continue the legacy of Spanish control in Africa. Composing less than 10 square miles combined, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla are home to nearly 170,000 Spaniards residing on territory governed by Spain since 1668 and 1497 respectively. Despite the territories' lasting military legacy under Spanish control, the area has long been claimed by its neighboring state, Morocco, as an integral part of its homeland and held under a form of modern-day colonialism. Ironically it is clear that in this microcosm of neocolonial debates, the best path forward for Spanish Africa is simple: self-determination.

Territorial disputes between Spain and Morocco have persisted in some form for well over a millennium. From 711 until 1492, the Iberian Peninsula was governed under Moorish control, unifying Morocco and Spain under the same leadership. Although the fall of Granada in 1492 definitively separated the two territories, land in Northern Africa and the peninsula alternated between Moroccan and Spanish control for centuries. These conflicts laid the foundation

of dichotomous perspectives on Spanish-Moroccan history: while Spain reidentified itself as a firmly European and Catholic society, Morocco leaned into its Muslim past and created a distinctive African culture diومتetrically opposed to European colonialism.

Today, these tensions have only been further exacerbated, particularly with respect to territorial and diplomatic disputes. Western Sahara, a region along the Atlantic Coast south of the Canary Islands, was held by Spain as a colony until 1975. After a guerilla insurgency led by the territory's indigenous inhabitants, Spain renounced its claim to the region and withdrew from the area. Although this was heralded as a win against European colonialism, Moroccan officials used the withdrawal as an opportunity to expand their territorial influence. Since then, Morocco has exploited the region's phosphorus reserves, moved settlers into the region, and waged a counter-insurgency against Western Saharans vying for their independence. Spain, on the other hand, has implicitly supported the independence movement, offering refuge to the leader of the Western Sahara's Polisario independence group, infuriating Moroccan officials.

Although located nearly one thousand miles north, Ceuta and Melilla have become the frontlines of this modern-day colonial struggle. Morocco, in its attempts to solidify control over its corner of Africa, views the two cities within the same legacy of Western Sahara: remnants of European imperialism. Importantly, last year, Morocco began relaxing its border controls with the city, allowing thousands of undocumented migrants to enter Spanish territory and ratcheting up tensions. Spain has responded by moving troops into both cities and introducing resolutions to the European Parliament blaming Morocco for the immigration crisis.

Attempts to ameliorate the tensions have been largely ineffective. Primarily, both Spain and Morocco have continued to rearticulate their own narratives about why their claims are legitimate and seek international support for said stories. Moroccans, relying on their own experiences with European colonialism, have called the territories "colonial enclaves" and drawn comparisons between Spain's discontent for British rule over Gibraltar. Spain, on the other hand, has pointed to the cities' long history of Spanish control, dating back a combined 1,000 years and the strong support of the cities' residents. However, the status quo has remained largely unchanged. Unfortunately for both nations, the opinions of the international community will not convince the other party to renounce their claims.

With no end in sight to these tensions, it is time for Spain and Morocco to put their claims to test with the only party that truly matters: Spanish Africans.

Self-determination presents several valuable advantages to resolving territorial disputes with long-lasting colonial legacies. First, it empowers individuals within a territory to control their own political destiny. This fundamentally democratic ideal rests on the

understanding that citizens are best equipped to determine their own future and capable of putting the self-interest of competing governments aside. Moreover, democratic processes provide legitimacy to territorial disputes either by providing a political mandate to the status quo, or by ensuring that transitions of territorial possession are done by the will of the residents.

This model has been tested all over the colonial world with great success. In Canada, for example, referenda on the future of the province of Quebec settled political tensions among pro-independence Québécois and those who sought to remain with Canada. In the United Kingdom, ballot initiatives on Scottish independence and secession from the European Union provided opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard and leave politicians out of the equation.

Certainly, this model is not without its challenges. Within the last decade, Spanish officials ignored the results of democratic referenda in Catalonia in which over 90% of voters favored independence from Spain. Morocco, on the other hand, has suppressed independence movements in Western Sahara that have garnered popular support among inhabitants of the territory. In both situations, clashes from local supporters of these self-determination movements have exacerbated political and social tensions in the regions, and threatened prosperity in these communities. However, these roadblocks should not disrupt the pursuit of democratic values. International governments could publicly pressure Spain and Morocco to abide by the results of a self-determination referendum in Ceuta and Melilla, and universally recognize the outcome of the vote.

Ultimately, the direction of Spanish-Moroccan relations should be determined by the people they directly affect. It is time to put the power back in the hands of Spanish Africa.

# Shot In the Arm: Not a Moment Too Soon

Jeh Mory

One of the most astonishing public health advancements of the past two centuries lies in the field of inoculation. From smallpox to cholera to polio to yellow fever, formerly common diseases were practically eradicated, with dramatic implications for life expectancy, quality of life, and improved economic and social outcomes. Even the Central African Republic, which currently ranks 193rd out of 193 countries in life expectancy at birth at 54 years, has experienced a dramatic increase in this metric since it gained independence in 1960. However, it is impossible to be satisfied with this progress when countries at a similar level of development such as Bangladesh enjoy a birth life expectancy of 73 years.

One key aspect of this problem is the diseases that continue to almost exclusively ravage swathes of the African continent. Consider malaria, which in 2020 inflicted an estimated 241 million cases and 627,000 deaths worldwide, according to the 2021 World Malaria Report. A whopping 95 percent of cases (accounting for nearly 20 percent of the entire continent's population) and 96 percent of deaths occurred in Africa, with 80 percent of these deaths observed in children under 5. Despite an estimated \$4.3 billion invested annually in anti-malaria efforts, from both governmental and nongovernmental sources (most famously the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), at least 600,000 people have died every year from this disease since at least 1990. In light of these facts, news of the WHO's approval of GlaxoSmithKline's (GSK's) Mosquirix anti-malaria vaccine this past October comes as a proverbial shot in the arm, offering the prospect

of tremendous economic and social ripple effects, mitigating the loss of tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars in lost productivity every year.

To be sure, the world has been far from inactive in the fight against malaria. The U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), a broad-based effort that partners with 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and 3 Southeast Asian countries to fund proven mitigation strategies, such as mosquito nets, insecticides, antimalarial drugs, and strengthen local health system capacities, provides a case in point. A 2017 study on the effectiveness of the PMI found that from 2006 to 2014, just \$3.7 billion in U.S. government spending helped prevent the deaths of 1.7 million young children, for an average of just \$2,200 per child. Thus, the long-awaited development of a vaccine of any effectiveness would make a significant impact in the fight against malaria.

Anti-malarial vaccines have long challenged some of the world's top pharmaceutical companies. Mosquirix was approved by the WHO in October 2021 after a research and development process that began in 1987 at a total cost exceeding \$750 million, including significant NGO assistance and funding. The final stage of this process included a pilot program in Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi, where over 2.3 million doses have been administered since 2019 in a routine and cost-effective process, despite the complications posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is worth pointing that Mosquirix would hardly represent some sort of panacea for this crisis—in fact, the vaccine is notable

for its moderate to limited effectiveness. Its Phase three clinical trial, conducted between 2009 and 2014, observed a prevention of about 30 percent of severe cases after a four dose schedule in children under the age of five. By contrast, three doses of the inactivated polio vaccine are 99 to 100 percent effective, which helped drive the near-total eradication of the disease once the vaccine was made widely available. Nevertheless, even this limited effectiveness would prevent the deaths of tens of thousands of children annually, dramatically improving public health and economic outcomes in the most heavily affected countries. Moreover, one study conducted by Alassane Dicko, a malaria researcher at the University of Bamako, suggested that Mosquirix's effectiveness against deaths could be boosted to as high as 73 percent if administered in the run-up to the rainy season in conjunction with other antimalarial drugs, a process called seasonal malaria chemoprevention.

Moreover, GSK has taken crucial first steps in ensuring adequate and affordable supply. In a statement released immediately following the news of Mosquirix's approval, the company committed to making up to 15 million doses available annually at no more than a 5 percent markup above the cost of production. GSK has also partnered with Bharat Biotech, an Indian firm, to produce the requisite doses and scale up production in a cost effective manner. While the standalone vaccine is estimated to be less cost-effective than either ensuring universal access to mosquito nets, insecticide spraying in homes, or SMC, there is optimism that the estimated

cost of \$200 per disability-adjusted life year (DALY) saved could be drastically decreased when combined with SMC, addressing concerns that funding the vaccine rollout would crowd out more cost-effective methods of prevention.

Encouragingly, the broader fight against malaria is a situation where simply throwing money at the problem may well work wonders. The WHO's 2020 World Malaria Report raised the alarm over a global funding shortfall—out of a target of \$5.6 billion to be raised from international donations, just \$3 billion was ultimately raised in 2019—a shortfall of 46 percent. Mosquirix's impending rollout may well contribute to a further shortfall while the world remains preoccupied with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and a host of budgetary distractions that have long precluded adequate funding for anti-malarial efforts. Frustratingly, the Copenhagen Consensus Center, a think tank founded by Danish economist Bjorn Lomborg, has long advocated for sustained anti-malaria funding as one of the most cost-effective outlets for developmental aid money. In a 2015 article, Lomborg claimed that each dollar spent in these (non-vaccine) efforts would generate \$36 in returns—a whopping return on investment. Ultimately, a renewed funding push from wealthier countries and prominent philanthropists may well successfully make tremendous strides in eradicating this disease, with potentially revolutionary public health, economic, and social outcomes for millions of Africans.



# What the Hell is Happening in Ethiopia?

Hanna Schechter



For the past year and a half Ethiopia has been at war, with thousands dead, over two million displaced, and a man-made famine devastating the country. The current war is being fought between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), from Ethiopia's northern Tigray region, and the Ethiopian government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in collaboration with the neighboring country of Eritrea. A United Nations investigation reported mass killings, ethnic cleansing, over a thousand cases of sexual violence, and other human rights abuses as a result of the conflict. So, how does Abiy—who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize—go from a celebrated leader to one who removes free media, shuts down the internet, arrests journalists, and uses ethnic slurs against the Tigrayan people? How did this civil war start, why does no one seem to know about it, and why hasn't the international community done more to help the people caught in the middle of this crisis?

Prior to the civil war, the TPLF governed Ethiopia with an iron grip. The front was created in the 1970s as a rebel resistance movement, and in 1991 overthrew the Marxist government, becoming the governing party of Ethiopia. The Tigray government was oppressive and authoritarian. Anti-government protests broke out in 2016, and in 2018, Abiy became prime minister. Prior to becoming prime minister, Abiy was a member of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization which, along with the TPLF, was a member of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). This is why, after coming to power, Abiy's work to diminish the political prestige of the TPLF and consolidate power between the multiple parties in EPRDF escalated tensions further between Abiy and TPLF leadership. In the beginning, Abiy was hailed as an international leader by instituting democratic reforms and making peace with Eritrea, a longstanding regional

rival, which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. However, after consolidating power, Abiy started arresting government officials and isolated many Tigrayans economically and politically.

In the summer of 2020, thousands of Ethiopians from ethnic minorities were arrested during anti-government protests and the murder of an Oromo ethnic anti-government singer, Hachalu Hundessa. The build-up towards civil war started in September 2020 when Abiy's government postponed elections due to the pandemic allowing him an additional 9 months of rule; however, the region of Tigray decided to hold parliamentary elections anyway. Abiy denounced the Tigray elections as "illegal," exacerbating the already growing tensions between the Tigray minority and the government. In the election, the TPLF won all the parliamentary seats with a reported 90%-98% voter turnout. The TPLF victory

proved to be a legitimate jab at Abiy's government with support from the Tigrayan people. Right after the election, the Ethiopian government cut off the TPLF party from government funding, escalating tensions further.

Two months following the parliamentary election, the TPLF preemptively attacked an Ethiopian military base on November 4, 2020. Abiy responded militarily, and so the civil war began. In June 2021, Abiy's forces retreated from the Tigray region, and by November 2021, the TPLF had drawn within 100 miles of the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. However, the TPLF was forced to retreat by the strength of Ethiopian citizens joining the fight and arms provided to the Ethiopian military by neighboring countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Iran.

Throughout the war, both parties have committed mass human rights abuses, with the

Ethiopian government instituting a blockade in July 2020 to cut off aid to Tigray, resulting in a dire human rights crisis. According to The World Food Program, in November 2021, around 9.4 million people in the north of Ethiopia were in desperate need of food without the means to get it due to the government's blockade of aid. After the UN urged Abiy to end his "man-made" famine through the blockade, the Ethiopian government expelled UN officials from the country and denied any wrongdoings. On the other side of the war, Human Rights Watch reported that the Tigrayan military was executing civilians, and cases of rape and deadly airstrikes targeting civilians were reported by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to the UN Human Rights Council.

With the continued lack of respect for human life on both sides of the civil war, the international response has been underwhelming.

In response to the human rights abuses, on January 1, 2022, President Biden suspended Ethiopia's access to a U.S. trade program called the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Specifically, this action will limit the Ethiopian government's ability to move weapons between Ethiopia and Eritrea using Ethiopian Airlines, a previous recipient of AGOA funding. In February of 2022, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee introduced the Ethiopian Stabilization, Peace and Democracy Act to impose sanctions on individuals involved in the war and end the financial assistance to the government of Ethiopia. The bill further asks the U.S. Department of State to decide if war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed by the parties involved in the war. Although these are steps in the right direction, the U.S. response has been slow and disproportionate to the amount of human rights abuses taking place in the country. As a

democracy and advocate for human rights, the U.S. can and should be taking a harsher stance on Abiy's government.

The African Union (AU) response to the war has been, to put it lightly, disheartening. The most recent AU annual summit labeled "Building Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent" was held in Addis Ababa in February 2022 and addressed the Covid-19 pandemic, coups in Mali, Guinea, Sudan, food insecurity, Israel, climate change and the Tigray crisis. In regards to Ethiopia, the AU envoy working to mediate discussion between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government has been criticized for its ineffectiveness and bias towards the Abiy government. With the AU summit being held in Addis Ababa and lack of real condemnation to hold Abiy's government accountable, the AU is allowing Ethiopia to continue putting civilian lives at risk.

With a general global consensus on the dire humanitarian crisis in the country along with public support, why hasn't the world done more? While individuals around the continent of Africa wrote an open letter urging for a peaceful negotiation, most governments have taken no to little political action to end this conflict. These actions could include increased efforts to deliver humanitarian aid and individual sanctions on Tigray and Ethiopian leaders responsible for disregarding human life and rights in this war. The AU has allowed Abiy's government to continue ethnic cleansing of the Tigray people without jeopardizing Ethiopia's position in the union while international bodies, such as the U.S., have been slow to respond to the crisis—causing some to question whether they care at all.



# South Africa Is Right: They Should Be Rewarded, Not Punished, For Discovering Omicron

Ethan Story

On November 24, 2021, South Africa alerted the world to the Omicron variant of Covid-19—more contagious but seemingly less severe than the then-prevailing Delta variant. The global reaction was swift: within hours, countries from around the world began to institute travel bans to and from most of Southern Africa. When the United States imposed their ban, eight Southern Africa countries were included—only two of which had actually detected a single Omicron case. Meanwhile, the U.S. excluded U.S. citizens and permanent residents from the ban, shutting out native Africans from international travel while permitting Westerners free entry despite returning from the same supposedly Omicron-invested countries as banned travelers.

These bans were unjust and discriminatory, yet another example of the Western world dealing in Afrophobia rather than sound policymaking and science. Southern African politicians immediately said as much; South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa decried unfair discrimination at the hands of the international community, while Malawi's President—whose country had less than 20 Covid-19 cases at the time—ripped the bans as rushed and unjust. The World Health Organization (WHO) agreed, calling on countries to avoid travel bans, citing the heavy burden such restrictions placed on countries, especially poorer ones. WHO's regional director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, also praised South Africa, saying the country should be commended—not shut off from the world—for discovering Omicron.

Despite the justifications given by the international community, which largely focused on buying

time against the variant, the travel bans imposed were highly ineffective. Almost immediately after the restrictions went into effect, Omicron cases were detected across Europe, including in the United Kingdom. The first Omicron case in the U.S. was identified on December 1, a mere five days after restrictions against Southern Africa were imposed on November 26. Omicron was also present in Europe long before South Africa reported the virus to the world and thus before the bans were imposed: nine cases were linked to an event in Scotland on November 20, while the Netherlands reported that domestic spread of the virus had occurred a week before the restrictions went into place. Thus, the bans were nothing short of an impulsive action that did far more harm than good.

The bans lasted for over a month, with the United States finally lifting its restrictions on the eight Southern Africa countries on December 31. The European Union waited even longer, finally lifting its restrictions on January 10. The economic cost of these restrictions was high: Cape Town, South Africa, estimates that it lost \$12.6 million daily due to decreased tourism, while unemployment spiked in industries that were banking on December holidays in the southern hemisphere's summer to recoup previous losses from the pandemic. To put it plainly, the Omicron travel bans only kicked African countries while they were down, dampening the recovery of poorer countries already rocked by a pandemic-imposed economic downturn.

Instead of being punished for alerting the world to Omicron, South Africa should have been commended. The nation was able to discover and sequence the new variant largely due to

advancements in virology made though combatting the HIV/AIDS crisis, a clear success story. South Africa's advanced genomic sequencing abilities alerted the world to a variant that likely originated elsewhere, perhaps in other less vaccinated countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Regardless, it was South African scientists—not American or European scientists—that discovered Omicron, despite the variant being present in Europe for most of the month of November. For that, we all should give South Africa—most of all their scientific community—our thanks, not our travel bans.

Perhaps worst of all, and as many in South Africa have rightfully pointed out, global vaccine inequity is likely at least somewhat to blame for the Omicron outbreak. Across the world, wealthier countries possess plentiful vaccine supplies—enough to vaccinate their population several times over, in the American case—while poorer countries struggle to obtain enough doses. Even when vaccines are acquired, they're often dangerously close to their expiration date, hurting efforts to get those doses into arms. As of Omicron's discovery in late November, only around 25 percent of South Africa had been fully vaccinated, compared to 64 percent of North America and 62 percent of Europe. The picture for the whole of Africa is even worse, with only 10 percent of the population being fully vaccinated by late November. Thus, the outbreak of Omicron on the African continent ought to come as no surprise: the United States and Europe have consistently underdelivered on their global vaccination promises, allowing the virus to swirl unimpeded. It is this uninhibited spread that increases the likelihood of a variant developing.

What can African countries do to prevent future travel bans and improve vaccine equity? One suggestion—made by Victoria Fan, a professor of health policy at the University of Hawaii, Manoa—is for African nations to withhold information on the emergence of potential new variants from the world. Indeed, Indonesia tried a similar strategy in 2006, withholding Avian Flu samples from the WHO in protest of the samples being used to make a vaccine Indonesia would not have access to. Such a route inserts geopolitics into the arena of global health, kicking off a potentially dangerous game that could spiral into pandemic nationalism at a time when the world needs to be working together more, not less.

Another strategy could be to engineer an African voting bloc that stands together at international forums and in the press. This would be difficult; a number of African countries, most notably Angola and Rwanda, imposed their own bans on Southern Africa at the expense of pan-African solidarity, making clear that there is no single African foreign policy. Still, the African Union and Africa's regional heavyweights should follow South Africa's lead and publicly blast the international community for their poor Omicron response. This public diplomacy ought to take Africa's cause directly to Western media organizations in an attempt to name-and-shame global leaders for complicity in crafting harmful travel bans and furthering vaccine inequity. Only with a loud and united Africa will the continent be able to demand better treatment at the hands of the world's wealthiest countries.

# AMERICAS.



# Deadly Progressivism

## Argentina's Long-Lost Battle



Azul Cibils Blaquier

The term *progressivism* is historically controversial. Born from one of the central Enlightenment thinkers, Immanuel Kant, and his definition of progress as that which moves away from barbarism and towards civilization, progressivism originally argued for the abolition of slavery, rise of literacy, end of sex inequality, and promotion of social equality. The term was introduced into contemporary mainstream politics in the West at the beginning of the 20th century. It initially defined a period of widespread social activism and political reform where middle-class citizens were center stage, targeting political machines and addressing the problems caused by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Fast-forward to today and things get muddier. Progressivism is yet again gaining traction under the LGBTQ+, BLM, Pro-Choice and many more social reform banners that have captivated western society, and Latin America is no exception. While this may seem like a positive impact, and on some level may be, it has provided the region's populist and corrupt leaders with an opportunity to regain control— one they're not likely to let go of. This is a region-wide phenomenon, for which we'll take the case study of Argentina as an example.

Many have argued over how and why Argentina went from

being the 7th richest country in the world at the beginning of the 20th century to the underdeveloped nation it is today. The causes are many and unclear. The fact remains that nowadays Argentina is struggling with over 40% of poverty, almost 50% annual inflation and severe structural corruption throughout its political institutions. Needless to say, it's very unstable, unlike the many Western nations it is emulating in its progressive policies. The U.S, UK, France—they have their problems, sure. But its political institutions are stable enough to handle such a reckoning. For starters, none of their vice presidents have ten judicial causes against them, nor are they trying to escape justice. Amidst such monumental systemic breaches of justice and equality, matters such as gay rights, abortion rights and transexual rights, among other popular social reform issues that were previously considered by few have now been brought to the front of the agenda by virtually every political party on the spectrum.

In 2019, Alberto Fernández won the presidential elections against the incumbent president, Mauricio Macri, in what marked the beginning of a new pink tide (also known as a turn to the left in LA politics) for the country. Voters, disillusioned by Macri's failed economic policies, lost faith in his party, Cambiemos (Let's Change), and resorted back to the familiar Kirchnerism, the political movement that's characterized Argentine politics since 2003 whose leader is former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015), in the hopes that the new political actor that was Mr. Fernandez meant things would be different, even with Mrs. Kirchner as vice-president. They grew tired of what the media called (and continues to do so) Macri's right-winged social policies, despite the fact that none of them came even close. His traditional background automatically rendered Macri's efforts to promote equality and establish a just system useless. It didn't matter that Mrs. Kirchner, as president, had promised to veto the bill that

would decriminalize abortion and that Mr. Macri, despite his Catholic beliefs, stated he would not interfere. Or that he increased government spending to improve the Villa 31, a massive shanty town located in the center of Buenos Aires. It was too little, too late. Progressivist speech had gripped the media, and that title has always belonged to the Peronists, the most important left-wing political party in Argentina since the mid 20th century and that which fathered Kirchnerism. National TV networks and newspapers fostered the urban myth that Macri's government was by the rich, for the rich. However, the opposition is not to blame. Nobody would expect anything else from them. The problem lay with the real progressives who were more concerned with the president's elite upbringing and male privilege than with his actual policies.

Argentina is facing one of its most difficult times economically. Meanwhile, a large part of the Argentine population is more preoccupied with gender-inclusive language, the feminist agenda and the heteronormative culture that still characterizes the country. To relax these concerns, Kirchnerism employs speech tactics, verbally and continually addressing these issues and ensuring the people that "there is a pressing need to recover the banners of social justice," especially after the coronavirus pandemic made it evident how "millions and millions suffer while a few reap the rewards." In what he classifies as an "ethical imperative," the president regularly proposes changes to the capitalist system that is to blame for these inequalities. In a similar tone, he offered political asylum to Bolivia's autocratic leader Evo Morales when he left his country in 2019 for facing charges of treason, thus aiding him to escape justice. Those he respects, however, seem to have little intention of actually doing good. The president of the Argentine League for Human Rights, Mr. Schulman physically and verbally abused a cashier this February while wearing a T-shirt that read "Derechos Humanos" (Human Rights). Not

to mention the multiple legal cases against Mrs. Kirchner that she continues to escape, which Mr. Fernández originally publicly and frequently denounced, and which include treason, corruption, and money laundering. This is the same person who is now the face of a party that in 2019 sent out envelopes with cash to civilians living in the poorer areas of the country alongside his party's ballot.

Progressivism in Latin America is used as a tool by populist leaders to justify a larger state and therefore promote their personal interests. It does more harm than good, for while it may bring truly relevant and important issues to the table, it primarily serves as a façade. None of the economic measures taken under the progressive agenda in Argentina have served to actually improve people's quality of life, unless achieving comfort and a sense of justice being done thanks to mere catch phrases that are manipulatively used and never implemented counts as improving quality of life. Argentines will never see a just republic until their priorities change.





# The Case for a New Referendum on Independence in French Guiana

Chris Coffey

In French Guiana, the time is right for a new referendum for autonomy to be put forward. Independence from France would bring challenges: a loss in subsidies, technological investment, and military protection. These costs would be outweighed, though, by the opportunity to stimulate domestic growth, innovation, and employment in a region of the world that is too often overlooked. No amount of money from France has been able to quell the unrest and dissatisfaction in French Guiana in part because its people crave the right to self-determination. After several more years of inequity, a referendum today might just pass with the chance at self-sufficiency on the ballot.

For most people, the word “France” evokes images of gothic architecture and lavender fields rather than primeval rainforests and a tropical climate—yet, the second-largest region of France, as it happens, is located over 4,000 miles away from the European mainland on the northeastern edge of South America. French Guiana, officially an overseas region and department of France, has been fully integrated into the French Republic since 1946. It is a part of the European Union, uses the euro as its currency, and has standard French as its official language. French Guiana maintains a close relationship with France, on whom it relies for subsidies, technology, and investment. French Guiana’s largest trading partner is France, where it exports fish, gold, and timber. Because of its close relationship with France, French Guiana’s Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of nearly 20,000 U.S. dollars remains one of the highest in South America.

French Guiana’s European connection, however, has been far from a guarantee of prosperity. The cost of living in French Guiana is much higher than in neighboring countries because of its economic reliance on imported goods from France and subsistence farming. French Guiana, despite enjoying a higher standard of living than much of Latin America, is the second poorest of France’s five overseas regions, with an unemployment rate of up to 22.3 percent and over 40 percent of the population below the poverty line. Along with a high infant mortality rate, endemic diseases including malaria, yellow fever, and dengue fever are also present. Increasing rates of poverty and crime in recent decades, coupled with a perceived lack of support from the mainland, have soured public opinion towards France in French Guiana. Conditions deteriorated to such an extent that by 2009, French Guianan labor unions were threatening to launch widespread protests and general strikes. Citizens felt that the French government was indifferent to the low wages and stagnation because there was no increase in welfare or support from France in response to diseases or economic hardship. Similar labor movements took place from 2009 to 2010 in other French overseas departments including Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean and Réunion in the Indian Ocean. In response, referendums were held in 2010 in Martinique and French Guiana proposing increased autonomy from France.

In French Guiana, the referendum was resoundingly defeated because of concerns that increased independence would result in even less financial support from France. The resolution, which was put forward by then French President Nicolas Sarkozy, was rejected by 70.22 percent of voters, or over 22,000 votes. Voters were asked whether they wanted

more power to be given to the government in Cayenne, the capital of French New Guiana. The proposed change would have shifted French Guiana’s status from an overseas region to a semi-autonomous collectivity in the mold of French Polynesia. If the resolution had passed, French Guiana would have been regulated by a different article of the French Constitution. In 2010, many French Guianians were not ready for independence from France. Another decade of worsening economic and health conditions, along with a global pandemic that exacerbated the flaws of the French colonial model, might mean that public opinion on independence in French Guiana has since shifted.

Despite the one-sided result of the referendum, unrest in French Guiana has only grown. In 2016, French Guiana became the region of France with the highest murder rate. Illegal mining practices also polluted the area’s rivers and rainforests. Gross domestic product per capita in the territory is now less than half what it is in the mainland as the economic, social, and possibly racial divide between mainland France and the remnants of its colonial empire has worsened. The increase in crime and poverty, as well as a decline in social services and high cost of living, led to a general workers’ strike and widespread demonstrations in 2017. March 28, 2017, saw the largest demonstration in the history of French Guiana. The protests and strikes brought the local economy to a halt. The demonstrations were orchestrated by a group calling itself the “500 Brothers Against Crime,” which included protesters from all walks of life, many of whom were anti-French dependency activists.

In the nearly five years since the social unrest intensified, the French government has done little to allay the concerns of French Guianians. The French government, led by President Emmanuel Macron, pledged billions of euros in supplemental funding for healthcare and infrastructure, but this did little to solve the structural problems inherent in French

Guiana’s political arrangement with France. Any economic recession or fiscal pressure on the French government carries negative effects for overseas regions like French Guiana. Researchers from the University of Guyane have determined that reliance on the French economy has resulted in a “private sector that is both underdeveloped and insufficiently diversified,” “protectionism that increases the costs of local production,” and “excessive government deficits financed by bank credit.” Increased or total autonomy from France might cost French Guiana the benefit of supplemental funding in the short run, but it could foster the growth of local industries in the long run.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 emphasized pre-existing inequities. French Guiana has been hit harder by the virus than other regions of France, as proven by its comparatively higher case and death rates per capita. The pandemic revealed the medical facilities of French Guiana to be inferior to those in other territories such as Martinique. French intervention has also stunted the growth of French Guiana by limiting its control over its natural resources. It is widely speculated that French Guiana has significant untapped oil reserves because its neighbors Guyana and Suriname have made recent offshore discoveries. Total, a large French oil company, has a monopoly over oil in French Guiana and has ceased drilling operations.

A new referendum for independence would offer French Guiana greater control over its natural resources, and thus its economic future. Instead of using the Euro and being so heavily reliant on French imports and subsidies, French Guiana could look to its South American neighbors for partnership. Perhaps most of all, though, a new referendum on independence would give the people of French Guiana another opportunity for self-determination and to end the pervasive feeling of being treated as second class citizens.



# Gender Politics in Mexico: AMLO's Populism, Femicide, and Gender Parity

Samantha Klos

In recent years, the streets of Mexico have been filling with purple crosses bearing the names of murdered women. Consuelo Martínez, mother of femicide victim Victoria Pamela, describes “each cross [as] a case, a pain.” The civil protests reflect a rise in gendered violence and femicides by 235 percent from 2015 to 2021, prompting women to take to the streets in overwhelming numbers. They call themselves “voices de la ausencia,” or “voices of the absent,” in the face of rampant impunity. Meanwhile, Mexico’s government has reached gender parity, with a 50 percent quota for women representatives as law. To understand this political dissonance, look no further than President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s (AMLO) populism and profuse anti-feminism. Despite Mexico’s institutional progress, AMLO’s active ignorance of women’s voices makes him complicit in the country’s gender inequality and violence epidemic.

President López Obrador founded the Morena party, which is widely considered center-left, after leaving the Party of the Democratic Revolution. His 2018 victory is representative of global trends toward populism and a general disenchantment of Mexican people toward traditional parties. The President campaigned on empowering marginalized communities and bridging economic gaps but has failed to follow through,

especially on promises directed towards women’s rights. As a self-proclaimed leftist and facilitator of gender parity laws, many expected AMLO to be a feminist, however, he has been outspoken about his distrust of them. It is a classic populist polarization tactic of ‘othering’ feminists and generating a communal sentiment among his supporters. He maintains that he is a “humanist, not a feminist,” and that feminists are “conservative puppets” infiltrated by his opponents to dismantle him. The struggle is reduced to a political tactic being employed to undermine him, which falsely implies that the feminist movement is a new creation rather than a historical struggle for equality.

Although there was not an organized, collective feminist movement in Mexico until the 20th century, feminist thought has existed for centuries amidst machismo, patriarchy, and paternalism. From educational advancements pre-revolution to conflict-induced labor integration to the later embracement of Marxism, Mexico’s feminists have ushered in strong intersectional perspectives. Another win for the feminist cause came in 2003 when Mexico adopted its first gender quota at 30 percent—however, this was ridden with loopholes and only required quotas to be met in candidacy runnings, not election outcomes.



Femicide protest in Mexico City. Sign reads:

**“I wasn’t born a woman to die for being one.”**

Source: Wikimedia Commons

It has evolved with continued pressure, with most loopholes closed and a subsequent 50 percent mandate. Now, the central goal of the movement is to eliminate femicides and impunity.

Specifically, over the past two years, Mexico has witnessed an extreme uptick in femicides and general violence against women, which is linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and government-sponsored impunity. In March 2020 alone, over 26,000 emergency calls were placed relating to violence against women. AMLO alleged that most reports were fake, and his reply was an urge for women to refrain from fear, to take their role in the home seriously, and

for those considering violence to instead “breathe and count to ten.” In general, pandemic-oriented conversations drowned out those of violence in Mexico, concealing the President’s inadequate responses and the magnitude of women’s plight from the general public.

Further, AMLO has backtracked on his affirmations that there would be no impunity in Mexico during his presidency. 93 percent of violent crimes went unpunished as of 2021, and this figure is expected to be higher for femicide. Unpunished abusers have ranged from husbands to police officers to politicians; for example, AMLO has gone so far as endorsing a Morena politician twice

accused of rape, Félix Salgado Macedonio. Despite criticism, AMLO defended Salgado and chose not to disqualify him from the running, indicating that his administration has neither the will nor the capacity to punish, especially when it is politically convenient.

For many, it is surprising that this level of impunity remains even with gender parity. Ideally, equality in representation would transfer into equality in all other areas of life, but it has become clear that this inclusion is stronger on paper than in practice, becoming a way for AMLO to save face. While Mexico is leading the world in female representation,

both the current administration and political parties as a whole have undermined the law by relegating women to relatively less powerful positions. During gubernatorial elections specifically, women were generally only nominated in non-key states, leaving high prestige roles for men. For example, two women Morena politicians, Indira Vizcaíno Silva and Lorena Cuéllar Cisneros, were elected as governors in Colima and Tlaxcala which are among the smallest of all states. Women from AMLO’s coalition are strategically chosen, ensuring that interests align and his power is not challenged. Combined, these factors place limits on women’s enforcement

capabilities and their impacts on executive decisions.

On the other end of the spectrum, feminists have been increasingly ardent. They have responded with larger and more frequent protests than ever before. Most recently, they gathered in cities across the country for International Women’s Day on March 8, 2022 (a yearly occurrence). Preceding this were demonstrations for “Día de las Muertas” in November 2021, annually on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Valentine’s Day 2020, and more immediately following many highly publicized cases. These protests will not cease until meaningful action is taken to protect women at large and establish legitimate, standardized punishments for perpetrators of violence. This combination of mounting anger amongst women, populism that villainizes them, and circumventions of gender parity laws makes the issue of

gender politics in Mexico very complex. One thing made clear is that AMLO’s commitment to being a “political messiah” and his specific type of populism that ‘others’ feminists is not only inhibiting women from having equal political agency, but in turn propelling the violence and femicide trends. Gender parity laws can only go so far when the head of state circumvents all progressive avenues. With AMLO’s approval ratings at an all-time low, feminists have the opportunity to be the crucial opposition necessary to dismantle the ruling Morena party in the 2024 election. The world is watching, and what happens in Mexico may have repercussions across Latin America—a region leading in progressive legal measures through gender quotas, yet also in violence against women.



# The Downfall of Latin American Catholicism

Brendan Tilds

Throughout the various periods of colonization and development in Latin America, Christianity has remained a constant. While 60 percent of the population identifies as Roman Catholic, it wasn't until 2013 that Latin America saw its first pope, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, papally known as Pope Francis. Since Brazil was first colonized by Portuguese explorers in the 1500s, the concentration of self-identifying Catholics in Brazil grew into the largest concentration of Catholics in the world. The Pew Research Center estimates there are 123 million Catholics in the country. Despite a Latin American person assuming the role as Pope for the first time, the population of Catholics in Brazil is in decline. As soon as late 2022, Catholicism could become a minority religion within Brazil due to the stringent guidelines of the Catholic Church and the rise of religious conversion.

Unless the Catholic Church undergoes vast reforms in Brazil, the decline of Catholicism in the region will continue to decline. Throughout the Church, there is a series of strict policies that are exclusionary towards those who were not baptized by Catholic priests. Even with the declining population, the Church fails to loosen its policies to allow new membership in the church; for example, "The church does not baptize babies that were not born to parents married by Catholic priests." This rule bars a method which could increase the population of the church and help to curb the decline. Furthermore, the Church doesn't allow its

members to follow through with divorce. If a couple within the Church decides to divorce each other, an informal form of excommunication occurs. This is an additional method through which the Catholic Church's policies employ exclusionary measures during a time of decline.

Not only is there a very strict set of rules, customs, and traditions that members of the Catholic Church must follow, but the Catholic Church as an organization is marred by a series of controversies spanning decades. Nearly every major news outlet speaks of the sexual misconduct that the church covered up for years, including past popes. The Church provided little restitution for the past scandals that have occurred at the hands of previous popes and members of leadership.

Finally, an issue that remains present within the Catholic Church is the church's specificity when establishing their places of worship. Due to the constraints surrounding when and where a Catholic Church can be built and started, there is a strong inability for these churches to expand into rural and more poor areas. While the Catholic Church has difficulty expanding into more rural and poor areas, the different sects of protestant churches such as Evangelism and Pentecostalism do not share the same struggles. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches can and are oftentimes built in the founders' homes. The

flexibility shared by these two sects allows them to grow and form in places the Catholic Church can't touch. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics estimated, in 2010 the percentage of Catholics in proportion to the population was 64.6 percent while Evangelicals accounted for 22.2 percent. However, ten years later the number is down to about 51 percent while the percentage of those who identify as evangelical grew to over 31 percent. During the decline of the Catholic Church, other sects, such as the Protestant Church, stepped in to fill the space. This convenience often leads to faith switching, the process of switching from one sect within a religion to another.

While there is a significant number of people who do switch from the Catholic Church to one of the Protestant sects due to the lack of accessibility of the Catholic Church, a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014 indicates a multitude of other factors. Of such factors, "the most popular reason given by former Catholics in Latin America for embracing some form of Protestantism was to have a more personal connection with God, cited by 77 percent of respondents."<sup>2</sup> The more loose organization of the Pentecostal churches, the largest and quickest growing sect of Protestantism, have a closer relationship with the workers and are better equipped to promote growth and prosperity in poorer neighborhoods. According to the same survey, "Nearly six in ten said they

left Catholicism because they found a church that helps members more." These smaller, more local churches are significantly more involved in the surrounding neighborhoods and communities, which was an important factor in deciding to switch to the protestant church.

Unless the Catholic Church in Brazil is allowed to undergo several reforms, Catholicism will no longer be the majority of the population of religious identification in Brazil. Currently they are too exclusionary in their practices which stems the flow of new converts. Additionally, the nature of the current controversies surrounding the Catholic Church have negatively impacted their image and ability to improve how the public sees them. On top of that, the nature of Brazil's infrastructure creates a difficulty for the Catholic church to quickly expand within the region. It is too rural in some places, and in favelas and larger cities it's too difficult to construct churches. In the places where the Catholic Church has faltered, protestantism and other sects of Christianity have flourished. The relaxed traditions that these sects have adopted have allowed them to exponentially expand with the nation, slowly chipping away at the diminishing concentration of Catholics within Brazil.

# ASIA-PACIFIC.





the colonial government in all provinces. Here, the practice of street-naming after military figures who suppressed the natives was seen as a way to squash out native resistance and show power. By contrast, roads in Dakar were named after political leaders, civil administrators, and favored ideologies, such as Victor Hugo, William Ponty, Liberte, and Republique. Here, the French employed a different strategy. The colonial government did not face fierce military resistance from the native population, so their mission was to promote assimilation, association, and republican ideas. The French government saw this practice as an efficient tool for educating and civilizing the native populations of their colonies.

After independence, post-colonial Vietnam and Senegal each had their own unique approach to reappropriating these French street names. In independent Vietnam, the socialist government erased all French-derived names and replaced them with names of indigenous revolutionaries. Most notably, in 1975, the revolutionary government renamed the city of Saigon itself after Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the Indochina Communist Party. This approach aligned with the Vietnamese government's socialist tendencies and anti-colonial sentiment. Here, the people of Vietnam suffered high human costs in its path to independence and wanted no connections to their previous colonizer.

However, in post-colonial Dakar, rather than replacing previous street names, authorities decided to maintain and embrace them. The new government proceeded to not only draw new street names from France, but also to draw names from other countries. For instance, they proceeded to name a major road the Kennedy Avenue after U.S. president John F. Kennedy. The government also named another boulevard after Nelson Mandela, the prominent South African president who fought against apartheid. This modern practice of street-naming in Dakar aligned well with the

greater goal of the country's authorities, that is, urban diplomacy. With these street names, the authorities aimed to promote Dakar as a progressive city on the global stage. Through urban diplomacy, Dakar was able to situate its struggles and growth in alignment with the growing global trend towards urbanization.

The practice of toponymy and its following re-appropriation processes have occurred in a variety of urban spaces across the globe, including post-communist capital cities such as East Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest, and Moscow. Another prominent example of renaming streets in the modern times was the commemoration of Mohamed Bouazizi, the fruit seller whose actions are said to have ignited the Arab Spring. In Tunisia's capital, Tunis, the *boulevard du 7 novembre*, a major road, was renamed after Bouazizi. In retrospect, it is clear that toponymy, or street-naming, is a powerful but subtle practice among powerful nations to exert power on suppressed populations. When considering power, many would associate it with violence, destruction, or occupation of military force. In the context of architecture, planned space is powerful and is meant to make its users behave in ways they would not otherwise. These planned street-names and urban planning practices allowed European history and ideologies to become "engraved into the minds and hearts of the colonized".

Furthermore, in the context of post-colonial, modern societies, the re-appropriation and renaming process of these street names reflects how each nation situated itself in the world and history. Each government had the choice to erase the traces of its dark colonial past, to embrace elements of it, or to incorporate those elements within the context of its modern agenda. After all, these choices demonstrated how each nation reconciled with its relatively oppressed history.

\* This article draws from the studies of Njoh & Chie on Toponymy and the studies of Nicola Cooper on Urban Planning.

# Power Built in Space

## Colonial legacies of toponymy (street-naming) in Southeast Asia and West Africa

Joey Do

What do the cities of Saigon, Vietnam and Dakar, Senegal have in common?

They both have French street names.

Although located on the continents of Asia and Africa, Saigon and Dakar both acquired French street names during their prolonged colonial occupation. From 1857-1956, Saigon was the capital of the Federation of French Indochina (comprised of modern-day Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia). After Vietnam gained its independence in 1945, the city remained its

largest cultural and commercial center. Similarly, during colonial occupation, Dakar was the capital of the Federation of French West Africa (comprised of modern-day Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Niger). Thus, it became a major beneficiary of the French colonial government's modernization projects in the region. After its withdrawal from the Mali Federation, Senegal peacefully transitioned to independence in 1960. As major metropolitan hubs, both cities received considerable attention from the French colonial government

which took place after the industrial revolution. In utilizing new urban planning techniques, the French government had two distinct goals. First, it wanted to increase its prestige as a global colonial power. Second, it aimed to fulfill its self-proclaimed responsibility to educate 'racial and cultural others.' In this context, the practice of toponymy, or street-naming, fulfilled both of these goals. In both case studies above, Eurocentric street names became power built in space, asserting selected historical knowledge as well as proclaiming French prestige into

the collective memory of the oppressed.

Although similar in purpose, stark differences persist in the practice of toponymy in these two cities. In Saigon, most streets were named after French military figures. Roads and boulevards were named after celebrated French military personnels such as Galleni, Bonard, Charner. For context, in Indochina, the French government received one of the fiercest military resistance. Since 1854, the Vietnamese population has led multiple military operations against



# Mitigation of Afghanistan's Organ Trade

Anna Heiss

\* At the time of publication, Anna Heiss was an intern with the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. The views expressed in this piece are her own and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Government or the Department of State.

If I don't sell my kidney, I will be forced to sell my one-year-old daughter," said Aziza, an Afghani mother of three. Afghanistan's economy has been in distress for years, but the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and the withdrawal of foreign assistance caused it to plummet. Prior to the takeover, and during the Ghani Administration, an estimated 80 percent of the government's budget was funded by international actors. The majority of this assistance has since been cut off due to a reluctance to provide aid to the Taliban. The strain on the economy has had a trickle down effect that has worsened the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Millions of people are living with insufficient food, water, and shelter. Even fewer people have access to healthcare, energy, and education. The organ trade has emerged as a means to pay off debts or cover basic needs; the sale of organs is illegal in Afghanistan, but the practice is rampant and highly unregulated. The ability of sellers to live with one kidney has rendered the organ commonly sold. Amid the country's ongoing economic crisis, it is not uncommon for the poor to resort to selling an organ to pay off a couple

thousand dollars in debt.

Organ recipients pay for the organ and fees associated with the transplant itself. However, sellers are responsible for medical treatment following their surgery. Mohammed Wakil Matin, a former surgeon in Mazar-i-Sharif, said that very few sellers seek post-operative care. Organ transplants are common and generally safe procedures in many countries with advanced healthcare systems, but the health infrastructure in Afghanistan is underdeveloped. Follow-up checks, adequate nutrition, and time to recuperate are necessary for recovery, yet unobtainable for many sellers. In some cases, the payout from the organ sale is insufficient to cover debts or necessities like food and water. This reality forces family members, and even the sellers themselves, to turn to work, often strenuous labor, or begging to make ends meet.

To address the organ shortage, Iran's government created a registry for organ sellers and recipients in 1993, making it the only country in which the organ trade is legal. The system's advocates say that

these "paid donations" mitigate the global organ shortage and are a way to make money charitably, rather than resorting to illegal activity. However, even when permitted by law, the organ trade inherently targets people in vulnerable financial situations and is condemned by several leading medical experts and agencies, including the World Health Organization. Furthermore, Iran's system is far from foolproof; people continue to privately list organs to bypass the waiting list for sellers, and noncitizens of Iran have attempted to present false identification to skip the line for recipients in their respective countries. While the registry may ease the process of connecting sellers and recipients, the illegal organ trade persists due to its underlying cause: poverty.

Reinforcing current laws related to organ sales seems like an obvious way to curb them, and the Taliban has expressed their commitment to cracking down. However, this strategy presents two major caveats. First, monitoring the organ trade is extremely difficult. The entire organ sale process in Afghanistan takes place privately, meaning that any

tracking would need to be conducted with the assistance of local hospitals. However, consent for the donation is the only information needed by surgeons. Mohamed Bassir Osmani, a transplant surgeon in Afghanistan, said "We have never investigated where the patient or donor comes from, or how. It's not our job." The Taliban is said to be forming a committee to investigate and suppress the organ trade, but little has been formally announced. Without a verification process to ensure legality in the process, surgeons will continue to perform transplants without knowing if a transaction was involved. Secondly, the pervasiveness of organ sales is a direct result of the rampant underdevelopment throughout the country. Economic need is cited as the primary motivator for organ sales, in both voluntary and coercive cases. As noted by Graeme Smith of the International Crisis Group, exerting economic pressure will only worsen the financial situation in Afghanistan and will not bring down the Taliban regime.

A combination of foreign assistance and domestic

economic stimulation is essential to bring money to the people of Afghanistan and help the country recover from its financial crisis. This strategy is the most sustainable way to address the economic situation and provide relief to those who are so impoverished that their only option is selling a kidney. International governments and NGOs are reluctant to administer aid to the "interim government" announced by the Taliban, which is warranted in light of the group's human rights abuses. However, prior to the Taliban takeover, NGOs were able to successfully work in Taliban-controlled regions in the Middle East and Central Asia. A level of risk for NGO workers exists, but

the Taliban previously offered protections for employees and has adamantly expressed the need for NGO assistance. Considering the precedent for the ability of NGOs and the Taliban to collaborate on program implementation, foreign governments must provide assistance to NGOs and act as an intermediary with the Taliban if necessary. This process is known as securing NGO acceptance, and it is typically more effective when regionally-based organizations are at the forefront of the acceptance effort. Reputable groups like Doctors Without Borders and the World Food Program continue to operate in the area, but the Taliban typically

prefers to work jointly with NGOs that are familiar with local leaders and other civil society establishments. Investment in such organizations will improve the humanitarian and economic situation in Afghanistan, allowing the need for organ sales to diminish.

By providing funding to NGOs based in or near Afghanistan and facilitating communication with the Taliban, foreign governments gain the capacity to contribute to the administration of aid where regional figures recognize the greatest need. This approach also addresses the West's political disinclination to provide funding directly to the Taliban. The current lack of foreign

assistance will perpetuate the economic crisis in Afghanistan—and the organ trade as a result. Without addressing a financial situation in which selling an organ is the most feasible option for some people, the practice will persist. While it may be difficult to regulate the organ trade itself, economic recovery will diminish the need for organ sales as a method of gaining financial support.





# India's Rocky Path to Wind Energy

Juhui Oh



**A**rising global consciousness about climate change and an accelerating race to reduce carbon emissions towards a global net-zero have pushed many countries to adopt power generation through wind energy. According to the International Energy Agency, an unprecedented 108 gigawatts (GW) of onshore wind, double that of 2019, were installed globally in 2020. Since one gigawatt can power 750,000 homes, 108 gigawatts of wind energy alone can power more than 7.5 million homes globally. Wind turbines produce zero carbon emissions, and their land-use efficiency has inspired many countries to rush to install wind power generators. India is no exception. However, despite the potential of wind turbines to provide a breakthrough for India's environmental and economic issues, the government has not taken any clear steps to implement and subsidize wind energy projects.

The Indian peninsula's 7,600 km coastline provides optimum conditions for harnessing wind energy. With more than 17 offshore wind projects developed and more than 38,000 generators established already, the country is ranked as the fifth biggest wind power generator globally after China, the European Union, the U.S., and Germany. The country's first offshore wind energy project in the Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat started in 2018. This ongoing project aims to reduce approximately 101,234 tonnes of carbon emissions per year by displacing an equivalent electricity generation at the grid. Despite its potential impact and a government subsidy at the beginning of the project, the actual operation process has

stagnated for more than three years.

Last year, the Indian government (GOI) announced its new climate pledge: by 2030, 50 percent of India's energy would be generated using renewable energy sources. This goal aligns with the United Nations climate pledge to ensure access to "affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all" by the year 2030. India has not demonstrated any significant steps toward global climate change mitigation and adaptation. Despite pledges, in the last two years, India has increased the use of fossil fuels. According to Climate Action Tracker (CAT), an independent scientific research institute, India's environmental policies are "highly insufficient" to meet a net-zero plan. If India does not abide by the net-zero plan, a four degree celsius increase in global warming will result by 2030. There is an urgent need to coal-phase out and renewable energy. Therefore, a quicker transition to wind energy, manifested by supporting offshore wind projects, could provide a breakthrough for the GOI and show the international community India's commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

The main deterrent to installing wind turbines is wind energy's financial incompetence compared to its biggest competitor: coal. As Kashish Shah, an energy analyst of the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) noted, offshore wind is an expensive technology considering India's GDP and government budget. While it has low operational costs, one wind turbine costs about 3.5 million USD to be installed. The government finds it burdensome to sponsor state-level wind turbine installations.

Growth and investment in the wind industry haven't always been a low priority in India. From 1994 to 1996, India was in a so-called "wind-rush" period with impressive growth in the wind industry due to private investments under the central government's zero-tax expansion plan. However,

in 1997, the government imposed a 12.9 percent extra tax on wind energy after an Indian stock market crash due to an aftershock of 2018 "Asian contagion" economic crisis began in Thailand. Most private investors began to seek alternative energy sources or moved their money away from India. In 2019, the Indian government lowered the tariff on wind energy to an unprecedented level, ₹2.4-2.6 (about \$0.032) per unit, compared to the previous ₹4.0-4.5 (about \$0.053) per unit. The government has high hopes that this decision will attract foreign investors, but no significant changes have been detected.

On its path of poverty reduction and economic expansion, the GOI is prudent in budgeting for environmental technology. According to the Times of India's Budget Factsheet, the top three ministries that received the most funding in 2021 were the Ministry of Defense (13.7 percent), the Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution (7.4 percent), and the Ministry of Home Affairs (4.8 percent). Additionally, 65 percent of all government subsidies were allocated for food, followed by 22 percent for fertilizers used for agriculture. Considering over 220 million people in India survive on ₹32 a day (\$0.42), the prioritization of economic growth over environmental transition seems fair. However even within the goal of alleviating poverty, focusing on wind energy investment rather than using coals will do more for the cause in the long run.

According to the Bloomberg New Energy Finance's report, wind farms can generate power at \$27-29/Mwh compared to coal's \$41/Mwh, demonstrating that wind energy's cost efficiency outpaces that of coal. The report also suggests that while building wind infrastructure is costly, it will be cheaper in the long term. A rapid transition to wind energy provides a great opportunity for the Indian government to seize the title of an emerging environmental and economic leader in the international

community, especially since the activation of wind farms often leads to job opportunities for nearby neighborhood.

Wind energy also addresses some of solar energy's shortcomings for India. According to the International Energy Agency, solar energy accounts for about 4 percent of India's total electricity generation and is expected to outpower coal by 2030 due to its cost-effectiveness. However, one drawback of solar energy is its intermittency: it only generates electricity during the day and cannot support evening load peaks. Therefore, installing wind turbines along the coastline in Karnataka or Gujarat—where the wind is frequent and solar panels are installed—can increase land-use efficiency and renewable energy generation.

One policy model that the GOI could refer to is China's 13th Wind Energy Development Plan 2050. While China has distinct geographic characteristics and a different political framework than India, its high levels of pollution and large population are comparable. Considering these similarities, the GOI could potentially model its energy policy after China's. The most notable Chinese policy is the Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) quota policy. According to this law, all commercial companies' energy (often electricity) use should come from wind energy. If companies fail to follow this rule, they can choose to do net metering, where they generate energy themselves using commercial wind turbines to pay off the amount of electricity they used. Another option is to purchase renewable energy electricity quotas from market entities that have exceeded their annual consumption (similarly to cap and trade). Considering that the GOI cannot afford to subsidize wind turbine manufacturers, letting the market decide the wind energy price using the RPS quota and setting a more substantial emission standard will be an effective way to push India towards wind energy use.



# The Need for Economic Reform in Kazakhstan

Oscar Scoberg

As the world rang in 2022 with festivities and celebrations, Kazakhstan braced for a series of protests which soon developed into a widespread revolt against the country's political corruption and economic inequality. The initial cause of unrest was the government's decision to further cut subsidies on fossil fuels, a move that effectively doubled the price of liquified petroleum gas almost overnight. Protests quickly broke out against the policy, as already struggling communities felt even greater economic pressure from an insensitive government. As tensions rose people thronged the streets of Almaty, the nation's largest city, and many of these protests escalated into riots. The precise chronology of events, from protesting gas prices to inches from a revolution, is contested, but the results are clear: over 220 people were killed, police arrested nearly 16,000 individuals, and combined economic costs totaled more than \$3 billion. Furthermore, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev ousted former President Nursultan Nazarbayev from his roles as chairman of the governing Nur Otan Party, and as chairman of the National Security Council, appointing himself to fill both vacancies. Nazarbayev, who ruled the authoritarian government for nearly 30 years, is often blamed for the rising inequality in Kazakhstan and for the economic stagnation of the working class while simultaneously growing the riches of the elite. Tokayev's move to assume both roles further consolidates his power at the top of Kazakhstan's government, and provides an even stronger case for the implementation of progressive reforms aimed at reducing wealth inequality before popular political dissent sparks up again.

Though the protests may be attributed to the sharp increase in fuel prices, this development simply fanned the flames that had been growing over the past couple decades. The real roots of the unrest can be traced to the kleptocracy that has formed in Kazakhstan over the course of Nazarbayev's reign. For example, one report attributed nearly \$733 million in real estate to members of Nazarbayev's family and close friends. One of Nazarbayev's daughters and her husband own the largest bank in Kazakhstan, and were previously estimated to be worth \$3 billion each. In fact, corruption was so prevalent among the Kazakh elite that British authorities were prompted to issue "unexplained-wealth orders" to members of Nazarbayev's family. Along with Nazarbayev, other elites frequently used their power to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. Their cronyism was highlighted during the recent protests, particularly when Tokayev admitted to the nation that thanks to the first president "a group of very profitable companies emerged in the country, as well as a group of people whose wealth is significant even by international standards." To convey the magnitude of the economic inequality in Kazakhstan, net personal wealth of the bottom 50 percent of the population has increased by roughly \$5,000 since 1995, with those in the top one percent having increased their wealth by roughly \$1.3 million in the same time frame.

Another cause of the unrest, which ties directly to the economic disparity, is the lack of political freedom and plurality. Legislative elections do not meet democratic standards, and observers noted enough fraud during the 2019 presidential elections to declare

it incredible. Furthermore, the ruling party, Nur Otan, effectively functions as the only political party, while many opposition parties are banned and sometimes even labeled as terrorist groups. While other parties do exist and hold certain degrees of influence, those with any legitimate ability to oppose the Nur Otan party are considered loyal to it. For these reasons, the Kazakhstan government is frequently labeled as authoritarian, with a small group of elites pulling all the strings. It is worth noting, though, that Tokayev has quite conspicuously removed many long-standing Nazarbayev loyalists and family members from their roles in government in the aftermath of the protests, and his office has recently affirmed a commitment to democratic reforms. However, "you cannot build a Jeffersonian democracy overnight," an adviser to Tokayev remarked, casting doubt on the implementation of reforms to bring about genuine political plurality, competition, and freedom.

Looking forward, the socioeconomic conditions that sparked the deadly uprising must be addressed by the Kazakh government if there is to be any hope of repairing and uplifting Central Asia's richest country. Economic inequality is compounded generationally, and the median age of the young population is only thirty-one years, meaning the future for many Kazakhs grows dimmer each day. There is a real chance that Tokayev's "reform" rhetoric simply entails shuffling up the government without stopping the cronyism—a publicity stunt to soothe the masses without actually listening to them. Is the president simply flirting with the public, teasing them with meaningful policy in one giant charade?

If Tokayev truly means business, and is legitimately seeking to build what he calls a "New Kazakhstan," his approach towards the economic disparity in his country must be radical. Encouraging the formation of local unions to further empower Kazakh workers would serve the dual purpose of increasing

political participation, as well as increasing workers' wages and improving working conditions. Policies focused on improving healthcare and education would increase the quality and quantity of human capital in Kazakhstan, boosting national productivity. Tokayev could even look to neighboring Uzbekistan for inspiration, specifically their new affordable rural housing program, designed to target a particularly disenfranchised portion of the population and directly improve their condition. Investment in the people of Kazakhstan through public infrastructure projects would bolster the country's production capacity and efficiency, create thousands of jobs, and set Kazakhstan on a path towards future success. High-speed railways connecting people across the country or improved communications infrastructure stretching to even the most remote corners would help relieve much of the economic stress that the people of Kazakhstan face. Funding such projects would be difficult if Tokayev follows standard liberalization procedure. However, Kazakhstan is not a poor country; its wealth is just unevenly distributed. Taking the hoarded wealth from the ruling elite through targeted taxation and similar measures, then directing it through social spending to the people of Kazakhstan would allow the government to finance most, if not all, of the aforementioned projects.

The issues facing Kazakhstan—political suppression and economic inequality—were vividly brought to light during the most recent civil unrest. With the new president appearing to usher in a new era for Kazakhstan, its citizens can only hope that his words are backed by action. To address the many pertinent economic issues, Tokayev's best option is to radically change the current distribution of wealth in the country through direct public spending and a strong commitment to eliminating corruption. Thus, Kazakhstan can flourish and prosper as it begins a new chapter in its history.

# How the China-Taiwan Debate Fuels Violence in the Solomon Islands

Ethan Wilmot

If I am removed as Prime Minister, it will be on the floor of Parliament. I have faith and respect in our democratic process, and I will defend it with my life." Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare of the Solomon Islands spoke these words in response to violent riots in his country. The irony of this statement is that Sogavare has continually made a mockery of the democratic process, by accepting bribes from foreign officials and refusing to accept the results of popular referendums within the country. In November 2021, a wave of violence struck Honiara, the capital city of the Solomon Islands. Buildings were damaged, businesses were destroyed, and four people were left dead. The parliamentary building itself was sieged and nearly breached. This violent episode is representative of the conflict and the competition which has historically existed between the islands of Guadalcanal, where Honiara is located, and Malaita, another island in the Solomon Islands. The island of Malaita is the most populous province in the island chain of 680,000 and remains one of the most impoverished. During the 1999-2003 period of ethnic violence that engulfed the islands, tens of thousands of islanders were forced to leave Guadalcanal and relocate to Malaita. The continued violence between islands culminated in November of 2021 when many members of Malaita for Democracy, a Malaitan advocacy group, traveled to Honiara on the island of Guadalcanal to protest the economic conditions on their island.

The conflict within the Solomon Islands is based in decades of back and forth rivalry between the provinces of Guadalcanal and Malaita. From 1998 onwards, ethnic violence and competition was rampant, leading to lasting animosity between the two provinces.

With a poverty rate around 22.7 percent, many Malaitians blame Guadalcanal and the central government for the lack of economic development. Indeed, in 2020, the island of Malaita voted for independence in a referendum. This vote of popular majority has not been respected by Sogavare, but no solution or path forward has been detailed. China has taken advantage of this division in order to gain further control in the region and has contributed to the violence.

Adding to the tension was disagreement over the Chinese government's influence on the country's domestic affairs. In September 2019, Prime Minister Sogavare reversed the country's long standing recognition of the Republic of China in Taiwan to the People's Republic of China in mainland China. This sudden move was accompanied by a large increase in Chinese influence and investment in the country, as well as accusations of corruption. In August 2021, it was discovered that 39 members of Parliament received payments from a fund created by the Prime Minister that funneled money from the Chinese government into infrastructure projects. This revelation resulted in a loss of confidence in the federal government and raised questions about integrity, as well as concerns over the level of Chinese influence over the islands. Chinese control over the Solomon Islands would be a step in the wrong direction for the country, as China has a disturbing record on human and civil rights and acts in bad faith when dealing with other countries. To accelerate an end to the conflict in the country over the recognition of China, the international community must invest in infrastructure projects in the Solomon Islands to both encourage economic growth and prevent China from continuing to invest to assert its influence

in the region. This improvement to the standard of living in the Solomon Islands would allow the country to act with greater independence from China.

China's connection with the recent violence in the Solomon Islands is an important political development for the greater Pacific region. Almost immediately after its decision to switch recognition, the Pacific island nation of Kiribati also elected to recognize the People's Republic of China over the Republic of China. In fact, since the election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, seven allies of Taiwan in the Pacific have converted their recognition to the People's Republic of China. The mounting pressure of China's economic and political influence is forcing a massive political realignment in the region. This change poses a major threat to Taiwan, as its list of allies grows ever smaller. Taiwan depends on these nations to continue to recognize its legitimacy as it fights for its survival. The decision by Prime Minister Sogavare represents a major victory for China, as the Solomon Islands represents yet more evidence of the rapid expansion of Chinese diplomatic and economic influence.

Not only is this alliance dangerous to Taiwan, but it poses a threat to the security and sovereignty of the Solomon Islands. In 2019, after the announcement of the diplomatic switch of recognition from Taiwan to China, the Chinese government made a deal with provincial governor Stanley Maniteva to lease the entire island of Tulagi to the Chinese government. Their stated objective through this deal is to construct a fishery base, an operations center, an airport, and an oil and gas terminal. Fears persist that China may use the island to exert military

force in the Pacific. The islands, known for their importance to the Pacific War in World War II, remain strategically important due to their proximity to Australia and deepwater ports which are important for naval bases. Chinese projection of power in this region would allow them to put further pressure on Australia and other Western aligned countries in the Pacific, as well as benefit China economically.

The decision by President Sogavare of the Solomon Islands to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China is a direct cause of the violence seen in Honiara. The accusations of corruption that have plagued his government have destroyed confidence in the integrity and sovereignty of the country. It has led to further internal conflict between Guadalcanal and Malaita and has threatened a secession movement. The debilitating poverty of the country has led many to desperation and resorting to violence in order to enact change. For these reasons, the international community needs to closely examine the conflict and find ways to improve the economic situation of the country. By investing in the country and improving its economy, the country can begin to become less reliant on China for those investments, leading to a brighter future for the country—free of Chinese influence. The Chinese government has proven that it does not act in the best interests of the Solomon Islands and should not be allowed to extend its reach in the region. Through these measures, the country can become an example of democracy and prosperity in the region, acting as a counterweight to China's expanding power.



# EUROPE.

# Russian UN Veto Perpetrates Crimes Against Humanity

Alexis Juncaj

The United Nations was once revered as an institution that carved the path for peace around the world, yet in the last couple of decades, this reputation has dissipated. Shaping the geo-political climate post-WWII gave the P5 members of the UN Security Council (the U.K, U.S, France, China, and Russia) a veto power that holds unparalleled weight when it comes to UN action. The only mechanism for the international community to prevent or even react to war crimes is if the UNSC passes resolutions that the P5 approve of. Russia is an especially relevant P5 nation seeing that their use of the veto in the past decade has prevented peacekeeping and interfered in UN action during the 2014 annexation of Crimea and Syria Civil War. The UN will continue to lose legitimacy if the Security Council cannot fulfill its purpose to prevent devastating crimes under the UN Charter. Therefore, the UN must rethink the role the Security Council plays in preventing and prosecuting crimes against humanity.

While other measures have been attempted, the key to solving the UN's dissipating legitimacy and the unchecked power of the P5 nations is for member-states to employ the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to enforce established resolutions that weigh majority votes over the veto power. For instance, Resolution 377(A), the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, gives the General Assembly the authority to overrule a Security Council decision if the P5 veto obstructs international peace and security. The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine is another protection that is meant to ensure the international community never again fails to prevent mass atrocities. Yet, these protections have historically not been implemented. Given the P5 currently exercise legislative and judicial powers, their ability to interfere with the administration of justice has not been contested. Therefore, there is hesitation to call on the ICJ in fear that efforts will go to waste. However, these resolutions clearly indicate that historical vetoes have breached

UN resolutions and therefore should not be ignored. If nation-states call on the ICJ to enforce the principles of existing resolutions, future crises similar to Crimea and Syria will not be ignored by UN failure to overrule the veto.

There have been instances where the P5 nations themselves commit crimes against humanity and abuse their veto power to grant themselves a pardon. For instance, the UN failed to act in the Eastern Ukraine annexation of Crimea in 2014. Despite 13 of the 15 countries attending the emergency Security Council meeting supporting a resolution to affirm Ukraine's sovereignty and ensure peace, Russia vetoed any peacekeeping efforts. This violation of human rights has not been addressed by the United Nations. Further, the impunity enjoyed by the Russian state goes to show that P5 nations are unbound by UN law as a result of their veto power. Given the overwhelming support for Crimea peacekeeping, the member-states should have called upon the ICJ to enforce resolution 377. Although there

is a concern of veto interference on judicial proceedings, ICJ enforcement may have granted the UN majority the final decision on peacekeeping efforts to protect the people of Crimea and quell Russia's hunger to conquer Ukraine. If the majority votes had outweighed the Russian veto in 2014, it's possible that the mass crimes committed during the 2022 invasion in Ukraine would have had a different outcome. Yet again, Russia's veto has plummeted the effectiveness of the UN, along with its legitimacy.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 could have been prevented if the International Court of Justice's role included actively enforcing resolutions brought to their attention by member-states. In 1994, Russia, along with the U.S. and UK, signed the Budapest Memorandum; here, they promised to uphold Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons. Violating this agreement, which was signed by three of the five P5 nations, alone should have been enough for the ICJ to intervene in Crimea before, during, and after its annexation



by Russia. After disarming Ukraine of nuclear weapons, there was no effort from the ICJ to enforce the Budapest Memorandum, Responsibility to protect Doctrine, or Resolution 377 to sanction Russia for breaching the agreement and thus preventing it from annexing Crimea. Russia's violation of the Budapest Memorandum in the annexation of Crimea was a promise of what would come to be the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The failure of member states and the ICJ to penalize Russia before, during, or after the consistent signs that they would continue to attempt conquering Ukraine has corroded the UN's legitimacy.

Not only has Russia blocked resolutions for themselves, but they have also used their veto to protect allies and their interests. In 2011, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad attempted to quell dissent during pro-democracy protests which ultimately led to a civil war in the country. According to the UN's September 2021 count, the death toll is at least 350,000 civilians though other sources claim it's much higher. Russia has been using its veto to block resolutions against Assad's regime, given its extensive arms deals with the Syrian state. Since 2011, Russia has blocked 16 resolutions on Syria, and in doing so have obstructed peacekeeping and cast public doubt in the UN's ability to

prevent human suffering. With the escalation of this conflict remaining unchecked by the UN, 5.7 million Syrian refugees have sought haven around the world. Member states, who overwhelmingly voted to send aid to Syrians, again should have turned to an international court to challenge the veto and intervene when their organizational structure was aiding the deaths of thousands. The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine should have protected the Syrians, yet Russia was allowed to profit off a war that has destroyed the lives of millions.

Supporters of the veto argue that the veto power allows for the P5 countries, who allegedly contribute the most peacekeeping forces to the UN, to proportionally have more say in where their efforts go. Ironically, the P5 only contribute 3.7 percent of today's 100,000 soldiers deployed in UN-led peace forces around the world. These same proponents might say that financially, the P5 compensate for their lack of physical soldiers. Yet, three of the five P5 nations contributed less than six percent to the 2021 peacekeeping operations, the lowest being Russia at 3.04 percent. Therefore, claims against granting responsibility for the allocation of peacekeeping resources to a majority consensus do not seek

an equitable balance of power.

The post-WWII system of preventing mass crimes needs to be fully rethought. This organization has become paralyzed by the concrete power of their institutional oligarchy commonly known as the P5. Although Russia is being most critiqued amidst its current actions, that's not to say the other P5 countries have not used their veto for personal gain. To effectively restore the legitimacy of this organization, the UN must honor the majority consensus by enforcing already established resolutions that limit P5 control over UN response to human rights abuses. Judgment of mass crimes and what path to pursue should be left up to a court, not an oligarchy that exempts their own crimes and those of other nations.

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**The post-WWII system of preventing mass crimes needs to be fully rethought.**

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# Should We Save the Queen?

## European Monarchies in the Present Day

Kerri Kenney

Most Western European nations are championed as representatives of contemporary democracy: citizens are, generally, able to vote for their government representatives freely and fairly, media outlets are not censored, adults have universal suffrage, and constituents are represented by some form of Parliament. However, even though Western European countries share these characteristics, and they consistently rank among the most powerful and modernized countries in the world, most remain, by definition, constitutional monarchies.

The multiple royal families of Europe have been able to coexist within the democratic functioning

of their respective country's government vernments. Into the modern age, democratic systems of government have taken control of the lawmaking responsibilities that previously belonged to the royals. Yet many of their subjects across the continent and world have wondered: what's the point? In examining the pros and cons of upholding a constitutional monarchy in a modern, democratic government, an especially interesting monarchy to consider is that of the United Kingdom and its dependencies and territories, collectively referred to as "The Commonwealth." It can be concluded that existing European monarchies make

almost no difference to the functioning and success of their governments and societies, although their cultural impacts are significant.

In addition to the United Kingdom, there are eleven other monarchies in Europe: Belgium, Denmark, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden, Monaco, Andorra, Liechtenstein, and Luxembourg. All but Monaco and Liechtenstein are constitutional monarchies, meaning that their monarchs are unable to or do not influence the political and legislative decisions of their states. They are consistently rather powerless regarding the establishment of laws,

besides either signing them into law (similarly to the American President's role in the United States' lawmaking) or consulting legislators, which is in large contrast to some Middle Eastern monarchies where royals hold key government jobs.

This lack of political power across monarchs introduces one of the most common arguments for abolishing monarchies as a whole. Citizens understand that their taxes pay for a wide variety of government services that keep their countries sustained, but paying a considerable amount each year to fund royal families' duties that seem to have no significant impact on





the success of their countries seems unnecessary and unfair. In an article examining the costs of the British Royal family, The Atlantic reported that monarchies tend to cost their citizens significantly, with the British monarchy in the lead. Buckingham Palace asserted that “sustaining the royal family costs Britons 53 pence, or about 81 cents, per person, per year. The total came to about 33.3 million pounds (about \$51.1 million) between 2012 and 2013, up from 32.4 million pounds the previous year, but some British republicans—those who want to abolish the monarchy—say the actual cost is much higher, once you factor in necessities like security detail and the cost of preparing for royal visits. Their figure is about 200 million pounds, or \$307 million.”

Considering the colonialist history of the United Kingdom, maintaining the royal family also undermines the progressive steps that the UK has taken to separate itself from its imperialist past, particularly since most European royal families have sustained their power and worldwide influence over time thanks to colonialism itself. Monarchs like Queen Elizabeth still preside over various territories and dependencies that were colonized by their own nations decades and centuries ago, even as their governments condemn other world nations’ modern colonialist intentions.

Additionally, opponents of European monarchies point out the discrepancies of supporting and idolizing ridiculously wealthy families in the context of greater global issues. Since nations with constitutional monarchies like the United Kingdom pride themselves on providing above-average quality of life for their citizens in comparison with most third-world countries, promoting and funding the non-consequential actions of rich white families is both ironic and hypocritical. This, once again, completely undermines any claims made by these governments to be progressive or superior to other world powers.

However, there are potential positives to be considered when examining the validity of monarchies in the modern age. Again using the monarchy of the United Kingdom as a sort of case study, it can be clearly seen that European royal families play a role in maintaining a sense of pride and stability in their citizens.

For one, the British monarchy has become less of a political institution over time, and more of a brand, but this is not entirely a bad thing. The media frenzy and unfaltering public support that accompany every decision that the royal family makes—divorces, quotes in passing to tabloids, even walking their kids to school—create tangible unity amongst citizens that may otherwise be divided by political party or social class. Their weddings are watched by millions around the country and the world. The Atlantic reported that “the British tourism agency has reported that the royal family generates close to 500 million pounds, or about \$767 million, every year in tourism revenue, drawing visitors to historic royal sites like the Tower of London, Windsor Castle, and Buckingham Palace. The country’s tourism agency says that of the 30 million foreign visitors who came to Britain in 2010, 5.8 million visited a castle.”

And though the British public occasionally can scrutinize some of the royal members’ personal lives and choices, public opinion of the monarchy has been at almost 70 to 80 percent for more than a decade, according to the Wall Street Journal. It’s clear that the royal family’s position as icons and celebrities doesn’t faze all of their subjects and instead instill pride in many. The upkeep of the monarchy promotes long-lasting traditions and culturally significant customs. These not only power the economy but also universal sentiments of nationalism and historical appreciation, which would not exist as strongly without royal figures.

Overall, European monarchies like that of the United Kingdom have consistently had strong

positive impacts on their culture and aspects of their economy. They have remained an integral part of many of their societies for this reason, promoting nationalism and unity. However, as time has passed, these European monarchs have also become politically neutral and almost meaningless, making it questionable if their benefits outweigh the numerous costs they have on their citizens, particularly economically, and the threat that they pose toward their progressive democratic societies. As countries like the United Kingdom continue to modernize and attempt to distance themselves from their colonial legacies, and the most famous monarchs like Queen Elizabeth II approach retiring age, the costs of maintaining their monarchies will undoubtedly become more apparent and important.

## Othering the Foreign: The Road from Putin’s State-Sponsored Homophobia to Violence

Zeynep Koseoglu

In 2013, the Russian Duma passed a law “On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development” to work against the promotion of ‘non-traditional sexual relations’ to children. While this law does not ban relationships, it targets the open, public existence of LGBTQ+ individuals. Commonly known as the ‘gay propaganda law’, it effectively works as a ban against the inclusion of any *netraditsyonnyi*—meaning non-traditional—sexual relations in public media, education, and even supposedly safe spaces such as therapist and doctor’s offices for children and adolescents looking for information on queerness. Since its passing, ‘the gay propaganda law’ has severely destabilized the already precarious safety of individuals belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in Russia. This has been particularly true for regions with strong religious and nationalist inclinations, such as in the separatist state of Chechnya where outrageous crimes—which included kidnapping, torture, and homicide—were committed in 2017 against over 100 individuals suspected of being gay in order to “cleanse” the Chechen nation. Indeed, there is great potential for violence in Russia that is influenced by the intersection between politically approved homophobia, through which the state attempts to erase LGBTQ+ individuals from the fabric of society, when combined with nationalistic narratives that promote masculine military culture.

Ultimately, President Vladimir Putin’s emphasis on protecting the so-called traditional values of the country, the policing of which grants him significant power to shape both the demographic and the socio-political culture of the country, has allowed for crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals all across the nation to go unpunished and has made it nearly impossible for LGBTQ+ individuals to get necessary help and information

to protect them from their hostile life at home. Hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals are consistently underreported and there is no comprehensive government database to record the true extent of harassment and assault, which is a testament to the lack of care and attention the Russian government is willing to give to its LGBTQ+ citizens. Despite this absence of federal information, crime against LGBTQ+ individuals has been illustrated by researchers to have increased since the authorization of ‘On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development’. In fact, research published in the European Journal of Criminology attests to the harmful effects of the law by demonstrating an increase in hate crimes since 2013. This research further shows that hate crimes doubled in 2015, and although there was a slight drop in 2016, levels remained high. This is reinforced by a 2020 survey collected by the Moscow-based research organization Levada Center as part of their Soviet Man’ project, which details societal changes in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union, including views on the LGBTQ+ community. The results were alarming, with 18 percent of Russians stating their desire to ‘eliminate’ LGBTQ+ individuals from society. 32 percent chose isolation from gay men and women, while only nine percent wanted to assist them. The possibility that almost one in five Russians consider the elimination of LGBTQ individuals to be desirable is shocking, but this unfortunately aligns with the rhetoric behind the ‘gay propaganda law’. The homophobic public sentiment, coupled with increasing hate crimes, showcases the erasure of LGBTQ culture and community from the national narrative. The 2021 version of this survey questioned about 1,600 respondents from 50 different regions in the country and found that only 25 percent of the respondents believed

two consenting adults have the right to enter into a same-sex relationship. While a 25 percent approval rate is slightly higher than the 2020 survey data, researchers noted that this increase is also accompanied by an increase in disapproval—meaning that Russian citizens are less likely now to feel neutrally about LGBTQ issues than before. This change highlights the pressure cooker that is Russian society for LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the intense polarization which has translated itself to Russian politics and legislation.

This polarization may be related to Russia’s efforts to garner support for extreme nationalism and pro-war sentiment, which hinge on harmful ideals of state-sponsored masculinity and coincide with patriarchal and homophobic ideologies. The academics Olga Riabov and Tatiana Riabova argue in the “Remasculinization of Russia?” that the political state of the country is associated with the cultural reception of policy contrasted against societal values of gender. In the post-Soviet world, this can be interpreted as the glorification of self-determination as a positive masculine attribute of the nation, in contrast to, for instance, the necessity to receive foreign aid from other countries, which is considered negatively feminine. Therefore, nationalism and military protection of the nation are valued more highly in a patriarchal society in contrast to process of diplomacy and cooperation which are considered more feminine, and by association weaker. In this sense, Putin utilizes political homophobia as a method of othering LGBT individuals who do not fit the characterization of the ideal Russian man—involved with constant displays of stereotypically masculine strength, including a tendency to violence and readiness for nationalistic war. This is further supported by the government’s

tendency to label pro-LGBTG+ organizations as ‘foreign agents’. In fact, the Levada Center was placed on the list of NGOs considered to carry out functions for foreign agents in 2016.

Indeed, Riabov and Riabova’s research has shown that the desire of Russian citizens to be perceived as ‘mighty’, ‘invincible’, and ‘independent’—rather than ‘peaceful’ or ‘educated’—increases in correlation to state-sponsored processes of demasculinizing the Other, which in this case pertains to LGBT individuals who are linked to the Western world because their sexual orientation is increasingly considered to be non-Russian, as the state-rhetoric on queerness—which is further perpetuated by the ‘gay propaganda law’—identifies LGBTQ+ individuals as ‘foreign agents’ to Russian society.

The link between homophobia, nationalism, and masculinity is even more relevant in light of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine this past month. In his speech declaring the “military operation” against Ukraine, Putin spoke on the undesirable values of the West which aimed to “destroy our [Russia’s] traditional values... leading to degradation and degeneration” of Russia. The fiery language Putin uses and the process of Othering he employs highlights how significant the interwoven connections between Russia’s state-sponsored homophobia, its unrelenting call for extreme masculinity, and its war efforts are. As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine continues, it is increasingly important to draw attention to Russia’s failure to protect its own LGBTQ+ citizens, and the additional danger the invasion poses to Ukraine’s LGBTQ+ population. The LGBTQ+ community remains insufficiently protected, and are increasingly hurt while caught in the double cross-fire created by Putin’s war-mongering and nationalistic ignorance.



# The Changing Face of NATO and European Defense

Ben Miller

For decades, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s purpose has been more figurative than literal, appearing as a vestige of Cold War anxiety. However, on February 24, that all changed. Russia's invasion of Ukraine shocked the international community and has undoubtedly marked a permanent shift for NATO, the global order, and East-West relations. While this tragedy remains ongoing and the results of it remain uncertain, the future of NATO can be better ascertained: an organization strengthened and more committed than ever to the core European values of freedom and democracy. In the weeks, months, and years to come, NATO will be tested and its importance will only increase. If the situation deteriorates, and Putin moves into neighboring countries, such as Moldova, or worse, a NATO country, the Cold War era institution will be more critical than ever.

NATO has been a fixture of the international community since its establishment in 1949. Its creation sought to usher in post-WWII peace on the European continent, a peace to prevent competing powers from turning against each other and dissolving into senseless violence. The NATO alliance of 30 nations is based on a core belief of collective security inscribed within the founding treaty's Article 5: an attack on one is an attack on all. NATO grew in strength and power for much of the 20th century. However, with the memory of war fading, surging insidious far-right elements have tested NATO since the turn of the century, pushing the organization to explain its relevance in a relatively peaceful, globalized

world. Former President Donald Trump frequently flirted with the idea of the United States leaving NATO and repeatedly berated fellow members, notably Germany, for failing to fulfill their defense spending requirements of two percent of GDP. NATO held fancy summits and built a shiny new headquarters but there was an immaterial nature to the organization, without a tangible purpose. However, the debate about relevance has quickly become moot in recent weeks. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has interrupted almost a century of peace on the European continent, a peace that has been tested through regional conflicts in Eastern Europe but has nonetheless endured. Putin's encroachment on Ukraine has placed NATO into an unprecedented spotlight as it seeks to fulfill its mission set forth in 1949.

NATO is an ever present force in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, despite not being directly involved. The organization is acting as a deterrence force backed by the full strength and power of the world's largest military. Nonetheless, some foreign policy experts argue that Putin's decision to invade Ukraine was NATO encroachment and expansion, potentially acting as an impetus for this conflict. However, experts also view Putin's decision as one that was baked in to fulfill his imperialist dream and NATO expansion simply serves as a useful excuse. There are valid arguments to make that NATO was too flirtatious with the concept of Ukrainian admittance to the organization and if they were more forceful in their refusal, this war could have been averted. However, it

is not entirely convincing that Putin's decision would have been different given his deeply held views about Ukraine and his disgust at their shift toward the West and Europe.

Putin has loathed NATO his entire career, viewing it as a direct threat to Russian security and doing everything in his power to sow division within the alliance. Therefore, it is ironic that within just a few weeks, Putin has reversed any weakening of the alliance in recent years and instead emboldened and strengthened it in an unprecedented way. As someone who has often been characterized in Western media as a genius and multi-dimensional chess player, Putin's decision to invade Ukraine seems to negate that characterization entirely. Instead, Putin's carefully crafted persona through decades of propaganda has been replaced by an image of a sad, insecure, impulsive man clinging to alternative realities. On top of high-level unity, Sweden and Finland have unprecedented levels of support for NATO membership. For the first time since World War II, Germany is dramatically increasing their defense spending to more than two percent of their GDP. Chancellor Olaf Scholz pronounced, "We will have to invest more in the security of our country to protect our freedom and democracy." Indeed, an armed Germany is a concept few anticipated, but these times demand such bold action by democracies in the fight against autocracy.

NATO faces a unique challenge as it seeks to navigate the Russia-Ukraine war. Hopefully,

NATO's military might remain unused and peace prevails. However, regardless of the outcome, NATO will emerge stronger than ever and with a newfound confidence that this alliance is worth preserving, strengthening, and fighting for. NATO must also take away lessons of incorporating realism into their ambitions, recognizing that not every nation can be part of the alliance and that sometimes, geopolitics must take precedence for the sake of peace on the continent. NATO's current tight-rope act is the right one and leaders refusing to use NATO force in Ukraine is the correct approach to avoid escalation. In the years to come, NATO must use this moment to strengthen the alliance as it stands today, looking inwards to continue to improve alliances between members and fortify the world's democracy bloc as Russia and China present a countervailing bloc pushing autocracy and dictatorship. Circumstances in Ukraine remain fluid and anything can happen in the weeks, months, and years to come. Despite this uncertainty, one thing is certain: NATO is not going anywhere.



## The World is Bored of Boris: Johnson's Fall From Grace

Ella Sieger

The United Kingdom's Conservative Party has earned the moniker of "the most successful political party in the world" due to its total domination of politics in the 20th century and a sudden revival of strength in the 2010s. While other democracies have cycled through different parties at the helm, the Tories have been in power for twelve years and counting. There is no denying that such a streak of victories can only be accomplished by a highly successful and organized political party. However, there is one man who has brought the victories of the last century to an end: Boris Johnson. The

current Prime Minister of the UK, despite his initial victory in 2019, has blundered through his last few years in office, losing support from high-ranking party officials and ordinary voters alike. The effects of Johnson's fall from grace will not be confined to his own reputation—what he chooses to do next could determine the fate of the entire Conservative Party.

Johnson's sister has said that Boris once wanted to be "World King" when he grew up; in 2019, he finally got his crown. He was in the ideal position to become Prime Minister after Theresa May's Brexit withdrawal



agreement failed to pass three separate times. By the time Johnson began campaigning for PM, Brexit had been at the forefront of British politics for the better part of three years, creating schisms and fomenting frustration among British citizens. Johnson's motto of "Get Brexit Done" revealed that voters were willing to overlook other policy issues of the Conservative Party in favor of reaching a decision about Brexit. May was forced to resign after her repeated failed attempts to bring Brexit negotiations to a close, and Johnson was not shy about his lack of faith in her as a PM. His comparison of her Brexit deal to "wrapping a suicide vest around the British constitution" in a scathing Daily Telegraph article gained widespread attention. Johnson is widely seen to have organized the fall of May, and it is undeniable that Brexit created the perfect atmosphere for Johnson to rise to his long-awaited throne. On top of the chaos of Brexit, his charisma and comedic commentary appealed to voters so much so that Labour Party opponents complained that voters only supported him because "Boris is a laugh."

So appealing was Johnson's charm that voters and Conservative Party elites were able to contently disregard his times spent as the Mayor of London and as a member of Parliament, which were riddled with controversy. He was late to two official meetings in his first two weeks in mayoral office and went on vacation to Turkey three weeks after getting elected. He referred to £250,000 as "chicken feed"—nearly ten times the annual wage of an average British worker. When then-President Barack Obama made a statement saying that the UK should remain in the EU, Johnson responded that Obama's "part-Kenyan" background was producing an "ancestral dislike" of the British.

Scandal didn't stop when he was elected as Prime Minister. Accusations flew when Johnson mobilized the entire party to defend MP Owen Paterson in November of 2021. Paterson

had been found lobbying for two companies that paid him more than £100,000 a year, leading him to resign following uproar from Parliament. Johnson's attempt to protect Paterson had disastrous results, and after the MP's resignation, Johnson was left on his own to handle rumors of corruption in his party. In perhaps the worst betrayal of his citizens' trust, leaked video footage from December 2020 revealed that Conservative Party members had gathered for a Christmas party while the rest of the country was on lockdown. Johnson had banned Christmas gatherings for citizens and only essential workers were permitted to go to work. Johnson was adamant that no lockdown violations had occurred over the holiday period, but immediately after the footage was leaked, senior party members canceled pre-scheduled press conferences out of embarrassment.

The damage done to the Conservative Party is clearly demonstrated in opinion polls: the Tories lag 14 points behind the opposing Labour Party. For Conservative lawmakers, that discrepancy could cost them their seats in Parliament. As Johnson's support from voters and top Conservative Party members alike dwindles, the Tories must make a life-or-death decision. Do they kick Boris, or do they stay with a man who has thus far kept them in power? It hasn't been difficult for the Labour Party to expose Johnson's inaptitude for leadership; he's done half the work for them. In a press conference in January 2022, Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party, zeroed in on two statements Johnson had made in December of 2020 in which he denied Covid-19 violations at Downing. Starmer emphasized that in misleading the House of Commons, Johnson had committed a ministerial offense. As high-ranking party officials call for Johnson's resignation, the weakness of the Conservative Party grows readily apparent. The Labour Party is not composed of fools—they recognize this for what it is: an opportunity to take down

the Tories.

This is how giants fall. Johnson has distorted the very foundational principles of the Conservative Party that have been in place for 200 years. He is always prepared to bend the rules, manipulate the public, and exploit high-running emotions related to contentious political topics. In his campaign for PM, Johnson connected with voters who felt they had been neglected by existing institutions. He was a messiah, a man of the people. But when a messiah falls, everything else follows. The UK has faced global ridicule for the entirety of Johnson's term. The Conservative Party used to represent a stable, powerful Britain. Now, the face of the Tories appears in political cartoons from Washington to Canberra. Conservatives need to make a decision that ensures they keep their reputation as a party with a coherent ideology that genuinely values the lives of British citizens. Otherwise, Johnson could be the difference between the party's life and death.

# Germany's Missed Opportunity on Energy and its Dangerous Consequences

Adrian Woutas

On December 31, 2021, Germany shut down all but three of its remaining nuclear power plants and by the end of this year, plans to decommission the remainder. This process is the end stage of the Energiewende policy conceived by the Merkel government in 2011, seeking to move Germany toward renewable energy. While the use of renewable energy has increased, the speedy closure of nuclear plants before coal and natural gas plants remain has perpetuated a dependence on those very sources. Without much gas of its own, Germany—like many of its neighbors—has looked to Russia for its needs. Despite warnings and condemnation from climate activists, as well as the United States, it forged ahead with the construction of the NordStream 2 pipeline which sought to double the amount of Germany's annual imports of Russian gas, and in turn perpetuated Russia's ability to geopolitically leverage its energy exports.

After Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, everything changed. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government froze the approval process for NordStream 2 and the European Union is pursuing a much more aggressive exit from Russian commodities. Even still, most European sanctions on Russia have a carve-out for Russian oil and gas, and millions of dollars in purchases continue daily as of this writing. But this dependence is not a new phenomenon, and instead the result of over a decade of deeply misguided policy that focused on turning away from nuclear energy without adequate ways to replace it.

Due to rising post-pandemic demand, crunches in supply, and decreased production in the Western part of the continent, Europe has actually been facing a growing energy problem for several years. Meanwhile, German climate goals remain

stubbornly out of reach with overlong timelines despite increasing pressure to act on climate. Europe must now reckon with how its reliance on Russian energy—facilitated by the German government—emboldened Putin's aggression and hampered the sanctions-centered response to the continent's largest conflict since World War II. The only way Germany can begin to atone for these mistakes is to swear off Russian oil and gas, invest more seriously in renewables, and reconsider the value of nuclear energy as a reliable bridge between the two.

The particular culpability of Germany in Europe's energy conundrum bears explanation. The goals of its aforementioned Energiewende policy are undoubtedly laudable: first conceived in the late 2000s, it sought to make renewables a "cornerstone" of future energy supply to reduce pollution and protect the climate. The German government approached the issue of climate change with a seriousness that other countries should have adopted far earlier. And its achievements in breaking new ground on solar and wind energy, reducing cost and increasing its appeal to the rest of the world, are worth celebrating.

Yet after the Fukushima meltdown in June 2011, the government removed the use of nuclear power as a bridging energy between fossil fuels and renewables. Anti-nuclear sentiment had always been a force in German politics since the emergence of the Green party in the early 1980s and the 1987 Chernobyl accident, and the aftermath of Fukushima proved to be nuclear's death knell. But politicians knew even at the time what the implications of this decision would be: in 2014, after lobbying companies to continue their investment in German brown coal mines,

Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel said "we cannot simultaneously quit nuclear energy and coal-based power generation." Germany had made its choice, and regulators set an ambitious date of 2022 for a full phase-out from nuclear power.

In the years since, emissions have modestly declined but remained stubbornly high, far beneath the country's climate goals. Moreover, Germany has faced serious issues with the stability of its grid alongside rising energy costs. Nuclear energy was an important "baseload" which could augment supply on calm, cloudy days—far from uncommon in Northern Europe—when renewables were spotty. As a result, Germany has come to rely on natural gas and coal for this base.

Since 2011, coal's share of power generation has declined, but it remained the largest source of energy in 2021 at nearly 28 percent. A new coal plant opened as recently as 2020 and villages continue to be displaced for the expansion of existing mines.

While nuclear energy is planned to be fully off the grid by the end of this year, dates for a full shutoff of coal power range from 2038, as approved by the Bundestag in 2020, to 2030 as agreed in coalition negotiations last fall. Neither are remotely sustainable for the climate in the short or long term.

Critics have been sounding the alarm about this policy's flaws since long before February 2022. Climate activists highlighted the unacceptable rise in fossil fuel use, consumers bemoaned higher costs, and the United States as well as other European countries—notably Ukraine—noted how German policy might strengthen Russia's hand. Beyond sending more money into Russia's coffers, the pipeline

would have cut off Poland and Ukraine from the pipeline transit fees they currently collect. German politicians nonetheless insisted the project was "not political" and an important part of Germany's energy transition.

Yet the Russian invasion was not the only wake up call. The devastating floods Germany experienced in summer 2021, which killed 196, drove home the scale of the climate emergency. Neither Germany nor the world can afford decades long "offramps" from polluting energy sources such as coal and natural gas. The dangers of nuclear meltdown as well as the challenges posed by the storage of atomic waste are not minimal, but they are manageable. Every single ton of CO2 released as a result of this energy policy, meanwhile, is not reversible and only accelerates the danger to the climate. In a sea of difficult options, Germany must prioritize what's best for the climate as well as rise to the occasion to confront Russia's aggression.

Germany put its eggs in the wrong basket when it came to energy in the 2010s. Nuclear, with no carbon emissions and far fewer problematic geopolitical implications, is a better choice to serve as a bridge between the status quo and a fully renewable future. To the extent that a reliable baseload will always be required, nuclear should likewise fill this role. If Germany has the possibility of reactivating the plants it shut over New Year's, while keeping its three remaining reactors open, it should absolutely try. Doing so will lessen the blow as Europe once and for all weens itself off from funding Putin's war. Both our collective future as a planet as the cause of peace and security in Europe demand nothing less.



# MIDDLE EAST.



## As Cyberattacks Continue, Tensions Rise between Iran and Israel

Sumayah Basal

**K**hameini, where is my gasoline?" read billboards across Iran on October 26th, 2021 as an Israeli-attributed cyber-attack prevented customers at 4300 Iranian gas stations from pumping gas. The attack was executed as a Denial of Service (DDoS) preventing gas stations from accepting state-subsidy smart cards for 12 days. This cyber-attack represented the most visible transition from government and industry-oriented cyber attacks to civilian-focused attacks in the cyber space. This attack, and Iran's retaliation, mark an escalation of the discreet "Cold War" that has been simmering between Iran and Israel.

The "Cold War" between Iran and Israel dates back to the 1960s and the dissolution of the alliances formed against both Soviet-backed communist influences and hostile Arab leaders. Originally, the two states had a "common ground in opposing threats emanating from the Arab core ... [and] the desire to contain Soviet and Arab 'hegemony' in the region" (Entessar, 1990). As the conditions that this facilitated

cooperation faded, a "nascent bipolar structure" formed (Parsi, 2007). The lack of a common enemy also eroded the checks and balances the two states provided each other with, leading them to become fearful of one another in absence of their alliance. Since then, the relationship has hardened, and cyber warfare has become just one arena of their broader conflict.

As the tumultuous relationship between Iran and Israel churns, the transition to civilian targets represents a shift in what kind of cyber targets are acceptable, impacting on civilians; quality of life, and regime stability in tangible ways. This shift will have major effects worldwide given the deregulated, lawless nature of cyber warfare, which lacks a foundational equivalent to the Geneva Convention. This has prompted questions about what comes next in both the Israel-Iran relationship and cyber warfare on the whole. Cyberattacks have shifted from taunting, warning, or attacking government officials and nations to a focus on mobilizing

chaos, outrage, and confusion in citizens on the ground. The circumstances surrounding the fuel attack emphasize the goals of Israeli decision-makers. The attack was executed on the anniversary of widespread anti-government protests two years prior that had been in reaction to a sudden increase in gasoline prices, and the Iranian government's crackdown on demonstrators resulted in 300 deaths. The chosen date of this attack is no coincidence, bolstered by the messages displayed at gas stations and on hacked billboards around Iran, all pointing the finger and blaming the government.

By disrupting the everyday lives of thousands of Iranian citizens and attempting to stoke revolutionary ire, the turn toward civilian-based cyber attacks prompts questions about the place such efforts take on the stage of warfare. The new civilian targets signify a momentous change in the relationship between Iran and Israel and the overall geopolitical balance of the Middle East. Previously, the cyber domain served as a way

for both countries to bolster their economies, education, and regional standing. Additionally, cyber tactics benefit from an inherent covertness, avoiding the need to declare war or have on-the-ground fighting (beyond proxies). The cyber-sphere was a space of posturing, collecting info, and blackmail but it hadn't transferred to the civilian targets until the killing of General Soleimani. This killing emboldened Israeli military and cyber operations in the region. It also prompted harsh policies from within Iran perhaps contributing fuel to the fire. Notably, prior to this killing, cyber operations against Israel had stopped altogether, after they proceeded with unprecedented force.

Civilians quoted by the Times expressed feelings of helplessness in the face of ongoing onslaughts of cyber attacks in each nation. Due to the shadowy nature of this rivalry, the effects of the cyber attacks had not been felt strongly by civilians until now. Israeli Beni Kvodi, an editor at an Israeli radio station, stated that



despite the relations between the two governments “from the little civilian’s perspective we are being held as prisoners here in the middle and are helpless,” Similarly, an Iranian stated “It isn’t our fault our governments are enemies. It’s already hard enough for us to survive.” Both express a detachment from the actual sentiments of the governmental operations at hand. This complicates the involvement of civilians in operations.

While the fuel shortage raged, anti-government movements never materialized. The Iranian government, realizing the potential for mass mobilization, led to an emergency meeting with the Oil and National Cyber Council to remedy the situation, pledging an extra 10 liters of subsidized fuel for all car owners. This swift action prevented the outburst Israel clearly desired. But, there is no telling if it will be able to act so decisively in the case of all future attacks.

Similar attacks on railways, ports, and other critical forms of infrastructure preceded this attack. The Economist Intelligence Unit emphasizes that “Israeli officials are said to believe that high-profile attacks on Iran, such as the ones on the railways and petrol stations, will help to undermine middle-class support for the Islamic Republic regime.” Further, cyberattacks increased upon the election of Ebrahim Raisi, an ultra-conservative Islamist, to the presidency in 2021. Their turn to civilian targets directly correlates with his election as well. Raisi has, albeit unsuccessfully, relaunched efforts to re-engage nuclear ambitions, pushing Israeli cyber policy to the extreme of civilian targets. In doing this, Israel is “exploiting the fact that civilian targets are more vulnerable than security operatives to cybersecurity lapses.” In return, The Economist observed Iran turning to civilian targeting tactics as a response to Israel and due to the fact that “this is the only arena where it can rack up successes, given that Israel’s military installations are highly protected.”

Ramazani previously established that the Israeli-Iranian conflict did not originate from religious animosity but rather formed out of the bipolar power struggle as the two nations competed for hegemony, as well as due to political considerations. Since then, we’ve seen this bipolar structure adopt religiosity and ethnicity as weapons of offense. For example, in Iran’s retaliatory attacks for the gas attack, an LGBT dating website in Israel was breached and website users’ preferences were leaked to the public. Here, Iranian extremist interpretations of Islamic law have been utilized in attempting to invoke fear and shame in Israeli citizens. Due to Iran’s advanced cyber capabilities, its goal is to make Israeli citizens feel that their government is unable to protect their privacy and personal integrity. Thus, privacy rights and access to services have both been interrupted in this seemingly endless posturing of cyber power between the two nations. As ideology seeps into the warfare methods, the entrenchment of the enemy status of the “other” has been developed, perhaps exacerbating this transition to more offensive civilian attacks.

It remains uncertain what the Iranian-Israeli cyber conflict will yield. However, one thing is certain: the rules of the game are changing rapidly. Now is the time to implement protocols, norms, and regulations for the operations of cyberspace.

# The Energy of Tomorrow:

## Artificial Intelligence and Renewable Energy in the Middle East

Sophia Clark

Nestled in the far northwest corner of the Tabuk Province in Saudi Arabia will soon be the city of Neom—a \$500 billion AI-based smart city powered entirely by renewable energy. Neom—a combination of the Greek prefix *véo* (Neo), meaning new, and the Arabic word *لبقّتسم* (Mustaqbal), meaning future—has the potential to entirely reshape the way Arab states approach urban energy challenges as renewable energy becomes more critical. Saudi Arabia’s bold plan is one of many rising interests in artificial intelligence in Arab energy sectors, and for the fragile geography of the Middle East, these solutions are more than welcome. As the region sees an increasing need for renewable energy and climate change continues to wreak havoc, artificial intelligence will become a key player in the Middle East’s energy transition.

For the Middle East, there are three main roles that AI could take on in the renewable energy sector: (1) predicting supply

and demand, (2) powering the implementation of the smart grid, and (3) making renewable energy production more sustainable. The utility of AI within the energy sector is continually increasing, especially since renewable energy development in the Middle East has been lackluster. The Pan Arab Clean Energy Initiative—a regional agreement signed in 2014 that set renewable energy targets and development standards across the Arab League—established goals for each of the twenty-two member nations. Of the thirteen states with goals for 2020, only three were able to meet or surpass their targets; the remaining ten fell an average 70 percent short of their respective targets. This regional failure to reach renewable energy goals has left the Middle East with only 11 percent of energy being derived from renewables—the lowest of all major regions. Other renewable energy plans—largely domestic in the form of National Renewable Energy

Plans—have similarly failed to stimulate adequate development in the region.

Indeed, while much of the hesitance to transition to renewable energy in the Middle East stems from the power of oil monopolies in the region, there is another critical issue that arises when states move away from a uniquely reliable source of energy. When working with renewable energy—particularly wind and solar—the quantity of energy produced is directly dependent on weather patterns. When there is no reliable algorithm to predict weather patterns and resulting energy production, countries are left with a decision between hoping they can generate enough electricity to meet demand or simply continuing to use a reliable source of energy—oil, in the case of the Middle East. One of the greatest appeals of AI in the energy sector is its ability to mitigate the impacts of weather volatility by utilizing historical meteorological data to predict coming weather conditions and their impacts on energy production. On the opposite end of the supply-demand equation, AI algorithms can utilize historic market data and usage patterns to determine future demand. With supply-side weather volatility predictions and demand-side forecasts working in tandem, Middle Eastern states can finetune their energy production and mixed usage to meet demand while minimizing costs and carbon output. Existing systems that have deployed such algorithms have seen an increase in energy yield of between 6 percent and 33 percent for solar energy alone.

On a greater scale, AI can be utilized to create an entire smart grid that integrates energy production with supply and demand prediction algorithms. One such initiative is underway in the United Arab Emirates. The DEWA/Enbala Virtual Power Plant is a joint project between the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority and the Canadian company Enbala that was announced in 2019. This project would oversee the creation of an AI-

powered virtual power plant that is run on efficiency algorithms that aggregate all available energy sources to supply Dubai with energy in increasingly sustainable ways. The DEWA VPP would be the second of its kind, with the first plant in Abu Dhabi having a massive capacity of 108 MW or 648 MWh. This immense potential is only powering a single city, indicating that the application of artificial intelligence on a regional or national scale would have immense implications for energy supply and efficiency.

Beyond the boundaries of infrastructure, AI will continue to drive the renewable energy transition through research and development. Artificial intelligence simplifies the energy research process by removing the need for trial-and-error experimentation. Instead of conducting thousands of tests on a solar panel, for example, AI can automatically assess the successes and shortcomings of the solar panel’s performance. This mitigates economic and environmental costs to the producer and the surrounding environment, in the process further reducing solar energy’s carbon footprint. As the region transitions away from fossil fuels, similar AI initiatives have the potential to assist in transitioning while minimizing carbon emissions from the process. In fact, over the next three years, AI is expected to add \$300 billion in value to Middle Eastern oil and gas operations by minimizing the ecological footprint and maximizing existing resource extraction and production.

Through maximized efficiency, predictive algorithms, and continued transitional support, artificial intelligence will be a critical tool for the Middle East as it continues to transition its energy grids to renewable sources. With the help of AI, the Middle East can accelerate its energy transition and minimize the environmental impacts of its energy use, not to mention entirely transform approaches to urban energy challenges amidst a growing population. For the Middle East, artificial intelligence is the future.





# International Community Must Address Suffering in Yemen

Rick Lytle

In 2014, Houthi Rebels in Yemen seized control of the country's capital of Sana'a, igniting a vicious civil war that has gripped the country since. While the government forces—forces still loyal to president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi—control a majority of territory in the country, the Houthis control a majority of the population centers which are mainly situated in the east of the country. This conflict has left a major moral stain on the international community which has stood by as war crimes continue to mount in Yemen. This year, the World Food Programme will have to reduce rations for

eight million people in Yemen thanks to a budget shortage of \$1.97 billion (a number that was calculated before the war in Ukraine and resulting increase in wheat prices). This budget shortage for the World Food Programme is a critical issue with a tangible solution. Yet countries have failed to step up.

Overall, the gruesome conflict has been a disaster for civilians in Yemen. The United Nations reported that by the end of 2021 that an estimated 377,000 people had died as a result of the war from both direct and indirect causes. According to the same report, 60 percent

of deaths were from indirect causes such as hunger, and 70 percent of deaths were children under the age of five. To put that into perspective, that is a child dying roughly every 15 minutes for over the past seven years. In terms of both direct and indirect casualties, the war is continuing to worsen. January 2022 was the deadliest month for civilians to date, thanks to Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in more than five years. The worsening humanitarian crisis is even more worrying coupled with the aforementioned shortage of funds for the World Food Programme.

Both sides of the civil war are responsible for this humanitarian crisis. The Houthis have been accused of seizing aid intended for Yemeni citizens and instead using it for their own benefit, while the Saudi-led coalition backing the government has similarly been responsible for civilian deaths. These include airstrikes on school buses and hospitals. Even more catastrophic for the country as a whole has been the Saudi' blockade and impediment of commercial activity at ports in Yemen. Even when food has been delivered, fuel is often delayed or stopped at the ports, so there is no way to transport

the food and humanitarian aid to the required destinations.

While the amount of economic and political pressure the international community can put on the Houthis is minimal, putting pressure on the government forces and countries aligned with them—mainly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—is more realistic. President Biden suspended the sale of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia upon taking office, but “defensive” arms sales have continued. The U.S. just approved a \$650 million arms sale to Saudi Arabia which included air-to-air missiles which Biden claimed as necessary for defense from Houthi drone attacks. However, the line between offensive and defensive support can easily be blurred. In September of 2021, the U.S. authorized the renewal of a \$500 million contract that included maintenance services for the Saudi Arabia's Apache and Black Hawk helicopter fleet. These helicopters have reportedly been used in operations against the Houthis inside Yemen, which means they are clearly serving an “offensive” purpose.

It is clear that just simply declaring the end of sales of offensive weapons doesn't accomplish anything. Without any real legal obligations to limit the sales of arms, there is a significant gray area regarding the use of weapons and different support mechanisms for the Saudi-led coalition. The blame for these arms sales falls on many countries other than the United States as well: a 2020 United Nations report also named France, the United Kingdom, Iran, Canada, Australia, China, Spain, and South Africa as complicit in continued “support of parties to the conflict, including through arms transfers.” As this list shows, countries from all corners of the globe are at least partially responsible for the continued conflict and ensuing humanitarian disaster.

This is where it is necessary to return to the World Food Programme's budget shortage. In 2022, 16 million of the 30 million citizens of Yemen will

suffer from hunger. At least half of that 16 million will see a reduction in food rations because of the budget shortfall. The number who could see their rations cut short is expected to increase as the invasion of Ukraine—the world's 5th largest exporter of wheat—by Russia—the world's largest exporter of wheat—continues to dramatically increase food costs around the world. Countries around the world have continued to approve arms sales for their defense contracting industries profiting off of the conflict, but have proven unable to fund organizations like the World Food Programme that are trying to clean up the mess those same companies and countries are creating.

The virtual abandonment of Yemenis—from being neglected with food rations to indiscriminate violence against civilians—is morally reprehensible and most end. This war is incredibly complex and no one party has anywhere near enough leverage to bring the conflict to an end anytime soon. But this does not justify a strategy of simply looking the other way as the number of completely preventable deaths in Yemen continues to pile up. Oftentimes, vague promises without any real effect can bog down solutions to problems such as this and make it easy for responsible parties to look the other way. There are tangible steps that can and need to be taken, and this starts with ceasing arms sales? fully funding the World Food Programme so an entire country doesn't slip into famine as a result of a conflict the global community is responsible in abetting.





# Elderly Refugees in Turkey: The Ignored Refugee Demographic

Josephine Ness

A 65-year-old Syrian refugee in Turkey expresses with despair: “We don’t have education, we don’t have money, we were a burden for people here, they want us to go. We lost everything in the war.”

While all refugees face challenges in adjusting to life in a new country, the elderly refugee demographic is often overlooked. Older refugees—defined by UNHCR as refugees over sixty years of age—face unique barriers in terms of economic and social integration; the convergence of old age and refugee status amplifies the struggle that these refugees face. Their vulnerabilities lie in difficulties with learning a new language and supporting themselves financially, critical skills for adapting to life in a new country that are extremely challenging without adequate humanitarian aid and a social support network. This isolation manifests in feelings of hopelessness like the sentiments expressed above.

In Turkey specifically, elderly refugees struggle due to insufficient funding. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees of any country and serves as the primary destination for Syrian refugees. Prior to the arrival of over four million asylum seekers who fled the Syrian Civil War, Turkish cities and towns were already facing significant development challenges. In order to effectively support the influx of refugees, Turkey partnered with the European Union and the World Bank to institute social

programs and development initiatives, such as education and employment programs. Although Turkey receives financial support from several organizations, the funding is inadequate. In a generally flawed system, the issues stemming from lacking financial support disproportionately harm older refugees.

Compared to younger refugees, elderly refugees face more severe challenges as a result of the language barrier. In a study published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, researchers found that over 50% of elderly refugees faced “language problems,” including issues with communication, everyday life, and formal processes and that almost all elderly women had no language education at all. In fact, UNHCR found that despite receiving 2% more language training than younger refugees, older refugees fall behind the younger generation in terms of Turkish language proficiency. Roughly one percent of older refugees have advanced Turkish proficiency, as compared to the five percent of refugees aged 18 to 24. Likewise, younger refugees are twice as likely than older refugees to have intermediate Turkish proficiency.

This lingual disadvantage in turn creates an economic setback for older populations. There is a direct correlation between Turkish language proficiency and higher monthly salaries. Those with beginner level Turkish proficiency have an average monthly salary of 1015 lira, while those with advanced proficiency have a monthly salary of 1280 lira. This makes the need for language courses that cater specifically to elderly refugees even more dire, as their economic status depends on Turkish proficiency.

Integrating into the workforce and supporting themselves financially also proves to be especially difficult for older refugees. Fewer than half of older refugees in Turkey described their income satisfaction as “tolerable.” Furthermore, due to gender-based discrimination, this

problem is even worse for elderly women, who are more likely to be economically disadvantaged and excluded from the workforce than men. Resources of elderly men were mostly wages and salaries (48.8 percent), while resources of elderly women were mostly social benefits (32.3 percent). Only 12 percent of Syrian refugees in Turkey between the ages of 18 and 24 were unemployed, 13 percent between the ages of 25 and 40, and 23 percent between the ages of 41 and 59. However, among refugees of the age 60 and above, over 50 percent were unemployed. The oldest population group is almost four times as likely to be unemployed than those below 40 years of age. This demonstrates a massive gap in employment between the younger and older generation and a lack of employment programs specifically targeted at refugees over 60 years of age.

Age and gender gaps in refugees’ economic status are an outcome of exclusionary and disproportionate social programs, which primarily promote employment opportunities for the younger, working-age population—inhibiting elderly refugees’ abilities to reach financial stability.

Due to these economic difficulties, elderly refugees are more likely to struggle with integration. Several studies suggest that the integration practices of Syrian refugees in Turkey can be described as ‘class-based integration,’ meaning that the Turkish government prioritizes skilled refugees who are capable of contributing to society through labor. According to the study, “Syrians who do not have economic resources struggled to access the labour market, education, and housing, all of which are essentials that need to be guaranteed.” Elderly refugees, a demographic more likely to be economically disadvantaged than those of working age, are not economically valuable to host countries and suffer from elevated difficulties in regards to integration due to their economic status.

Turkey attempts to assist economically disadvantaged Syrian refugees, but often excludes large portions of the population. For example, the Turkish government and its partners established the Emergency Social Service Net to provide cash assistance to vulnerable refugee families in Turkey. Its goal is to reach the poorest 40% of the 40 million refugees in Turkey and help them to meet their basic needs. However, the service failed to reach a large portion of those who needed it due to the criteria that specified the funding can only go to those with the very highest level of financial need. Among the applicants, 23% were poor but did not meet the criteria for receiving the assistance.

Turkey’s failure to prioritize the integration of older refugees and other refugees of lesser economic status reflects a deeper issue in the country’s refugee support system. Disproportionate and inadequate implementation of social programs and distribution of humanitarian aid not only promotes an economic gap between refugees and citizens—but also limits opportunities for economic advancement to certain groups.

However, Turkey now has the opportunity to rectify this situation. In June of 2021, the European Union greenlit a plan that would provide Turkey with \$3.6 billion to go toward assistance for Syrian refugees and border controls. This funding will grant Turkey the opportunity to expand its education, employment, housing, and language programs for Syrian refugees. It is now the Turkish government’s responsibility as a refugee-hosting nation to prioritize equitable, proportionate distribution of this funding—so that it goes to those who need it most rather than those who are the most economically valuable. The well-being of Syrian refugees depends on it.





# Eight Years After Sinjar Genocide, Justice and Support for Yazidis is Crucial

Mia Whitfield

The Sinjar district in northern Iraq once stood proudly as the home to over 400,000 Yazidis, a Kurmanji-speaking ethno-religious minority group indigenous to Kurdistan. Now, all that remains of their former home is evidence of the ISIL-backed genocide that occurred eight years ago. Seventy percent of Sinjar homes have been reduced to rubble, their furniture and tiling spilling onto the gravel streets. They provide a reminder of the families that once lived and gathered there before being dragged out of these same homes by ISIL militants to be summarily executed or enslaved. An estimated 5,000 Yazidis, mostly men, were massacred in these brutal attacks by ISIL which singled out the minority group as being “devil-worshippers.” Nearly all public infrastructure, along with Yazidi cultural and religious heritage, has been destroyed. ISIL also employed a “scorched earth” strategy in Sinjar where militants wreaked havoc on the area’s landscape and natural resources as they retreated, thereby slashing

any hope of resettlement for the local population. In Sinjar, stolen equipment, decapitated orchards, and sabotaged wells/irrigation canals were devastating blows to an agriculture-dependent population. ISIL left nothing but rubble and mass graves housing the bodies of those brutally killed.

Despite this destruction, death, and hopelessness, Yazidis forced out in 2014 cling to hope for a brighter future where they can return to their homeland and see justice brought to the perpetrators of the atrocities they endured. Yazidis deserve all the support necessary from the international community—the United Nations, governments, and humanitarian organizations—to achieve these goals. This support starts with recognizing the genocide for what it is, seeking legal justice for victims, and supporting Yazidi’s return home by providing aid and stabilization to the region.

Justice for the Yazidi population must be a priority. In 2017, the United Nations Investigative Team for Accountability of Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) was established and has since worked to collect and preserve evidence in Iraq of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed by ISIL. In mid-2021, UNITAD reached a “landmark moment,” in their work, officially declaring that ISIL crimes against Yazidis constitute genocide. This comes seven years after the genocide took place. Seven years after the bodies of more than 5,000 Yazidis were thrown in shallow mass graves, seven years after more than 300,000 individuals were forced to flee, and seven years after 7,000 Yazidi women and girls were forced into sex slavery, of which nearly 3,000 remain unaccounted for. The UN’s recognition of the Yazidi genocide is a significant step but far from the leap necessary to secure justice for this community. With the majority of the Yazidi population still displaced and dependent on

external support, they deserve more attention and urgency - especially in the face of genocide. One way this delayed recognition can be remedied is by finally establishing a judicial process that provides a path towards accountability against perpetrators.

Just as the international community established tribunals for genocides in Germany, Bosnia, and Rwanda, Yazidis deserve no less. Tens of thousands of ISIL militants have been charged in Iraq under counterterrorism laws but not for genocide. Current Iraqi judicial courts are not equipped to handle complex matters of international law and genocide. Iraqi police, prosecutors, and judges lack the capacity to investigate, charge, and try individuals for such crimes. Furthermore, current national proceedings against Islamic State militants are rushed and nontransparent, shedding little light on the crimes committed against Yazidis. Trying ISIL militants should not be in the

hands of small Iraqi courts, but should be taken to the International Criminal Court which is better equipped to address matters of genocide. Now that UNITAD has determined the atrocities as genocide, the UN Security Council must act to punish the perpetrators and prevent further atrocities by establishing a special criminal tribunal and investigating and aggressively prosecuting those responsible for Yazidi death and suffering.

Justice for the Yazidi community does not stop at accountability. They deserve a safe path home and extensive international aid and support. Though ISIL is no longer present in Sinjar, the region has become the battleground of various militia groups including the Kurdistan Workers Party, the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces, and Iraqi military representatives. At the same time as rival Kurdish factions launch deadly attacks against each other, Turkey regularly targets Kurdish insurgents in

Sinjar with airstrikes. With such a volatile security situation, it is no surprise that Yazidis are wary of returning home. Baghdad should act with urgency in Sinjar to restore local governance and political institutions (with Yazidis at the center of administrative bodies), as well as establish formal negotiations with Kurdish militias over disputed territories in the region, supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

The military and political instability in Sinjar is not the only deterrent for Yazidis hoping to return to their homeland. Physical barriers, like landmines and other explosive hazard contamination threaten civilians everywhere, from essential agricultural zones to underneath the rubble of the homes they seek to rebuild. Beyond this, most communities lack safe and reliable water, electricity, and public services. This is where international NGOs must step in to provide aid in the form of restoring infrastructure and

essential services, facilitating reintegration, and providing mental health and livelihood support. The Iraqi government should work closely with these external organizations and pass legislation to protect and improve prospects for returning Yazidis, including enforcement of the new Yazidi Survivors Law and strong implementation of its reparations framework. Safe passage back to familiar soil as well as national and international aid and support will begin to establish the foundation that this devastated population needs to restore the life they once had.

The genocide that took place in Sinjar eight years ago will forever haunt the communities that once called that region home. The seventy-some open mass graves that dot the landscape of northern Iraq will serve as continual reminders of the atrocities that once occurred. But, despite its past of death and despair, the future of the Yazidi community is not

entirely dim. The community is better connected to the outside world than ever before and has garnered much international attention thanks to various organizations, human rights groups, and activists like Nobel Peace Prize-winner Nadia Murad, a Yazidi herself. Furthermore, only months ago, a significant step was taken towards finally bringing ISIL militants to justice for their crimes against the Yazidi people. For the first time, in a landmark trial in Frankfurt, Germany, a member of the Islamic State was found guilty of genocide against the Yazidi people through his involvement in the enslavement and murder of a five-year old Yazidi girl. Other countries should follow Germany’s example in trying the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity. Yazidis deserve legal justice and international recognition as much as they deserve a safe and dignified return home if they so choose. The international community must firmly back the Yazidi people if these goals are to be achieved.



# Unintended Consequences of Drone Strikes: It's Time for the U.S. to Reevaluate its Primary Counterterrorism Measure

Anna Tuohey

A family dances at a wedding, a child plays in the yard, and a mother sleeps soundly in her bed. A minute later, they are reduced to a pile of rubble. Such destruction is an unfortunately common result of the U.S.'s drone strike program, the country's key counterterrorism tool under every administration since the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones allow for the neutralization of specific targets—often in remote corners of the world—without the risk of American boots on the ground. This capability bridges the gap between political opposition to so-called “endless wars” and the pressure to produce tangible results in the fight against terrorism. However, the civilian casualties resulting from the drone strike program and America's seeming lack of remorse exacerbate the anti-Western sentiment that drives terrorism sympathizers and facilitates recruitment. Despite a series of successful strikes which have taken out key terrorist leaders and targets over the past two decades, the drone strike program faces increasing criticism today that largely focuses on its high rate of civilian deaths and lack of long-term effectiveness in eliminating terror groups.

Since 9/11, U.S. drone strikes have killed over 250 civilians in Pakistan, at least 120 civilians in Yemen, more than 650 civilians in Libya, and dozens more in Syria and Somalia. These numbers are thought to be an

undercount due to inconsistent methods of data collection and the classified nature of many strikes. The unintended consequences of civilian casualties create a moral and human rights issue, and threaten U.S. national security interests. U.S. drone strikes diminish the sovereignty of target countries that have experienced the highest numbers of strikes within their borders by reducing already limited faith in these countries' leaders to protect against foreign intervention.

Historically, the killing of key terrorist leaders—a method often referred to as “cutting off the head of the snake”—has not been an effective strategy for dismantling entire organizations. New leaders quickly emerge in place of the deceased members, and communities who lose loved ones in U.S. strikes become angry and resentful. Local terrorist groups point to the seemingly indiscriminate killing of women and children as an example of U.S. indifference for human life. Civilian casualties resulting from U.S. based strikes serve as free propaganda for the very organizations targeted by those same attacks. These communities understandably feel wary of or even threatened by affiliation with locally influential terrorist organizations.

Because drone strikes do not require physical U.S. presence in the target country or area,

the President can exercise nearly unrestricted authority over their use without the input of Congress. The classified nature of much of the drone strike program further limits both congressional oversight and public criticism due to lack of comprehensive awareness of the use of drones. These strikes are a crucial aspect of American military capabilities, and it is certainly important to maintain a target on the backs of top individuals, disrupt operations even temporarily, and demonstrate American seriousness and capability in fighting global terrorism. However, now that more than twenty years have passed since the 9/11 attacks with most of the perpetrators either in detention or killed, it is time to reevaluate the costs of such frequent drone strikes.

In order to maximize deterrence and minimize fallout from these drone strikes, the U.S. must take a two-pronged reform approach. First, top national security advisors, counterterrorism specialists, and analysts must show greater restraint when it comes to launching a strike, with regards to credibility of intelligence and value of the target. Civilian casualties often result from hasty decisions based on incomplete information and may mistake civilians for terrorists or fail to ensure that any women and children are cleared from the area. The Executive Branch must allow for greater oversight, as key decision makers have control over human lives with a simple signal and press of a button.

Second, in the event that civilian casualties do continue as a result of U.S. based strikes, the government is obliged to develop a policy of reparation and investigation. The government must appoint an independent investigative committee to evaluate U.S. responsibility for damage caused by drone strikes and to recommend any necessary legal actions or repercussions. This may include official apologies and relocation of affected family members when necessary. Such policies, while not making up for the loss of human life, will serve to maintain our credibility as a defender of human rights in the Middle East and around the world, while also minimizing the heightened anti-American sentiments that often result from successful drone strikes.

# Children are Meant to be Our Future, Not Our Cannon Fodder

Heba Malik

Embedded deep in the bustling center of the city of Hasakah, Syria is a former technical college turned prison called Ghwaryan. Three years ago, U.S.-backed Kurdish forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) stumbled upon the complex in the search for a place to securely detain thousands of ISIS fighters and prisoners. In old classrooms, they saw rooms to hold 30 men comfortably, and 50 uncomfortably. They saw hall corners as guard stations. And they saw a place of education as a temporary prison. Eventually, they thought the Americans or the Iraqis—or whatever governments some of these fighters answered to—would repatriate their citizens to be tried and imprisoned on their soil. Certainly, the Syrian rebel forces had no internationally recognized court with which to try foreigners. They couldn't do it. Someone else had to.

Except no one did.

The foreigners stayed. With them sat 700 former child soldiers recruited to fight in ISIS ranks, hundreds of wives and girls, and an estimated 4,000 suspected ISIS fighters, all coalesced on a small college campus. The temporary turned permanent, and a month turned into three years. No governments came to repatriate, and the world returned to a normal that dismissed the needs of Hasakah.

The West is too confident that the war on terror is over, but that confidence is misplaced. The inattention to rehabilitation programs and prisons like Ghwaryan allows terrorist ideology to fester in ways that directly feed into the discontent that terrorist groups thrive on. Rampant dismissal of preventive mechanisms for terrorist indoctrination made the question of resurgence not when, but where. And as of

January 20, it was Hasakah. Child and adolescent detainees found at Ghwaryan were injured, hungry, and thirsty, according to UNICEF workers on site. They sat barefoot, some with blankets over their shoulders, facing the only windows in the rooms. Others report that adult rooms were overcrowded, with the dying left without medical treatment. When someone is left without food, without medical attention, and without basic needs, one wonders less why they desire the return of the Caliphate.

ISIS thrives on discontent, on men and women and children who have lost their homes, their jobs, and their families at the hands of the West. Prisons like Ghwaryan do not stem the flow of terrorism or curb the growth of terrorist groups; they are instead the perfect breeding grounds for recruitment and indoctrination. Imprisonment of children and poor prison conditions are free anti-Western propaganda and allow ISIS to portray itself as the bearer of stability. They can offer freedom—and they can offer life. A pressure release and concrete global rehabilitation plans, particularly for children, must constitute a renewed Western counterterrorism effort.

Without a doubt, some child soldiers did carry out heinous acts of torture and murder on behalf of ISIS. Yet they did so after being coerced, manipulated, and in some cases, abducted to be molded and indoctrination in ISIS training centers. The group molded their trauma and vulnerability into obedience and rage. If deemed necessary, they can be prosecuted under international law with factors like age and forced conscription taken into consideration. However, legal prosecution is neither justice

nor a remedy for the harms perpetrated against these children. Imprisoning them will not help rebuild Syrian society.

What can rebuild it instead is child soldier rehabilitation and reintegration. Child soldiers are less likely to hold stable jobs, build families, and participate in civic life. Without successful reintegration, former child soldiers are more vulnerable to recidivism in the future. Letting these boys and girls become a lost generation is disadvantageous to the sustainability of international counterterrorism efforts. It is in the interest of the United States and the wider international community to mitigate this outcome and create a stable and prosperous Syria.

To begin, children and teenagers held in prisons run by the SDF should be released into rehabilitation centers. The Syrian Civil War has lasted more than a decade and wholly turned the country—and its infrastructure—to rubble. No rehabilitation centers, or Interim Care Centers (ICCs) for former child terrorist fighters exist as of yet and established child services networks remain debilitated. The reintegration of child soldiers is a long-term and arduous project that necessitates much more than Syria can offer right now. Countries, most notably the United States, should funnel foreign aid directed to counterterrorism efforts into the creation and sustainability of these programs.

The primary historical framework for child soldier reintegration is disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation (DDR). This framework requires that teams identify the targeted children, remove their weaponry and publicly destroy it, and place them in ICCs until they release

them to their families. ICCs focus on fulfilling a child's hierarchy of needs by ensuring physical wellbeing, daily structure, therapy, educational activities, and vocational skills training.

In theory, DDR proves effective; in practice, it is barely a foundation. To effectively tailor DDR to former ISIS Syrian soldiers, the framework must be individualized to the specific cultural and religious contexts of training and places of return. Trained trauma-informed psychologists should be at the forefront of all established reintegration processes. In cooperation with local religious and community leaders, experts can educate families and communities on the debilitated states of their children, the effects of violence and extremism, and mechanisms of proper emotional support. Islamic teachers and influences can redefine the peaceful realities of religion for indoctrinated children, shifting away from extremism and toward moderation.

Clearly, the process is extensive and expensive. It is not as easy as looking away as soldiers we back are forced to convert college campuses into overcrowded, underfunded prisons. It requires both ardent commitment and funding on the part of international organizations and stakeholder nation-states. It necessitates good faith by community members and ICCs. It needs trust and it needs empathy. The children do, too. And if the world cares about their lives and safety, it should do this. And if that's not enough, the harsh reality of recidivism among child soldiers should be.



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