

THE CONSUL

FALL 2016

THE END OF

CHAVISMO?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE VENEZUELAN
POLITICAL- ECONOMIC CRISIS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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Dear Reader of *The Consul*,

I am proud to present you with our latest edition of *The Consul*. In this issue, our staff will explore a variety of locations and topics from around the globe.

I would like to highlight our featured article for our readers. This semester, Nicholas Palombi takes an in-depth look at the crisis facing Venezuela – one of the greatest political and economic catastrophes in the world today.

In addition to this delve into Venezuela; *The Consul* staff investigated political change in Southeast Asia, potential resolutions to the Syrian civil war, and Vatican contraception policy. We strive to provide our readers with diverse perspectives on a diverse range of topics, and I am particularly proud of our efforts this semester.

We are dedicated to providing an outlet for sharing our opinions, knowledge, and experiences on topics related to international affairs. I hope that, in reading *The Consul*, you continue to develop your interest and understanding of global politics and events. I also urge you to continue reading on www.theconsul.org where our writers post a constant flow of fresh content on their personalized blogs.

Thank you, and enjoy *The Consul*!

Jake Cohen
Editor-in-Chief

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SEASON IN REVIEW

May 9: Phillipine Election

Rodrigo Duterte is elected president of the Phillipines. Critics have noted parallels between Duterte's outspoken style and the rhetoric underlying the Trump campaign. The Duterte campaign leveraged popular disgust with the ruling class' failure to reduce poverty and a growing sense of distrust toward Western nations to earn a victory by a margin of over six million voters.

PHOTO: CNN PHILIPPINES



August 5-21: Summer Olympic Games

Over 11,000 athletes convened in Rio de Janeiro to compete in the XXXI Summer Olympic Games, including first-time entrants Kosovo, South Sudan, and the Refugee Olympic Team. The United States topped the medal count, earning 121 medals total.

PHOTO: REUTERS

September 28: 400 ppm

Atmospheric CO2 concentrations exceed 400ppm during a season associated with minimum CO2 levels. 400ppm represents a new maximum in geologic history, given that naturally-occurring carbon cycles fluctuate between 150 and 300 ppm. Experts worry that unremitting carbon emissions will exacerbate current international tension. The WHO, for instance, predict that climate change will expand the range of disease vectors carrying Zika and Dengue Fever.

PHOTO: INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS



June 23: Brexit Referendum

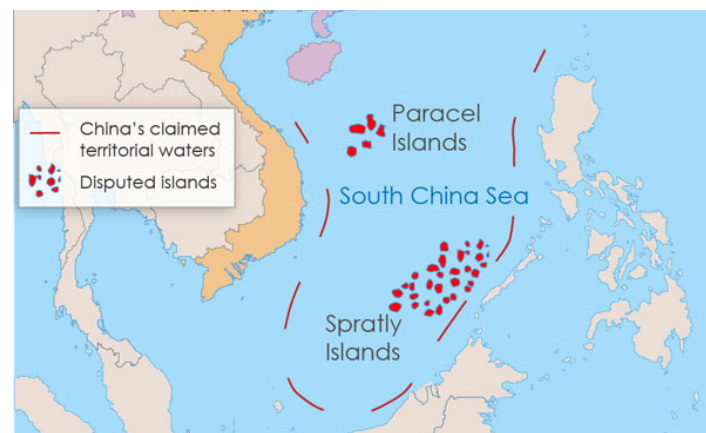
The United Kingdom votes to leave the European Union. The vote is regionally polarized: the majority in England and Wales voters elected to leave, while a majority in Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain.

PHOTO: ALAMY

July 12: South China Sea Arbitration

The Permanent Court of Arbitration rules that China's "nine-dotted line" claim in the South China Sea is invalid. Chinese President Xi Jinping rejected the tribunal's decision, stating that "China will never accept any claim or action based on those awards."

GRAPHIC: RFA



September 9: Temporary Halt to Dakota Access Pipeline Construction

The Department of Justice, the Army, and the Department of the Interior rule to temporary halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Subsequent protests throughout the continent represent an unprecedented coalition between Native nations to protect Indigenous water rights, and the ultimate ruling will set a precedent for Indigenous treaty rights are enforced in the twenty-first century.

PHOTO: INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY MEDIA NETWORK



October 2: FARC Referendum

Colombia narrowly rejects a peace agreement with FARC rebels. The deal would have provided amnesty to rebels who confessed their crimes, a provision that critics believed too lenient. President Santos has since pledged to "continue the search for peace" with the rebels.

PHOTO: FELIPE CAICEDO

FEDERICO RIOS ESCOBAR / THE NEW YORK TIMES

SEARCHING FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA

BY: KAVI MUNJAL

About a month before the historic signing of a peace treaty to end decades of bloodshed between the Colombian government and the FARC rebels, delegates from both parties arrived at the farm of Hector Moreno and Eumenia Acosta. The delegates informed the couple that they wanted to convert part of their farm in La Carmelita, a collection of rural communities near the southern border of Colombia, into a transition zone where FARC rebels would

yield to police, the military and international officials. On October 2nd, just four days before members of the Farc were due to begin arriving at the farm, the people of Colombia decided that Hector and Eumenia would not be hosting the historic transition, at least not as planned. Their country has gone into crisis, as Colombian voters rejected by referendum the ratification of the peace agreement by a slim majority of 50.2 percent, sending shock waves throughout the world.

WHO ARE THE FARC?

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (or FARC, for the group's initials in Spanish) are the rebel guerrilla group responsible for the longest running armed insurgency in the Western Hemisphere. The group was founded in 1964 as an armed wing of the Communist Party at a time when Communism and the Cold War were chief among global issues. Inspired by the recent Cuban revolution, the FARC were founded mainly by rural farmers and workers to combat the vast inequality in Colombia. Early members established an agricultural commune in the region of Marquetalia and demanded more rights to the Colombian land which was owned mainly by a small population of the elite. The FARC say that it took up arms when the threatened owners and the repressive government sent in the army to break up the commune.

For more than 50 years, the FARC have recruited men, women, and children of poor, rural communities to join their cause. The group's main target has usually been the security forces of Colombia, but rebels have also bombed infrastructure and social clubs. Kidnapping civilians and demanding ransom has also been a mainstay of the rebels' strategy. As a result, civilians have made up a large portion of the FARC's victims.

PEACE PROCESS

The FARC reached their peak when it numbered 20,000 fighters in 2002. Some talks were held around this time, but ended disastrously

when the rebels kidnapped several Colombian political figures. Over the ensuing decade, many members of the Secretariat, the group's leaders, either died or were killed by Colombian security forces. The increased effectiveness of the Colombian military operation against the FARC could be attributed to the millions of dollars in funding and training received by the Colombian forces from the US government. The US also worked to halt the flow of cocaine across the US-Mexican border, which had for years created a heavy profit for the rebels. By the turn of the decade, the FARC's numbers had been more than halved to only 7,000 members.

In 2011, secret negotiations commenced between FARC leadership and the Colombian government near the Colombian-Venezuelan border. These secret talks lasted for one and a half years as the fighting continued. After agreeing on an agenda, official peace talks began in Oslo, Norway in 2012. Peace talks were officially guaranteed by Norway and Cuba. Ceasefires were instituted and violated as the talks went on, with both sides accusing the other of inciting the violence. Talks were suspended and resumed many times, with various points agreed upon and others still bitterly argued.

Dialogue ramped up in 2015 as the United Nations, United States, and European Union took active roles in supporting the peace process. By 2016, various negotiations were in their final stages. The official ceasefire was signed on June 23rd, with the FARC proclaiming that they would not return to the jungles,

even in the event of a "no" vote. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos received the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize for his "resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end".

THE ROOTS OF "NO"

While much of the world may have been shocked to hear that the people of Colombia would reject peace with the group that had brought it chaos and carnage for fifty-two years, the result of the referendum should not be a complete surprise. Former President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a hard-liner against the FARC during his time in office, has led the campaign for a "no" vote on the plebiscite. The main argument of that campaign is that the current peace agreement is overly lenient towards members of the FARC. Members who confessed to their crimes, for example, would be given easier sentences with the possibility of not spending any time in conventional prisons, and rightly so. The thought of living up the street from unpunished guerrillas who had taken the lives of loved ones would horrify anyone.

Demobilized FARC rebels also stand to receive financial and political benefits under the current, rejected peace plan. Rebels would receive monthly stipends from the government, a payment many Colombians found insulting as they themselves struggle for financial well-being. The FARC would also be guaranteed ten congressional seats in the next two elections, amounting to eight years of guaranteed representation.

Many Colombians stated

simply that they could not bring themselves to trust and concede to the FARC. Given the military progress that the government has made against the rebels in recent years, Uribe's campaign pointed to the numerous concessions made by the government in the peace agreement as unnecessary forgiveness. The "no" campaign also relied heavily on the impact of decades of human rights violations by the guerrilla group. The conflict has taken the lives of more than 260,000 people, with thousands missing and millions displaced.

WHAT'S NEXT

The "no" vote came as a result of skepticism of the agreement's concessions and a strong campaign by Uribe, but voter turnout contributed to this decision as well. A "yes" vote was widely expected, both among the people and the government, and as a result voter turnout was under 38 percent. Many of the country's central, more developed provinces voted compellingly in favor of the treaty, but rural farmers and workers who have for years been extorted by the FARC turned out in force against the agreement.

The rejection of the peace agreement by referendum has sent Colombia into a political crisis as the country scrambles to salvage years of hard work and negotiations. The FARC, for their part, has vowed to maintain the ceasefire as both sides work towards a new treaty that is agreeable with the Colombian people. Representatives have returned to Havana to reopen discussions; not included among



FEDERICO RIOS ESCOBAR / THE NEW YORK TIMES

For the last three years, the FARC and the Colombian government have been trying to negotiate an end to a 50-year-old conflict.

them is Uribe and other proponents of the "no" vote. Santos met face-to-face with Uribe, his former boss, on the same day that Hector Moreno and Eumenia Acosta should have received the first of the FARC rebels on their farm. Santos promised to work with Uribe to "strengthen" the peace accord; Uribe handed Santos a list of "adjustments" to be made, a list that Santos will have to sell in discretion to the FARC. Meanwhile, Moreno and Acosta will have to wait for the agriculture and crop reform that will allow the farmland in their area of the country to thrive without the dangers of the drug trade used by the FARC for

profit.

So how does the future look for a country seeking to bring a definitive end to 52 years of conflict with armed insurgents? Both sides of the negotiating table are firmly set on establishing peace. While the rejection of the original peace agreement may cast a measure of uncertainty, it is clear that Colombia has entered a new era in its history. The direction of this new era will be defined by the country's ability to finally provide Hector Moreno, Eumenia Acosta, and the rest of the Colombian people with a sense of safety and equal opportunity by peaceful means. 🌱

The Case for NEGOTIATING WITH IRAN

OVER SYRIA

BY: ZACH GROSS

The current situation in Syria has dominated the attention of US policymakers over the course of the past six months. American strategy has been to focus on defeating ISIS on the battlefield militarily while trying to resolve the civil war in Syria primarily through bilateral negotiations with the Russian Federation. While diplomatic negotiations are the best way for the United States to resolve the catastrophe in Syria, we should be negotiating with the Iranians, not the Russians.

Iran is a much better partner than Russia in many regards. First of all, the rapport between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Zarif is proven.

Both were able to successfully manage their interests and those of hard-liners back home to reach an agreement after months of head-to-head talks. In the process, the American negotiating team skillfully shaped perception in Iran while vigorously pursuing a comprehensive agreement. For example, when speaking to Iranian media, State Department Persian language spokesman Alan Eyre couched his statements with lines from Persian-language poetry, which was well-received in Iran. Compare this to the toxic current relationship between the State Department and Russian state media. After the recent bombing of an Arab Red

Crescent Convoy delivering aid to Aleppo, state media outlet Sputnik claimed the attack was a hoax, inciting its domestic population against the United States. Continuing to negotiate with the Russians will probably continue to lead to their state media inciting their domestic population against America to a greater extent than Iranian media would for their own populace.

Secondly, Iran has more leverage over Assad than Russia does. Iran intervened before Russia in Syria because it values the Assad regime more highly than Russia does. Therefore, an agreement with Russia that provided for a transition away from Assad may not be

acceptable to Iran, while a similar accord with Iran would almost certainly be accepted by Russia.

Achieving a meaningful, nationwide ceasefire would also be more effectively achieved with Iran than Russia. The two main attempts at nationwide ceasefires – the February 26th Cessation of Hostilities and the September 10th US/Russia agreement both were undone largely because of a lack of enforcement on the ground, rather than due to similar anarchy in the skies. While obviously bombings in violation of the agreement did occur, had there been better ground enforcement of the deal, such violations would have been less likely. It's precisely this dynamic that makes Iran a more useful negotiating partner than Russia. While Russia's intervention has been broadly limited to airpower, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxies have been supplying, advising, and assisting government forces on the ground. Iran could, in the aftermath of an agreement, credibly threaten to cut off supplies and military support from groups such as Hezbollah, which would increase the likelihood of the regime's compliance to any future deal.

Such a strategy certainly has costs. Iran sees a pliable regime in Syria as a core national security interest.

Ayatollah Khamenei has publically refused to negotiate with the United States on non-nuclear issues. Further, Iran sees a pliable regime in Syria as a core national security interest; it is a key partner in the resistance to Israel and a bulwark against anti-Shiite rebel groups in the region. Under such circumstances, a deal would understandably be difficult to obtain, but I believe that the costs would be manageable.

Iran's intervention to date, while significant, have been far from an "all-out" effort to secure the future of the Assad regime. Of the 100,000 members of the IRGC, only about 2,500-3000 were deployed during a "surge" in September 2015, and those units reportedly suffered a

“While Iran's strategy of sectarian resettlement is morally reprehensible, it's not one that is mutually exclusive with a nationwide ceasefire that would satisfy the interests of America and its allies.”

staggeringly high 5% casualty per month. Iran's primary instrument of force has been proxy militias, a strategy consistent with risk- and cost-aversion. Groups like Liwa Fatemiyoun, which consists of Afghan Shi'ites recruited by Iran to fight in Syria, highlight the extent to which Iran is unwilling to bear the costs of a full-scale intervention in Syria itself.

Instead of relying on a near-term military defeat of the rebels, Iran has instead employed a strategy of strategic resettlement along sectarian lines. Basically, its strategy consists of brutally attacking rebel (Sunni) enclaves to the point of surrender and then offering them transit to other, more remote parts of the country. Then, Iran facilitates the repopulation of these abandoned areas – thus far largely in the suburbs of Damascus – with Iraqi Shias. One example of this was the surrender of Daraya, a rebel-controlled town near Damascus that was besieged by government forces for four years. According to the Washington Institute, after the town surrendered and its residents were evacuated, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, an Iraqi Shi'ite paramilitary group with ties to Iran, facilitated the resettlement of 300 Iraqi Shia families to the town.

Broadly speaking, while Iran's strategy of sectarian resettlement is morally reprehensible, it's not one that is mutually exclusive with a nationwide ceasefire that would



KEVIN LAMARQUE / AFP

US Secretary of State John Kerry speaks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in January.

satisfy the interests of America and its allies. America is looking for a ceasefire that can broadly reduce the level of violence throughout the entire country. By allowing Iran to consolidate some of its gains in the war, America could potentially achieve a credible ceasefire since Iran has been unwilling to bear the costs necessary for a full victory.

An agreement over Syria could additionally have potentially positive spillover effects. One of the major tensions during the negotiations over the Iran Deal was concern about the sharp disagreements between the West and Iran over Syria. Consensus over where to guide the conflict would lead to less uncertainty American-Iranian relations and a stronger base from which to implement the long-term

terms of the nuclear deal.

Broadly speaking, consensus has already been reached in the Iraqi theater: both Iran and the United States have supported the Iraqi central government in its campaign against the Islamic State. Of course, the actors Iran is working with in the Syrian theater unpalatable, but America needs to be honest with itself.

If we are truly dedicated to achieving a nationwide ceasefire, a necessary precondition for any potential political transition from Assad, with minimal military intervention, we need to be prepared to work with unsavory actors just like we have done in our campaign against Islamic State. In Syria, we have advised and aided the Syrian Defense Forces, which includes

fighters in groups linked to the Kurdistan Worker's Party, which the United States has labelled as a terrorist organization. In Iraq, the Popular Mobilization Units, a state-sponsored umbrella organization that has been a part of the campaign against Islamic State, is similarly led by leaders from groups that have been designated by the United States as terrorist organizations such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Hezbollah.

In the context of a potential ceasefire in Syria, any agreement short of toppling Assad will require preserving the power of groups like Hezbollah and the National Defense Forces on the ground. If we truly care about ending the bloodshed in Syria without putting substantial numbers of our troops in harm's way, this is an unfortunate, but unavoidable reality.



IN DEFENSE OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

BY: ETHAN WOOLEY

Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; Winston Churchill was as correct then as he is now. After over two decades of decline in relative power, Russia is reemerging—and reasserting itself—on the world stage. Vladimir Putin's Russia is displaying a willingness to antagonize and intimidate its neighbors, seize and annex territory by force, attempt to influence an adversary's election, and involve itself militarily in a region beyond the borders of Europe. Through these actions, and the ones yet to come, the Kremlin is sending a clear message to the world, specifically to Washington, DC: Russia is relevant again. Putin is showing that he is not afraid to act militarily and unilaterally to defend what he considers to be Russia's interests abroad. His refusal to relinquish his support of Ukrainian separatists despite international sanctions is indicative of the fact that he is not afraid to sacrifice his country's economy to send this message. Putin doesn't mind that he was kicked

out of the G8 (now the G7) or that his annexation of Crimea served to isolate his country diplomatically. It is as if Putin's actions are guided by one, singular mission: to make Russia relevant again. His intervention in Syria represents the single greatest step he has taken to realize this mission.

Considering Russia's initial goal for involving itself in Syria, one can objectively consider its intervention to be a resounding success. Putin's intention was simple: make Russia relevant in the Middle East. If Bashar al-Assad's regime falls and Syria descends even further into chaos, there will be competition to influence and shape the future of Syria amongst regional powers like Turkey and Iran, countries which Russia is also competing with for influence along its southern border. Furthermore, the United States will have a high level of influence over what a post-war Syria will look like, and an emboldened Russia doesn't want to allow the United States' power to go completely unchecked. Russia's military involvement in Syria can be extremely limited: as long as Russian aircraft remain actively engaged in the skies above Syria, Russia has a guaranteed seat at any serious negotiating table. Through a strategic application of hard power, Putin has made Russia relevant to the future of Syria and, indirectly, to the future of the Middle East.

From a geopolitical perspective, Vladimir Putin is playing a weak hand extraordinarily well. Economically, it's a different story. The Russian government has been operating at a deficit since 2012, and its Reserve Fund will run out by 2017. Part of the reason for this is Russia's dependence on oil revenue: in 2015, oil and gas

accounted 43% of the country's federal revenue. This dependence and lack of economic diversification began to harm the Russian economy in June 2014, when global oil prices took a sharp decline. The sanctions placed on Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014 by the United States and the European Union targeted the country's financial, energy, and defense sectors, and the timing of the

adventurism, but Putin doesn't seem to be backing down in Syria. In October 2016, Russia announced that it would install an S-300V surface-to-air missile system in its naval facility in Tartus, Syria. This missile system serves two purposes. Tangibly, its designed to take down incoming ballistic missiles and can be used to target enemy aircraft. Abstractly, however, it represents Russia's

“From a geopolitical perspective, Vladimir Putin is playing a weak hand extraordinarily well.”

sanctions had a snowball effect with the decline in oil prices. Additionally, the ruble has fallen almost 50% against the dollar since the implementation of the sanctions. The World Bank predicts that Russia's poverty rate will reach 14.2% this year as its economy is expected to shrink by 1%, an improvement over last year's decline of just over 3.5%.

Part of Russia's reemergence onto the world stage has been through increasing its military budget. In 2008, then-President Dmitry Medvedev announced that Russia would modernize its military by 2020 by building new bases, conducting military exercises, and updating old equipment. That expansion has ended this year, when Russia announced that it would decrease its defense budget by 5%. This budget cut is directly at odds with Putin's increased military

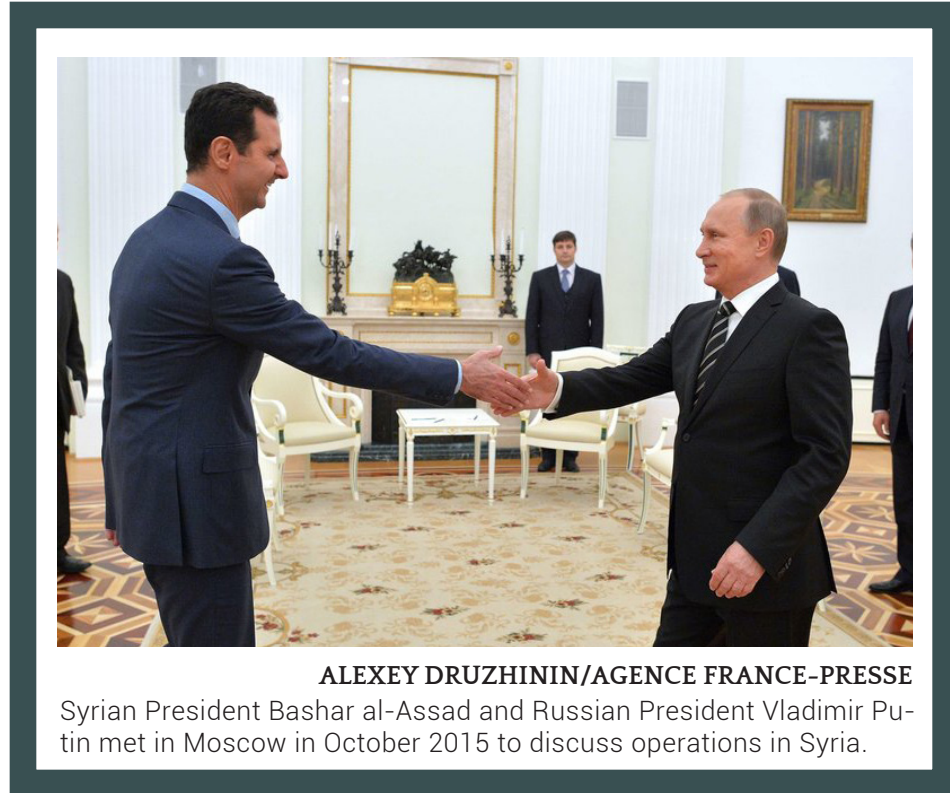
continued willingness to involve itself in the greater Middle East, since the range of the S-300V is roughly 250 miles, giving Russia a reach into the Middle East far beyond of the borders of Syria.

There is another reason for Russia to involve itself in Syria. Besides being one of Russia's oldest allies in the Middle East and the home of Russia's naval facility in Tartus, Syria also plays a strategic role in the export of oil to Europe, something that is crucial to the Russian economy. In 2009, Bashar al-Assad refused to sign an agreement with Qatar to construct a pipeline that would run from Qatar, through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, and then on to Europe through Turkey. Assad was pressured to reject the deal by Putin, who was concerned the pipeline would allow Qatar to undercut Russia's stranglehold on the European gas

market. Unsurprisingly, the United States supported the creation of the Qatari pipeline, since it would help balance out Russia's dominance in the European market and would help put an end to the monopoly that has allowed Putin to shut off natural gas to countries he has a dispute with, as he did to Ukraine in 2006.

One year later, negotiations began for an alternative \$10 billion pipeline with Iran. The proposed pipeline would have taken oil from Iran's South Pars field (which it shares with Qatar) through Iraq and Syria to potentially allow Iranian gas to supply Europe. The Memorandum of Understanding for the pipeline was signed in mid-2012 and Iraq signed a framework agreement for the construction project in 2013. Needless to say, the plan was put on hold once the Syrian Civil War began to spread to Damascus and Aleppo.

One may ask, where does Russia come into this? Putin, thinking that it would be easier to share the European market with Iran instead of Qatar, endorsed Iran's proposal for the "Syria-Iraq-Iran" pipeline. Minimizing cooperation with any potential competitors is vital to the Russian economy, since Russia's state-owned gas company Gazprom sells 80% of its gas to Europe. Russia would prefer to either deal with an Iranian pipeline or have no pipeline at all, making the chaos in Syria a blessing in disguise for Gazprom. Russia has been known to intervene abroad to prevent its monopoly on energy from being undercut: in 2008 Russia went to war in Georgia partly to prevent the export of gas to Europe through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey and Russia's 2014 intervention



ALEXEY DRUZHININ/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Moscow in October 2015 to discuss operations in Syria.

in Ukraine can be seen as an attempt to control a country which is vital to the transportation of Russian energy to Europe. With a sinking economy and a dependence on gas exports, it should not be a surprise that Russia is willing to bear the burden of a military intervention in Syria to ensure that it can maintain its dominance over the European market. Simply put, Russia's dominance over Europe's energy allows it to stay relevant in ways that any other declining power would not. In order for Russia to maintain this relevance in Europe, it needs allies like Assad to look out for its interests in the Middle East by blocking proposals like the Qatari pipeline. In order for Russia to stay relevant in Europe, it needs to stay relevant in the Middle East.

In the end, what does this all mean? The budgetary pressure has set in and Russia has had to scrap

its ambitious modernization plan for its military, yet Putin has shown no interest in stepping down in Syria. Despite budgetary cutbacks, Putin is continuing to increase his military involvement in Syria, which is not insignificant. His bombing of Aleppo alongside the Assad regime and the deployment of the S-300V missile system symbolizes that Putin is willing to remain directly involved in the conflict, not by merely arming the regime but by having Russian pilots fly combat missions alongside their allies in the Syrian Air Force, often bombing Qatari- and Saudi-funded rebel groups. Involvement in Syria is the next step in Putin's vision of a stronger Russia that asserts itself on the world stage. Putin is successfully making his country relevant in the Middle East, and one question remains: what will be his next step to make Russia relevant again? 🌐

DRONE DIPLOMACY

A mirror to the souls of states

How the international drone trade reflects the foreign policy agendas and priorities of states: a story in four case studies

BY: JORDAN DEWAR

October 7th, 2001 marked the first combat strike by what would come to be known as an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) or, more commonly, a drone. Since then, eight countries have used armed drones in combat, nineteen have armed UAV capabilities, and eighty-six countries have either armed or unarmed surveillance drones. As the question of the legality of the use of drones in combat, especially by civilians, grows more prominent, the way states' drone policies reflect their underlying interests also grows more striking.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

American drone policy reflects the underlying contradiction of American foreign interests, that is, the competition between American respect for rule of law and democracy

and the political and security needs of the United States. The United States almost solely exports drones to closely allied democracies with the majority of American exports going to other NATO states and a few to major non-NATO allies such as South Korea, Japan, and Morocco and the remaining going to three pro-American African states: Tanzania (which has an 89% approval rating of the US), Kenya (with an 83% approval rating), and Cameroon (with a 70% approval rating).

In the area of drone exports, at least, the United States exercises a great deal of caution that is almost uncharacteristic for American arms exports, but does seem to reflect a commitment on the part of the United States to keep drones in the hands of states it feels it can trust. However, American drone exports

reflect a contradiction found in the overarching Major Non-NATO Ally program, that is, that some of the United States' strategic allies don't necessarily follow the same democratic principles. Thailand, for example, which received the R4E Skyeeye UAV system from the United States, is a de facto military dictatorship with a Freedom House designation of Not Free, and thus a country that might use the advanced surveillance capabilities offered by drones against its domestic population. So, while the United States does only export drones to trusted allies, at times those alliances are more due to mutual security interests than mutual values.

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Russian Federation, much like the US, is exceedingly careful when it comes to exporting drones,

selling them only to Belarus, Syria, and Kazakhstan, not only out of caution, but also due to the fact that the Russian drone program lacks any true appeal. Russia only has one-armed drone, the Altius-M, a domestically produced drone with a payload of at most 10kg, and no long or medium range drones. Because of this, many CIS member states such as Azerbaijan, and former Soviet-bloc members such as Uzbekistan, have turned to new suppliers for their drones, namely Israel and China. In this regard for Russia, the drone trade reflects not only the states it has close ties with but the states it is beginning to lose ties with and the decline of the Russian arms industry as a whole.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Israeli drone sales account for 4.6 million dollars over the past eight years, or 60% of all drone exports, despite the fact that Israeli military spending only accounts for 1.13% of global military spending. More importantly, despite the emphasis placed by the Israeli government on Israel's status as a democratic state committed to the values of liberalism and civil rights, Israel has never been particularly choosy about the recipients of their drone technology. This fact became particularly clear when Israel began exporting the Harpy, a combat UAV with a 32kg (70lbs) warhead, to China in 1994, which created tensions between Israel and the United States that culminated in 2004 when China returned the drones to Israel to be upgraded and the United States, fearing they could be used against American and Taiwanese forces in a war against China, demanded they

be confiscated. The incident led to cooled relations between the United States and Israel and led to Israel being suspended from the Joint Strike Fighter program until Israel agreed to allow the US to review future Israeli military deals.

Another major recipient of Israeli drone exports is, surprisingly, Indonesia, despite the two countries not having formal diplomatic relations. The deal was conducted via

between the two states due to the support of French president Jacques Chirac for Yasser Arafat during the beginning of the Second Intifada. Israel also sold Scout UAV systems to South Africa during the rule of the South African apartheid regime.

For Israel, the export of drone technology represents the balancing act that guides Israeli foreign relations. That is, a need to retain the favor of the United States while attempting

“ For Israel, the export of drone technology represents the balancing act that guides Israeli foreign relations.”

a company in the Philippines due to the lack of formal relations between Israel and Indonesia and involved four Searcher (a relatively advanced drone with sophisticated SIGINT systems and satellite communication) UAV packages. This also isn't the first time Israeli arms dealers took advantage of third parties to conduct agreements concerning drones: the 1991 and 2003 deals between Israel and Finland took advantage of a Swiss intermediary. Israel also exported RQ-5 Hunters to France in 1995. This trade deal coincided with the intense deterioration of relations

to both enhance Israel's financial and military standing while building new relationships with emerging states. Through its drones, Israel hopes to buy the friendship of countries such as Mexico (which has bought the Hermes-450 and the Dominator-2 from Israel), Brazil (which has bought the Hermes-450 and Hermes-900 from Israel), Indonesia, and other states that either have strained or no diplomatic relations with Israel by creating mutually beneficial economic ties that might one day lead to stronger diplomatic and political ones.



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Although the Republic of Korea is one of the few states that produces high-quality and innovative UAV systems, South Korea has never exported one of their domestically produced systems. However, despite this fact, Choi Seong-wook, the director of the Korea Aerospace Research Institute has said “by 2023, South Korea should only trail behind the United States and Israel in terms of technological prowess while ranking as the fourth largest supplier of drones as measured in sales.” South Korea and Israel have also partnered together to work on ship-launched reconnaissance UAVs, a move that serves to both fulfill Israel's desire to strengthen foreign alliances through the transfer of technology and South Korea's need to have the technology to deal with potential maritime disputes and conflicts with its neighbors.

Furthermore, South Korea's attitude towards drones demonstrates

its desire to move away from solely basing its foreign policy and international reputation on its conflict with North Korea. While the South Korean military has used drones both for surveillance purposes and to drop propaganda over North Korea and the South Korean government continues to allow the United to station Gray Eagle drones (high range, high altitude drones with the ability to be armed with air to ground Hellfire missiles or Viper Strike guided munitions) in South Korean territory in response to North Korean aggression, the focus of the South Korean government and industry when it comes to drones is less on North Korea and more on improving its international standing and preparing itself for potential conflicts with its other, more technologically advanced neighbors.

CONCLUSION

A state's UAV trade register tells a story beyond that of its imports

and exports. For the United States, it reflects both the stability of American alliances as well as the difficulty the US faces in balancing its security interests with its democratic ideals. For Russia, it shows a state struggling to keep pace with its great power peers and one that, despite Putin's efforts, is losing its former allies to the West or China. Israeli drone exports show a state that both sees technological advancement as part of its national character and one willing to use that same technology to get a foot in the door for new alliances. South Korea's drone ambitions show the state's technological prowess as well as its pivot away from its historical foreign policy focus towards newer threats. In the end, UAV proliferation is unconstrained by international oversight, precedent, or regulations. Drone diplomacy shows what a state is in the dark and which groups it really trusts far more efficiently than its public statements ever could. 🌐



WARMING RELATIONS: PHILIPPINES AND CHINA

BY: JOE PIRES

Rodrigo Duterte is a charming and unique individual in Filipino politics. To start off, he idolizes the infamous dictator Ferdinand Marcos, desiring to give him a hero's burial in Manila. Furthermore, as mayor, he lamented the gang rape and murder of an Australian in the Philippines, all while saying that he wished he was the first to rape her. Even more surprising, he outdid Mugabe's "I am Hitler tenfold" comment by saying "Hitler killed three million Jews. Now there is three million, there's three million drug addicts. There are. I'd be happy to slaughter them." Needless to say, Duterte has proven himself to be radically different from his predecessors.

And after four months of extrajudicial killings, desiring to be the next Hitler, and calling President Barack Obama "a son of a whore," Duterte is outdoing himself yet again; after seventy years of close diplomatic ties with the United States, Duterte is planning to realign the Philippines diplomatically with China.

On October 20, Duterte was at the Grand Hall of the People in Beijing, declaring his intention to disengage with the United States, claiming that "I have separated from them. So I will be dependent on you for all time." The Chinese responded accordingly, pulling out red carpets and welcoming the strongman with a marching band led by a baton-twirling bandmaster, something not given to most world leaders. Within the

next couple of days, the foreign affairs minister, Perfecto Yasay, made some attempt to backpedal, declaring that the US is still the "closest friend" of the Philippines, but the Duterte government wants to break away from a "mindset of dependency and subservience."

These statements have baffled many. Not only do Filipinos hold the US in high regard, but the Philippines and China have not had a good relationship, due to the historical anti-communism in the Filipino government. Not only that, but there have been issues between the Philippines and China over the Scarborough Shoal, inflamed by increasing belligerency by China, which declared the Hague's decision over the shoal (which granted the

interface in Southeast Asia, as well as western reaction to his rule over the Philippines.

Duterte's plan for the Philippines is essentially an expansion of his plans when he was mayor of Davao. During his tenure as mayor (and vice mayor), Duterte engaged in a crackdown on the rampant drug epidemic in Davao, leading to a massive amount of extrajudicial killings. At the same time, Duterte had established a variety of social programs, including a large amount of drug rehabilitation centers. The result has been a massive drop in crime in Davao, at least according to Duterte himself. However, the stats that Duterte likes to use to make that claim have been disputed,

“Davao still has some of the highest violent crime rates in the Philippines.”

Philippines access to blocked-off region) null.

Although highly impulsive, Duterte's unprecedented statements make some sense. The reasoning behind Duterte's desire to realign with the Chinese (as well as the Russians) has to do with the interplay of Chinese

and Davao still has some of the highest violent crime rates in the Philippines. The plan for the whole of the Philippine islands is similar: engage in a crackdown on crime that relies on extrajudicial killings, while at the same time starting social programs and infrastructure projects.

This brings us to Beijing. Over the years, the Chinese government has helped give cheap loans to help developing nations in Southeast Asia and

and investors, the Chinese and the Russians seem like the only source for cheap loans needed for Duterte's infrastructure plans. On top of that, China's acceptance

power over a nation that was once a top US ally in the region.

For Duterte, the deal is a very risky move. Much of Duterte's high approval ratings have been due to his outspokenness. That, coupled with his improvements in infrastructure and social programs could allow him to overcome the initial backlash of a deal with China and lead to lasting popularity in the Philippines, a nation desperate for someone to fix their decades-long issues.

However, this does not seem likely and the deal can easily backfire if things don't entirely go according to plan. If the loans are misused (which seems likely given the corruption and mismanagement in Manila), the lack of other sources of investment could lead to a reduction in GDP growth, or outright recession. This, coupled with Duterte's snubbing of the US, could lead to a backlash that could hamper Duterte's future endeavors.

Given how recent these events are, Duterte has the opportunity to back out of this impulsive deal. China's diplomatic prudence has meant that the Scarborough Shoal hasn't been developed yet. Furthermore, many Filipinos, Duterte included, believe that the shoal is theirs. By accepting any deal that gives the Chinese sovereignty over the Shoal in exchange for fishing rights, Duterte could face a political backlash.

In short, there is a rather good possibility that Duterte gets out of his deals with China as quickly as he got into them. 🌐

“Retraction of investments could send the developing economy into a downward spiral, undoing a decade of economic development.”

Africa develop. The Philippines went a different route, focusing on western investors. The result has been massive growth rates, coupled with massive inequality. Now with Duterte – who came into power partially because of the reaction to the massive inequality and corruption – is starting to scare away investors at an alarming rate. The result could be devastating. With a country that is still dependent on foreign investment to keep its GDP growth rate high, the retraction of investments could send the developing economy into a downward spiral, undoing a decade of economic development.

This predicament leads Duterte to China. After the reaction from western nations

towards authoritarian practices would allow Duterte to have allies that don't complain about his crackdown (which has involved the extrajudicial killings of 3,000 people). In fact, there is a possibility that the Chinese could help him with Duterte's crackdown. So long as he ingratiates himself to Beijing and forgets about the dispute over the South China Sea, cheap loans and enabling allies would be within Duterte's reach.

From Beijing's standpoint, not much is lost. In fact, Beijing stands to gain influence in a region thought impossible. By gaining influence in the Philippines, Beijing not only secures a regional power in Southeast Asia, but they also win a symbolic victory against the United States by gaining



The End of Chavismo?

BY: NICHOLAS PALOMBI

After seventeen years of Chavismo policies, the people of Venezuela seem to have had enough. In December of 2015, the opposition Democratic Unity coalition won a majority in the National Assembly, the legislative body, for the first time since Hugo Chavez took power. This political change reflects the increasing severity of Venezuela's economic crisis, but will it actually bring about change? Since 2014, Venezuela has been sliding deeper and deeper into recession. High unemployment, astronomical inflation, and shortages of basic goods have become the norm in what used to be Latin America's most politically and economically stable country. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has accused the opposition and foreign influences, mainly US imperialists, of waging an economic war against his Bolivarian Revolution. Mr. Maduro has used his control of the government to undermine

opposition efforts to oust him from power or alter his economic policies, exacerbating tensions in the country. But how did we get here?

In 1999, Hugo Chavez ascended to the Venezuelan presidency after his failed coup attempt in the early 1990s. His platform advocated an end to corruption, increased spending on social programs, and redistribution of the country's oil wealth. These proposals proved very popular with ordinary Venezuelans. With overwhelming public support, Chavez drafted a new constitution, essentially giving him control over the three branches of government and calling for new elections in 2000. Chavez and his United Socialist Party of Venezuela won elections by a landslide, thus institutionalizing his regime and solidifying its power.

In 2003, Chavez initiated a series of interventionist measures in the economy with the intention

of preventing capital flight. These measures included price and currency exchange controls, and the expropriation of key industries. The idea was to make essential goods affordable for Venezuela's poor. The prices of basic goods such as sugar, milk, rice, and flour were capped. Many domestic producers complained that the new regulations forced them to operate at a loss. Some even refused to provide goods for the government-run stores where the price-controlled goods were sold. Others simply decided to stop producing these goods. The result was that the country became even more reliant on imports.

These normally economically infeasible policies were made possible by booming oil revenue in the early 2000s. Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world with profits from the industry making up 96% of its export revenue and half of its federal budget. When crude oil

prices were above \$100 per barrel, the Chavez government could afford to import luxury and basic goods and to spend lavishly on social welfare programs. However, the fall in crude oil prices has led to soaring budget deficits as the economic reality of heavy-handed government intervention became apparent. With crude oil prices falling as low as \$28 per barrel earlier this year, the price and exchange rate control policies continued by the Maduro administration have seriously undermined economic stability. The outcome has been recession and inflation, which was 180% in 2015 and is estimated to be above 500% for 2016.

These conditions have led to shortages of basic goods and medicines and the proliferation of a black market in Venezuela. Images and videos have littered social media and new outlets of Venezuelans standing in line for hours to hopefully receive their rations of basic goods. That is, of course, if the supermarket still has any supplies. In response, Mr. Maduro decreed a two-month stage of emergency in order to address the economic crisis. This situation gives the executive extra powers, including the authority to impose more stringent security measures. Though blocked by the opposition National Assembly, the Supreme Court overruled the legislature and approved the state of emergency.

In an attempt to combat shortages, Mr. Maduro used his newly attained powers to issue an official decree giving the army the authority to monitor food

processing plants and to coordinate the production and distribution of goods. Sadly, the army can't defend against incompetent economic policy and these measures will make little difference.

Since gaining control of the National Assembly in December 2015 the opposition has been trying, rather unsuccessfully, to unseat Mr. Maduro from power. The Maduro administration and its supporters in all branches of government have been actively thwarting attempts to reform the government, going so far as to jail opposition politicians. Government obstruction began in

“ High unemployment, astronomical inflation, and shortages of basic goods have become the norm.”

January of 2015 when the Supreme Court of Venezuela alleged that three opposition lawmakers had won their seats through fraudulent activities and ordered they not be sworn into office. By removing these three lawmakers, the opposition fell just short of a supermajority in the National Assembly. This would have allowed them to draft a new constitution and remove Mr. Maduro.

As a result, the opposition is attempting to fulfill constitutional requirements to hold a recall

referendum that would end Mr. Maduro's term in 2016 or early 2017. The first phase, completed by the opposition in May of this year, requires submitting a petition requesting a recall referendum. The petition received 1.85 million signatures, far more than required 200,000, and was submitted to the National Electoral Council. The NEC, which is also full of Maduro supporters, took its time verifying the signatures, invalidating hundreds of thousands of them, and in mid-August informed the opposition it could proceed to the second step in late October. The

next step requires the opposition to collect 4 million signatures, roughly 20% of the electorate, in favor of the referendum. If this step is achieved, the final phase is a referendum in which Venezuelans would choose to remove Mr. Maduro or keep him in power.

Current polls suggest that Maduro would be removed, which explains why the NEC and all other branches of the government are trying to slow down the process. Timing is key. If Maduro is removed before the first half of his

term, January 10 of next year, fresh elections would be held and the opposition would surely win. If the referendum is held after January 10, then Mr. Maduro's Vice-President and staunch supporter Aristobulo Isturiz will serve out the rest of the term until 2019.

As of October 21st, 2016, however, the issue of timing has become irrelevant. The NEC announced a suspension of the recall referendum for six months, alleging fraud by opposition politicians. The Organization of American States and the Venezuelan opposition have condemned the move claiming that the government is undermining the constitution in an effort to maintain control. Mr. Maduro has announced surprise talks with the opposition mediated by the Vatican to address issues facing the country. It is unlikely that these talks will bear fruit, though. The NEC's unconstitutional decision has only solidified the fears of opposition politicians and ordinary Venezuelans: Mr. Maduro's increasingly authoritarian United Socialist Party of Venezuela isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

In light of the deepening political crisis, there is one new positive development in Venezuela. The government has begun to roll back its price control policies. What began as an experiment in a western Zulia state, which borders Colombia, has been extended to six other border states. Local government officials have even hinted that the new policy could even be extended to the capital Caracas.



FEDERICO PARRA, AFP

A Venezuelan protests the growing economic crisis with a shirt that says "No hay comida" or "There is no food."

This experiment has provided an immediate change with positive and negative aspects for ordinary Venezuelans. Supermarkets that were once empty have shelves filled with food and other goods. The downside is that these goods are tremendously expensive, as high as 20 times the regulated price. For example, a 2-pound bag of rice that sells for 12 cents under price controls elsewhere sells for \$2; and a 2-pound bag of sugar capped at 40 been no official reports from the Maduro administration, it is likely that price controls will be removed or significantly scaled back across the country.

However, this will be the only change that will come. The IMF estimates that inflation in 2017 could be as high as 1700%.

The recession will continue into its fourth cents sells for \$3.50. While the financial strain has increased, many people are happy that they simply have the ability to buy food. Although there have year with GDP contracting by more than 10%. Mr. Maduro and his socialist party will control Venezuela for the foreseeable future. And as the government limps along down a path of authoritarianism, another certainty is that ordinary Venezuelans will suffer the consequences of economic incompetency and political gridlock. There is a rather bleak outlook for Venezuela as Chavismo is on the way out with an authoritarian Madurismo on the rise. 🇻🇪

Be Wise, Condomise

The Church's Moral Struggle

In 1963, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council – dubbed Vatican II in pop culture – to re-evaluate Church teachings in light of an increasingly secular and progressive world. Among its component parts was the Birth Control Commission, which – in a strident break with Church tradition – concluded that the ban on contraception lacked a valid theological foundation and ought to be discarded. In spite of the commission's majority recommendation, Pope Paul IV controversially decided to maintain the Church's austere and arguably archaic position on birth control, much to the dismay of liberal Catholics worldwide. Barely more than a decade later, the HIV/AIDS epidemic reared its ugly head, most prominently in sub-Saharan Africa. Although the Vatican initially responded by unequivocally reaffirming its ban on condoms, Pope Francis and his predecessor,

Pope Benedict XVI, have both acknowledged that condoms are not an absolute evil – specifically stating that condoms may be used, but only for the explicit purpose of preventing the transmission of STDs – all the while maintaining that they are an ineffective – potentially even immoral – solution to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Given the recently evolving nature of this debate, it seems appropriate for the Church to once again consider whether condoms are broadly permissible to alleviate sub-Saharan Africa's HIV crisis.

Before continuing this investigation, it is important to state that latex condoms work. This reminder might seem needless, but Church leaders have often claimed that condoms promote the spread of HIV/AIDS either by encouraging sexual promiscuity or merely because HIV is so miniscule that it slips through latex. Of course, the latter claim is nonsense,

BY: PAT WILSON

but the former claim actually offers a degree of intellectual promise. Although condoms will always inhibit the transfer of sexually-transmitted diseases, they remove barriers to sexual intercourse. If eliminating these barriers encourages sexual activity enough to outweigh the benefits of using condoms in unique sex acts, then widespread acceptance of condoms would increase the incidence of HIV/AIDS at a macro-scale.

Academics have explored this possibility. Their findings? The incidence of HIV infection is 80 to 90 percent lower amongst individuals who report regular condom use. One relevant factor might cloud these results. Specifically, individuals who regularly use condoms may be less promiscuous as a group – making condoms seem more effective than they actually are. However, the possibility that condom users are less promiscuous undermines

the argument that contraception promotes sexual promiscuity. Regardless of whether this prospect reflects reality, it remains true that widespread condom use prevents the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In spite of this fact, condom use is sparse in sub-Saharan Africa – the region most afflicted by HIV. For instance, in the Vhembe District of South Africa's Limpopo province, where HIV prevalence nears 18 percent, 71 percent of sexually active adults report inconsistent or no condom use. In the rural, Eastern Cape region of South Africa, only 16 percent of men report regular condom use.

There are several viable explanations for why condom use is so low. The first, and ostensibly most reasonable, is that condoms simply are not available. This idea squares with reality. In South Africa, for instance, 27.9 condoms are distributed per male aged 15 or older, far short of the 50 condoms per male target. Eliminating this shortage might seem to solve the problem, but there's no association between condom distribution and HIV prevalence from one South African district to another. This fact indicates that the availability of condoms matters far less than personal attitudes towards them. Put differently, if everyone actually used condoms, HIV incidence would fall; the problem is that people are simply opposed to doing so. Cultural, religious, and hedonistic motivations primarily account for this aversion. For instance, one study found that 43 percent of men and 35 percent of women believe that couples only

use condoms if they do not trust one another. Additionally, a 2014 Pew Research poll discovered that 15% of South Africans believe that condoms are morally unacceptable. As long as these dangerous beliefs persist, fighting the spread of HIV will be difficult.

Unfortunately, the Vatican has done its best to add fuel to this fire, even advising, “be wise,

fidelity obviously work.

The benefits of condoms, however, are far less clear. Countries with high HIV incidence also tend to report high condom distribution. HIV prevalence in Cote Divoire, Tanzania, Swaziland, and Zambia – where condom usage is not correlated with HIV infection rate – further demonstrate that the impact of pro-contraception programs is

“Although it might seem trivially easy, combatting the spread of HIV really is as easy as ABC”

don't condomise,” as one Catholic publication wrote in Nairobi, Kenya. Church officials have traditionally claimed that condom distribution policies are less effective than the Vatican-endorsed abstinence and fidelity programs. Indeed, there is some truth to this claim. Abstinence and fidelity are closely associated with reductions in HIV incidence. Edward Green, the former director of Harvard's HIV Prevention Project, remarks that “we now see HIV going down in about 8 or 9 countries in Africa and in every case we see a decrease in the proportion of men and women who report having more than one sex partner in the past year.” Abstinence and

either negative or negligible. If, as this information suggests, condoms exacerbate the HIV epidemic, then sub-Saharan Africa has been viciously hoodwinked.

Fortunately, they don't. As Green himself points out, there is also a correlation between the prevalence of mosquito bed nets and malaria, but no one would claim that bed nets promote the spread of disease. It is similarly natural that condom distribution is high in the countries suffering most from HIV. Why? Because these countries need condoms the most. In this respect, it makes no more sense to say that pro-condom public health programs exacerbate the spread of

HIV than it does to say that mosquito bed nets aggravate the transmission of malaria.

Studies demonstrating the impotence of condom distribution programs also tend to employ woefully inaccurate measurement tools. For example, the aforementioned study that examined the impact of condom distribution in Cote Divoire, Tanzania, Swaziland, and Zambia, looks at self-reported condom usage based on “door-to-door” national surveys. This methodology seems perfectly reasonable, but “door-to-door” censuses tend to vastly overestimate the prevalence of condom usage when compared to anonymous surveys. The British Royal Society investigated this phenomenon in South Africa in an effort to determine the genuine efficacy of condom distribution. Their conclusion? Once one controls for over-reporting, condom use most significantly explains South Africa’s decline in HIV incidence. Therefore, condom distribution programs are clearly promising. Public figures and religious organizations alike must recognize this fact and cooperatively combat negative attitudes towards their implementation.

However, condom distribution is not the only effective way to combat the spread of HIV; it isn’t even the best way. In fact, the most impactful programs take religious and practical angles, advocating abstinence, fidelity, and condom usage. AIDS workers have

“ As long as Western liberals value sexual freedom and the Vatican cares for ancient dogma more than they desire a practical solution to the HIV epidemic, progress will be slow.

affectionately dubbed this approach the ABCs – or Abstinence, Be Faithful, Condomise. Although it might seem trivially easy, combatting the spread of HIV really is as easy as ABC. For example, this policy sparked an over 50 percent reduction in Uganda’s HIV incidence rate over the course of six short years, and it has borne similar success elsewhere. Nevertheless, secular concerns – primarily provoked by international aid organizations – have oftentimes arrested the progress of pro-abstinence and monogamy programs.

All of this information leaves us at a quite frustrating juncture. Not only do world leaders know what, where, and how HIV operates, they know how to fight it, too. Unfortunately, as long as Western liberals value sexual freedom and the Vatican cares for ancient dogma more than they desire a practical solution to the HIV epidemic, progress will be slow. This fact means that the next step forward in ridding sub-Saharan Africa of HIV is not political; it’s ideological. The Vatican has taken a small step forward in acknowledging that condoms may be used for the sole purpose of preventing the transfer of STDs. Sadly, most people do not know that they are HIV positive – meaning that this doctrinal amendment is irrelevant for most of those suffering from HIV. The Church’s endemic opposition to condom distribution programs has further limited progress on this front.

Quite simply, minor amendments to Church doctrine are insufficient to combat the spread of HIV. Limiting the epidemic requires not only an admission that condoms are ethically permissible, but also support for condom distribution programs. Starting with Paul IV, past popes have missed the opportunity to take this step forward; Francis should do his utmost not to make the same mistake, and tell the people of sub-Saharan Africa: “be wise, condomise.” 🌍



OBAMA’S LEGACY ABROAD

BY: CLAIRE REARDON

Eight years ago, President Barack Obama rode into office on a wave of anti-war sentiment, receiving a Nobel Peace Prize on account of his promise to end the two sloppy Middle Eastern wars he inherited from George W. Bush. Today, those wars still exist, and American involvement in the Middle East is more convoluted than when he began.

The focus of Mr. Obama's Middle East foreign policy has often centered around withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan no matter what. In Iraq, this happened quickly; the Obama administration inherited an agreement with the Iraqi government to withdraw troops in December 2011, signed by Mr. Bush with the intent of negotiating a new status of forces agreement afterwards. After the new administration attempted and failed to negotiate the placement of a residual force of up to 5,000 troops, American forces departed, officially ending U.S. operations in Iraq. The situation deteriorated rapidly. Infighting among Sunni and Shi'ite factions threatened the existence of Iraq's precarious new government, and this came to head militarily. As the Islamic State gained traction and Kurdish terrorist attacks increased, monthly civilian deaths climbed from under 500 in 2011 to more than 2,000 in 2014. American troops were deployed again in 2014 to provide air support in the fight against IS. Despite Mr. Obama's promises for "no boots on the ground," ground forces returned to Iraq early this year, many of them on temporary assignment in order for

the number of troops stationed in Iraq to appear low. Currently, there are around 3,000 American troops training Iraqi soldiers to fight the Islamic State and 4,800 assigned to the operation to retake Mosul from IS.

In Afghanistan, Mr. Obama inherited a war of 32,000 troops. During his first term, Mr. Obama initiated a surge in troop levels to 100,000 with the intention of ensuring greater protection for civilians against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. (In 2002, the year after the Taliban was deposed by the Bush administration, only 10,000 U.S. troops and 5,000 troops from other countries remained for a population of 20 million Afghans. The result was political turmoil and a Taliban

comeback.) Over the next several years, however, troops faced greater restrictions on their involvement, shifting into training and advisory roles that stayed out of conflicts and could only use air power in the presence of designated terrorists, to save imperiled NATO troops, or if strategic collapse were imminent

(such as if a major city were about to be taken by the enemy). As a consequence, yearly deaths of civilians and Afghan soldiers have been on the rise since 2009, reaching nearly 6,000 this year. In 2014, Mr. Obama unilaterally and seemingly randomly declared the war over – unfortunately, the Taliban and al-Qaeda disagreed, and the U.S. had to keep fighting. The war in Afghanistan became the longest in U.S. history in June 2010, and Mr. Obama is the only president to serve two full terms of constant war. He announced in July that instead of his planned reduction to 5,500, 8,400 troops will remain in Afghanistan in 2017. This doesn't include the 26,000 currently labeled as "military contractors" in

order to keep the troop number artificially low.

Not only has Mr. Obama inherited war; he has also become enmeshed in conflicts stemming from the Arab Spring, starting with the Libyan Civil War. 2011 protests against the Muammar Qaddafi's autocratic government in Benghazi

soon transformed into widespread rebellion. Like the Saddam Hussein who inspired America's 2003 invasion of Iraq, Qaddafi was internationally criticized for a dictatorship that violated human rights of his country's citizens, suppressed political opponents, and sponsored terrorism. A French- and British-led NATO invasion aimed at protecting Libyan civilians threatened by government forces was launched in fulfillment of a Security Council resolution; this soon mutated into an operation to depose Qaddafi. After Qaddafi's death in October 2011, the Security Council voted to end NATO's involvement by the end of the month, ignoring the need to assist in the institution of a new stable government. None of the states that participated in the military intervention were willing to assume authority for Libya's nation-building, least of all Obama's United States. This illustrates America's historical attraction to toppling evil dictators coupled with an abhorrence at sticking around for the results (because nation-building gives off a colonialistic connotation and lacks a clear enemy around which to rally). As was the case with Iraq, rival militias feuded for power, allowing IS to fill the political vacuum. Libya descended into its ongoing second civil war in 2014.

Regarding the Syrian Civil War, Mr. Obama has been reluctant to exercise the military clout he wields

as Commander in Chief because he's maintained a focus on only interfering in situations that pose a direct and immediate security threat to the U.S. Humanitarian disasters are no exception. This is a policy over which he and the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power (who has written a book about America's repeated reluctance to condemn and take military action over humanitarian crises) reportedly frequently come to heads. Preferring to employ the threat of U.S. military action over the action itself, Mr. Obama attracted international criticism in the aftermath of 2013 government sarin nerve-gas attacks that killed more than 1,000 civilians outside Damascus. This followed his 2012 "red line" promise – that if President Bashar al Assad were to use chemical weapons against Syrians,

“Obama's hands-off approach was based on the assumption that the situation in Syria wouldn't affect U.S. core interests”

the U.S. would have no choice but to invade. Mr. Obama's reaction to the incident consisted of rejecting a plan to support Syrian rebel groups in favor of one designating that Syria's ally Russia obtain Assad's chemical weapons. Mr. Obama's hands-off approach was based on the assumption that the situation in Syria wouldn't affect U.S. core interests; what he perhaps didn't foresee was the civil war leading an accelerated expansion of IS, as well as a massive flood of refugees – both of which have destabilized American allies in the Middle East and Europe. Two years later after the first chemical attack, his administration had no alternative but to accept the former proposition and arm rebel groups in order to counter IS. This strategy has proved moderately effective when it comes to the Kurds, and as of April, there were 300 American ground troops fighting IS alongside these rebels in Syria.

The same selective interventionism that discouraged Mr. Obama from humanitarian intervention in Syria has realized one of the biggest diplomatic breakthroughs of the decade – the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal. He has stood out among his predecessors for emphasizing the world's institutions (NATO, the UN, the IMF) as the means to expedite a trending increase global stability. As such, he's focused on addressing issues that pose long-term threats to these organizations and international security, such

“The war in Afghanistan became the longest in U.S. history in June 2010”

as climate change and a nuclear Iran. The agreement was one of the biggest gambles of Mr. Obama's presidency, with terms as follows: The U.S. and its allies will lift all nuclear-related sanctions upon Iran's completion of sacrificing two thirds of its ability to enrich uranium, placing all but 6,000 of its centrifuges in storage monitored by the IAEA, exporting all by 300 kilograms of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium, converting the secret Fordow enrichment plant to a research center, rebuilding the Arak heavy water plant so as to remove its capacity to produce weapons-grade plutonium, and allowing IAEA inspectors more power to monitor nuclear activity. After complying, Iran will still face a five-year UN arms embargo and eight years of restrictions on its ballistic missile program. Mr. Obama's opposition in Congress has often cited concerns about the precedent set by not imposing repercussions on Iran for violating Security Council resolutions, as well as the failure to address Iran's sponsorship of terrorism. Israel and the Arab petro-monarchies with which America is allied see the deal as a breach of the U.S. security guarantee. But should Iran comply with the terms, it will be placed a year away from the capacity to build a nuclear bomb (rather than the four months it faced at the deal's signing), rendering this one of the most impressive diplomatic feats of recent years.

Little-known, however, is the Mr. Obama's recent military embroilment in yet another Middle Eastern conflict, the Yemen war.

This began in 2014, when the Houthi rebel group in Yemen took control of the capital and, with the aid of military deserters, ousted the U.S.-backed government. (The Houthis are Shi'ites that have been in conflict with the government on and off since 2004 and receive military support from Iran.) As the Houthis took over more of the nation, Yemen descended into chaos, and the U.S. pulled out its Special Operations troops that had been advising the Yemeni military. Consequently, the al-Qaeda branch in Yemen—on whom the U.S. has been conducting drone operations for years—was able to strengthen its grip, and in 2015, the Obama administration led the United States in joining Saudi Arabia's military campaign against the Houthis, including refueling Saudi warplanes and providing airstrike targeting intelligence. Despite condemnation the Saudi forces have received regarding the use of weapons most of the world has banned and the bombing of hospitals, the State Department has been approving weaponry sales and in May, the deployment of American ground forces. The conflict is ongoing.

But more than anything else, Mr. Obama's biggest legacy in the Middle East lies in the expansion of drone strikes. In May 2011, the Obama administration conducted a successful operation to kill al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, in which drones were utilized to spy on his house in Pakistan. This has become the standard for drone usage regarding terrorists, a system built almost entirely by President

Obama. Former President George W. Bush approved around 50 drone strikes that killed 296 terrorists and 195 civilians in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia. Since taking office, Mr. Obama has expanded the program to include Afghanistan and personally overseen the list of strikes. Data on the results of these is heavily debated; the government conservatively estimates that from 2009 through 2015, 473 strikes killed between 2,372 and 2,581 combatants and 64-116 noncombatants, while London's Bureau of Investigative Journalism believes the latter range is closer to 380-801. While the death toll of noncombatants has declined over time due to more accurate drone technology, the droning policy itself is indiscriminate—the New York Times reported that the U.S. “in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants,” unless specific evidences proves otherwise posthumously. This policy has attracted international revile due to high-profile killings including those of thirteen wedding guests in Yemen in 2013 and two development workers kidnapped by al-Qaeda in 2015. Additionally, by conducting strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia, Mr. Obama has broken peacetime laws with these states, which justify killing only when necessary to save a life. Mr. Obama's partiality toward drone strikes has created to an even more “out of sight, out of mind” disposition in Middle Eastern policy than the conspicuous traditional wars waged by his predecessor.

What a mess we are in. 🌍

Affirmative action policies in Malaysia lead to massive brain drain

The New Economic Policy (NEP) benefits the racial majority

BY: MICHELLE WONG

The term “affirmative action” usually calls to mind policies targeted towards helping minorities and underrepresented groups achieve equality in contemporary society. This refers to affirmative action in the United States of America. Affirmative action was first introduced by John F. Kennedy in 1961, with an executive order stating that government contractors “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.” The most common affirmative action policies in the United States focus on employment and education. In terms of education efforts, affirmative action refers to admission policies that attempt to provide qualified minorities with equal access to education. While one can debate indefinitely about the many pros

and cons of affirmative action in the United States; we cannot deny it benefits minorities in an attempt to foster equal opportunity for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups that have faced racial and gender discrimination in the past.

In contrast, affirmative action policies in Malaysia benefit the racial majority. Malaysia's population comprises of three main ethnic groups – Bumiputra, Chinese, and Indian. Currently, Bumiputras represent 69% of the population whereas Chinese and Indians comprise of 23% and 7%, respectively. Bumiputra means “sons of the soil” and refers to the Malays and indigenous groups hailing from the island of Borneo. The birth of affirmative action in Malaysia can be traced back to the British colonial period, when Malaysia was under British colonial rule and the British were accused of favoring Chinese and Indians

over Malays in the economy. This alleged discrimination led to the deadly racial riots of 1969, when racial tensions between Malays and Chinese had risen so high that mobs burned Chinese shops, killing hundreds of citizens. In response, the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, targeted towards the Bumiputra ethnic group for elevation in public life. Officially, the program had objectives of eradicating overall poverty as well as reducing and eliminating racial identification among socioeconomic status and geographical location.

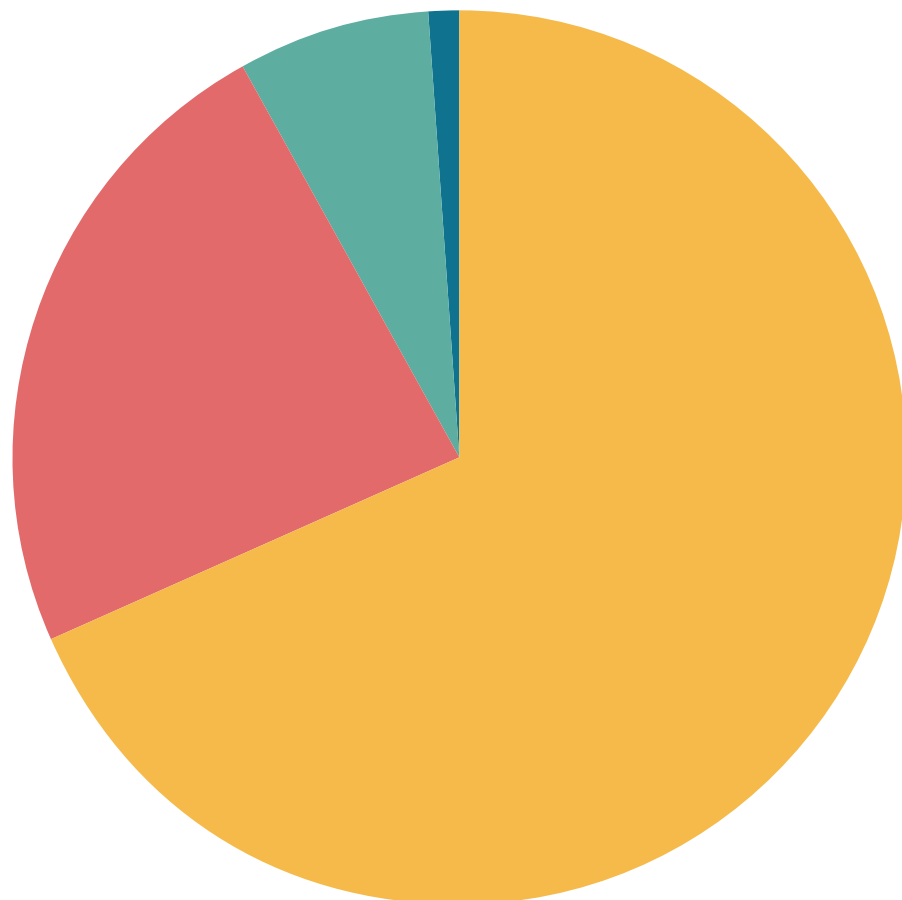
Chief among controversial NEP policies included preferential treatment for Bumiputras in public university admissions and the economy or job market. Many government-funded public universities are believed to reserve a 70% quota for Bumiputras, while around 85% of public servants are Bumiputra and many

high-level government jobs are reserved for those of Bumiputra status. By 1990, a target was set by the NEP to achieve 30% of Bumiputra-held national equity; this led to a requirement that all initial public offerings (IPOs) reserve 30% of total shares for Bumiputra investors. In addition, Bumiputras receive a 5-15% rebate on new housing developments and better home mortgage rates. Many Malaysians argue that the NEP disproportionately benefits Bumiputras while leaving other underprivileged ethnicities unaided. With the preferential treatment for Bumiputra students, many Chinese and Indian students fail to secure

the resources and help needed to advance their education, as the competition within the non-Bumiputra pool is much higher for limited resources. Additionally, while many Bumiputras suffering from poverty have since been elevated to a better socioeconomic status with help from the NEP affirmative action policies, Chinese and Indian citizens cannot say the same.

As a result of the implementation of NEP policies, Chinese and Indian citizens are frustrated with being considered as second-class citizens. This has created a racial divide in Malaysia and an “us versus them” attitude that affects Malaysians of all ages

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY ETHNIC GROUP IN 2016



and socioeconomic status, directly opposing the objective of NEP to elimination racial identification. In particular, Malaysian students are extremely dissatisfied with the affirmative action policies in higher education admission, scholarship grants and financial aid awards. Notable examples include the Yayasan overseas scholarship and MARA loan, which are only awarded to those of Bumiputra status. Moreover, the government has recently decreased the amount of general scholarships and loans for tertiary education, especially overseas education, thus increasing competition among non-Bumiputra students for the remaining awards. The NEP can also be claimed to facilitate entitlement and dependency among Bumiputra students. After decades of affirmative action, some students may have started to think they “deserve it” instead of “earned it”. Bumiputra students may also fail to put sufficient effort into their studies as they take for granted their admittance into public universities and access to financial aid.

With the 70% Bumiputra admission quota in public universities and shortage of financial aid, students of means often choose to attend private universities or pursue their

- Bumiputra 69%
- Chinese 23%
- Indians 7%
- Others 1%

education overseas. Students who do not receive financial aid from the government or Malaysian organizations do not have a bond binding them to a career or job in Malaysia so they retain their freedom to choose career paths in other countries. Many students who leave the country do not return if they can help it. Disregarding the legal bond, students do not feel an emotional attachment or loyalty to the

that an estimated 1 million highly-educated Malaysians had left the country. This number is substantial, considering Malaysia’s population is estimated around 30 million. Ethnic Chinese and Indian Malaysians were overrepresented in this statistic. The majority of emigrants cited “social injustice” as their reason for leaving. It shouldn’t come as a surprise that skilled Malaysians felt they

these are specifically the kind of people Malaysia needs to advance. In addition, increasing brain drain causes investors to lose faith in Malaysia’s investment opportunities as economic growth slows down.

Furthermore, the lack of incentives to study and work hard create an increasing skill gap between Bumiputra and non-Bumiputra citizens in Malaysia as Bumiputras develop a sense of entitlement to their privileges. Taking into account Malaysia’s increasing brain drain, the country suffers from a decreasing quality in human capital as Bumiputra citizens may never realize their full potential. Many Bumiputra-held companies are wholly dependent on government contracts to stay afloat while government-linked companies (GLCs) control dominate the banking, finance, oil and gas sector and much more. This rise of nepotism has allowed GLCs to stifle competition within these industries and steered the economy towards a decrease in private investment.

While the majority of Malaysians, including those of Bumiputra status, argue for a race-blind affirmative action policy that benefits the truly underprivileged, the government has yet to make this reform. Facing heavy pressure from the Bumiputra elite who fear the loss of their preferential treatment, the current governing body also fears the loss of majority Bumiputra votes in the next general election, should they revise the NEP to a merit-based policy. 🌐

“ Students do not feel an emotional attachment or loyalty to the country that failed to offer them the opportunities they earned.”

country that failed to offer them the opportunities they earned. Despite earning excellent scores in exams, the lack of merit-based scholarships and financial aid prohibit high-achieving students to realize their full potential through higher education. In this aspect, the NEP has undoubtedly led Malaysia towards brain drain as students seek out better opportunities abroad where they will not experience this sort of racial discrimination within their schools and workplaces.

In a study by the World Bank in 2010, it was reported

would be better appreciated elsewhere if their own country instated policies to sabotage their warranted advancement. Many Malaysians migrate to Singapore and Australia, where no such affirmative action policies benefitting the racial majority exist. Looking at the prosperity of Singapore, where meritocracy is rampant, one cannot deny that qualified and skilled citizens should be awarded the opportunities they deserve, regardless of racial ethnicity. As Malaysia loses out on skilled human capital, this hurts economic growth because

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