



THE CONSUL

SPRING 2017

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Dear Reader of *The Consul*,

I am honored 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 the featured topic of this Spring 2017 issue: Populism. It is the political movement that is sweeping through the Western world after wreaking havoc in South America over the past two decades, and it shows no sign of slowing down. From the unexpected Brexit results and US election of Donald Trump, populism is rearing its head in a major way.

In addition to this delve into Populism; The Consul staff investigated political upheaval in South Korea, the UN Human Rights Council, and Claire Reardon discussed her takeaways from her trip to Cuba. We strive to provide our readers with diverse perspectives on a diverse range of topics, and I am incredibly proud of our efforts this season.

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 fresh content on their personalized blogs.

It has been my honor and privilege to work with the talented writing and layout staff of *The Consul*, and I could not be more proud of this issue and my team.

Thank you, and enjoy *The Consul*!

Jake Cohen
Editor-in-Chief

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SEASON IN REVIEW

december

On December 13th, Syria's Assad regime took back the city of Aleppo from rebel groups that had been holding the city for the past four years, marking a turning point in the Syrian conflict.



AP PHOTO

On December 19th, a truck plowed through a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, killing 12 and injuring dozens. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.



AP PHOTO

Amidst tensions surrounding NATO-member Turkey's relations with Russia, the Russian ambassador to Turkey, Andrei Karlov, was fatally shot on December 19th in an art gallery in Ankara, Turkey.

january

On January 1st, an attack in a nightclub left at least 39 dead in Istanbul, Turkey. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.



SEDAT SUNA/EPA

On January 5th, U.S. intelligence agencies released declassified details on Russian efforts to interfere with the recent U.S. presidential election. U.S. president Donald Trump denounced the findings and Russian president Vladimir Putin denied claims of interference.



CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



AP PHOTO

On January 27th, U.S. president Donald Trump signed an executive order limiting refugees and immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries and prioritizing vetting of Christian refugees, sparking controversy and backlash.

february

On February 4th, the United States sanctioned Iran after a recent ballistic missile test. The sanctions target 13 people and 12 companies. Iran vowed to impose reciprocal measures, calling the threats from "an inexperienced person" (referring to U.S. President Donald Trump) useless.



AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO

On February 13th, Kim Jong-nam, the eldest son of former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and half-brother of current leader Kim Jong-un, was assassinated in a Malaysian airport when two women reportedly poisoned him. The women used VX nerve agent, a toxin used in chemical warfare.

SEASON IN REVIEW

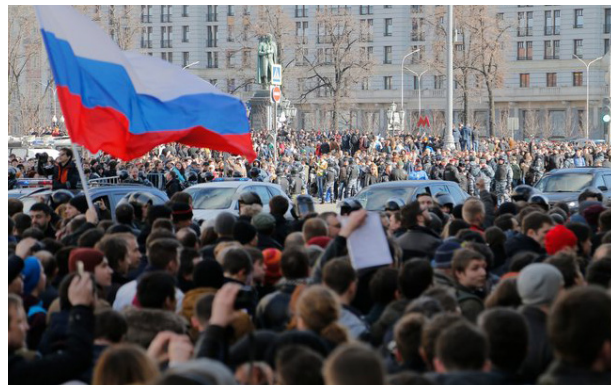
march

On **March 22**, an attacker drove a vehicle into pedestrians as well as the **House of Parliament in London**, then stabbed a police officer. **At least four people died**, including the attacker.



TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS

On **March 26th**, anti-corruption protests took place in nearly **100 cities across Russia** - the largest public demonstrations in years. Authorities detained hundreds of people, including activist Alexei Navalny.



MAXIM SHIPENKOV/EPA

The United Kingdom formally notified the European Council on **March 29th** that it would be **withdrawing from the European Union** and the European Atomic Energy Community. Official negotiations and steps forward have not yet been finalized.

april

On **April 7th**, the **United States launched 60 cruise missiles** at the Ash Sha'irat air base in **Syria**. The attack was in response to a toxic gas attack allegedly by Syrian warplanes that killed at least 83 people in rebel-held Khan Shaykhun on April 4th.



AP PHOTO

North Korea launched a missile on **April 16th** that **blew up** immediately after launch, hours before talks in South Korea about the arms program.

AN AMERICAN IN HAVANA

BY: CLAIRE REARDON

With the gradual normalization of American relations with Cuba, a limited number of U.S.-Cuba commercial air flights are becoming available. As the island nation becomes more open to the outside world, my brothers and I took it upon ourselves to hop on one to Havana for a look inside one of the world's last surviving communist countries.

Although the economic embargo doesn't stand as it once did, travel

to Cuba from the U.S. for tourism remains prohibited. So, my brothers and I prepared an ironclad case for why we were going for "educational" and "people to people" purposes. I arrived at the Cuban visa station in Miami equipped with every essay I'd written for a Spanish class since starting school at Penn, my sixteen-page Huntsman seminar term paper on the economic effects of Fidel Castro's agricultural reforms, The Consul's fall print issue, and mental answers to every question

I could be thrown. The agent only nonchalantly glanced at my passport before stamping my visa. That was how I discovered that basically any American can go to Cuba.

The José Martí International Airport was small, empty, and quiet. The only sight ahead was a line of no-nonsense, seemingly Soviet-era immigration desks, each labeled with one numeral on a yellow background, illuminated by an eerily dim bulb, and manned by a stony-faced Cuban.

Microphone-shaped cameras took photos of the entrants.

A throng of drivers was waiting outside security. We found ours and ran through the tropical rain to his 1957 Chevrolet. “¡Vamos, vamos!” He propped open the trunk to throw in our luggage, and then we were off.

I instinctively reached for a seatbelt, but my hand met empty space. My brother, intending to roll down his window, started twisted the wrong lever and instead nearly opened his door into oncoming traffic. Glancing at the other lanes, I noticed clouds of dark smoke left in the wake of vehicles that had overtaken ours. With what seemed like six inches of fog on the windshield and two inches of car between us and the ground, we all hoped Alexi was a good driver. He told us he was proud that the car was all partes originales. Most Cuban cars are so old that when their parts stop working, the owners have to implant the components of other old cars.

There are two truths about Cuba that an alert traveler finds impossible to overlook: 1. Cuba is communist, with a cult of personality centered around Fidel Castro, and 2. Cuba is poor, with the country’s only substantial source of income lying in tourism.

The signs of communism began popping up as early as the ride home from the airport. I watched signs reading “Siempre hasta la victoria,” “Más socialismo,” “Somos Fidel: Aniversario 75 de la revolución,” and “Fidel siempre vivirá en nosotros” whip by on the highway and peek out

from Havana’s alcoves. Mostly hand-painted, they underscore the country’s broad lack of commercialization. Stores are state-run and for the most part, labeled with only their purpose on a simple sign or handwritten on the cement wall: farmacia, centro de servicios eléctricos, panadería. There are no brands; in a grocery store, for example, I saw only two options for oil: light or dark, with all bottles unlabeled and the exact same size. Havana is also completely devoid of advertisements. I watched a baseball game on television for an hour and a half one night without the interruption of a single commercial. Though political propaganda like the highway billboards is a different story – as the nearby propaganda office, open at 7:00 pm on a Saturday, clearly communicated.

Perhaps most notable is the city’s police and army presence. Several

times my brothers and I passed army tanks filled with men sporting green military garb and black berets. We didn’t make a habit of starting political conversations, but some of the locals we met were surprisingly open about their opinions. “The government doesn’t help the Cuban people; it just spends its money on weapons,” one told us. “I don’t support the government. 57 years of one president is no good,” said another. Two Cuban guys having drinks with us pointed out that the bar had a flag from every country represented by Havana tourists. “What about the U.S.?” we asked. They hurriedly shushed us. Cubans have to be careful, they explained. If someone says the wrong thing or displays any American symbols, he ends up questioned and jailed.

Linked with Cuban communism is Cuban poverty. Purportedly conditions in Havana are now even worse than usual due to austerity resulting from Venezuela’s economic collapse. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba established a system under which it sent doctors and other professionals to Venezuela in exchange for oil, the excess of which it could sell. Now, Cuba is both receiving less oil and selling it for less money due to declining prices. Recently, the government has taken to lowering energy use and restricting access to gasoline.

But some problems are ongoing. The ration system, under which Cubans receive monthly coupons for small amounts of oil, meat, milk, sugar, rice, and beans, was instituted in 1962 but continues today. All other groceries have to be paid



CLAIRE REARDON

for in Cuban pesos (CUP), of which the average Cuban earns only \$20 US per month.

Here’s where Cuban monetary policy becomes convoluted – the CUP isn’t the only official currency of Cuba. Despite Raúl Castro’s 2013 promise to change things, the island still operates with two monies. The Cuban peso buys mainly food, while the Cuban convertible peso (CUC) is considered the country’s “hard currency” and can buy basically anything. The CUC’s value is pegged to the U.S. dollar and is worth 25 times as much as the CUP. Despite the fact that state employees and most other Cubans are paid in CUP, though, most consumer goods are priced in CUC.

My brothers and I stayed in the extra rooms of a family that by U.S. standards would be considered lower middle class but in Cuba was of the wealthy few. They, as many other Cubans working in tourism, were paid in CUCs, highlighting the fact that in this country, the rich had their own currency and operated in a separate economy from the masses.

But there’s only so far

hard currency can get you in an underdeveloped state. Poking my head into grocery stores, I always encountered more empty shelves than full ones, with entire sections lacking food. Lines for certain goods and services ran down the block. A too-big glass case in the neighborhood electronics store offered a total of three phone cases and two chargers. (Although there’s no need, perhaps, when the city still operates on pay phones.) Walking down the street one day, my brothers and I ran into a giant crowd of people. “What’s happening?” we asked one, to which he responded, “It’s the hotspot.”

Despite staying in Havana’s relatively higher-end Vedado neighborhood, we felt (perhaps illogically) wary walking at night. In Havana, stray cats and dogs roamed. Our path was lit only by the dull, ethereal glow of flickering streetlights – that is, the ones that still worked. We once approached an electric wire that was visibly, audibly, and significantly sparking. As we passed, it fizzled and went out, plunging the block into darkness. I got the sense that it would

be a long time before it was fixed. The city had an infestation of potholes that looked like they’d originated during the Bay of Pigs Invasion and had since filled with discarded trash. The streets were lined with beautiful colonial houses, but almost every one was crumbling down because its owner couldn’t afford the upkeep. Giant piles of stone lay on sidewalks where overhangs and stairways had collapsed. Water cascaded from broken pipes in upper story windows.

The only buildings in one piece, it seemed, were the immaculate state-run hotels and glass-windowed stores in Old Havana. One night our host directed us to a fancy state-run restaurant where we spent twice a normal Cuban’s monthly salary. I left with a bad taste in my mouth that had nothing to do with the food. The rumors were confirmed: The only money to be made in Cuba is made in tourism.

My brothers and I saw this again when our cab driver honked at a passing car. “¿Tu amigo?” my brother asked. “Sí,” he replied. “He’s a doctor, but he needs to work another job because the government salaries are too low. I studied finance, myself.”

So will an increase in American tourism brought about by the lifting of the embargo help ordinary Cubans? Well, perhaps. My brothers and I stayed in a family-run casa particular, rode in unofficial taxis, and ate in paladares, or semi-legal restaurants within Cuban households. Through these institutions, some of the better-off Cubans are able to get away with small-scale capitalism and reap the benefits of tourism. It will be interesting to see what shape the Cubans’ future will take. 🌍

“Cubans have to be careful... If someone says the wrong thing or displays any American symbols, he ends up questioned and jailed.”

PARAGUAY IN CRISIS

Big trouble in a small country

BY: EDUARDO COCCARO

In recent weeks, bloody protests have rocked the streets of Paraguay's capital, Asunción, and its other main cities. To external observers' shock, protesters stormed the national Congress and set it ablaze on March 31, setting off a spike in interest in this landlocked South American country by media vehicles across the world.

To better understand this chain of events, it helps to look back not only at the political developments of recent months but at Paraguay's history as a young democracy still in the process of building strong government institutions.

In 1989, Paraguay emerged from the bloody thirty-year long dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner. As it sought to ensure the country would never again fall back into a repressive regime, the Constituent Assembly made sure to include a single term limit for future presidents in the 1992 Constitution. It made sure to state in the Constitution that this article could only be altered if a referendum were called on reforming the charter. As an added precaution, it also added a caveat stating that such a referendum could not be called on the grounds of altering



presidential term limits alone.

In the following decades, Stroessner's Colorado Party held on firmly to the presidency and the government apparatus in general. It was only in 2008 that it was displaced by the Liberal Party, led by the charismatic "bishop of the poor", Fernando Lugo. However, his challenge to Colorado hegemony ended with his impeachment in 2012, which was denounced by other (primarily left-wing) Latin American governments as a "parliamentary coup." His downfall caused a split in the Liberal Party between factions who were for and against it, ultimately leading to his discontented supporters establishing the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA).

With Mr. Lugo's downfall, Horacio Cartes of the Colorado Party handily won the 2013 presidential elections. As his term limit in 2018 approached, Mr. Cartes was forced to choose a successor within his party—or instead, gamble on a constitutional maneuver that would allow him to contend for a second term. Surprisingly, he found support for this shift among Mr. Lugo's supporters, who see it as a way of opening the door for another presidential term for the deposed former bishop.

In an unusual late night session, the Paraguayan Senate approved an amendment to the Constitution that would allow the president to run for re-election. This set off a spark that resulted in the storming and burning of Congress, with thousands of



EPA

Protestors stormed the national Congress in Paraguay on March 31, 2017, setting the building ablaze in response to recent elections.

protesters taking to the streets. Tensions only heightened when police stormed the PLRA headquarters in downtown Asunción and killed a student organizer. Student protests erupted across the country, rekindling unsolved conflicts from a major student strike in 2015.

President Cartes asked for a "political solution" on April

2, invoking the importance of preventing any further bloodshed. In the lower chamber of Congress, members of his own Colorado party as well as Liberal and PLRA deputies refuse to vote on the Senate's proposal and demand that the president scrap it immediately. As tensions continue to rise, Paraguay's fractured society enters dangerous and unknown territory. 🇵🇷



PARK GEUN-HYE'S

FALL FROM GRACE

After all that she has been through, there is now a nude painting of Park Geun-hye.

After the past three months, the beleaguered Korean president has been through a self-imposed hell. Ever since it was discovered that her closest confidante was engaged in massive corruption, President Park and the rest of South Korean politics has been in upheaval, ranging from mass protests in Seoul to impeachments to a series of arrests, one that could potentially end with the fallen president's arrest. In hindsight, the satirical nude painting of the president seems quaint in comparison.

BACKGROUND

Although the scandal itself is only a few months old, the stage was set decades prior. Primarily, the things that led to this recent scandal started with the rule of Park Chung-hee. In the seventeen years between the coup that gave him control of South Korea to his assassination in 1979, Park ruled the nation with an authoritarian grip on many aspects of South Korean life. On top of that, under his rule, the massive family-owned conglomerates that dominated the country's economy (chaebol) expanded rapidly and developed closer ties with the Park administration.

There is also another figure in the Park administration: the shamanistic cult leader Choi Tae-min. He is mentioned here for two reasons. First is his influence over president Park. Choi acted as a Rasputin-esque figure, accruing massive amounts of wealth and power via Park.

Second, he has a daughter: Choi

Soon-sil, who was a close friend and associate to Park Chung-hee's daughter: Park Geun-hye.

OCTOBER 2016

Investigations began in late October, when investigators speculated that Ms. Choi was creating foundations to enrich herself. In order to get the money to start the foundations, Choi and two staffers for president Park, Ahn Jong-bum and Jeong Ho-sung, extorted around 75 million dollars from various chaebols. On top of that, Choi was able to get the Ewha Womans University to accept her daughter, Chung Yoo-ra.

Questions were raised as to how Choi was able to do these things. Soon after, it became clear that Choi had access to confidential files and government information, as well as a variety of links to the South Korean government. The most important link: Park Geun-hye.

Within the last days of the month, Park had fired officials as a form of damage control, and Choi was being interrogated by the police. Outside the Blue House, thousands were protesting in Seoul, demanding that Park resign from her post.

NOVEMBER 2016

Both the prime minister and the finance minister were implicated in the scandal, so Park nominated replacements: Kim Byong-joon and Yim Jong-yong. It did not help soothe tensions. Two days later, on November 3, Choi was arrested, and Park scheduled a public address, claiming that the scandal was due to her being too trusting of Choi. That too did little to allay the opposition, which wanted to see Park out of the Blue House. They simply believed that Park was trying to do everything to keep power and avoid arrest herself.

Five days later, the opposition was able to convince Park to

withdraw her nominations, as well as give up control of her cabinet. Now, the prime minister, whose role is mainly titular, will now administer the cabinet. To make matters worse, by the middle of the month, Park lost not only much of her power, but also much of her popularity, falling to a shocking 4%. Like many of her predecessors, Park was leaving the office deeply unpopular.

It gets worse. The protests outside of the Blue House have grown exponentially, with tens of thousands calling for Park's resignation. On top of that, prosecutors are now trying to question the embattled president over the corruption scandal. Within a week, they were outright accusing Park of collusion.

Then there's the Viagra and the K-Pop. A small scandal erupted when it was discovered that the office of the president ordered hundreds of Viagra pills. The official explanation was that the pills were used to treat altitude sickness while officials were in high-altitude parts of Africa. The official explanation went further, saying that none of the 360 pills were used. A few days after President Park's office confirmed those claims, members of South Korea's industry and media were being questioned en masse, with some being arrested. One particular case involves Cha Eun-taek, a director of K-Pop music video. Allegedly, he used his connections to Choi to win lucrative contracts.

To cap off a horrible month for Park, the loathed president announced that she is willing to resign. However, it was clear that parliament would not let Park resign. For Park, things were going to get litigious.

DECEMBER 2016

Although a less eventful month, December was even worse for Park, who was now cloistered in the Blue House, once her childhood home, sleepless, friendless, and hopeless. On December 9, parliament voted to impeach Park. A court has six months to determine whether Park should be fired. In that time, premier Hwang (in the end, he was not fired) is now the president. The protestors in Seoul, which was nearing a million strong, celebrated.

By the end of the month, two major trials began. The first was Choi's trial; the second was Park's impeachment trial. Claiming the charges against her to be a "house of cards," Park has yet to show up to any of the proceedings.

By the end of December, prosecutors shifted focus towards the government's relationship with South Korea's chaebols. This started with prosecutors charging a government official with illegally swaying a Samsung merger vote.

BEYOND 2016

To put it mildly, South Korea is in political turmoil. By now, executives in both the government and in business have been questioned and arrested. In mid-January, prosecutors attempted to arrest the head of Samsung, which has also been reeling over issues regarding the Galaxy 7 phones. Unsurprisingly, given how leniently business executives are treated, the arrest warrant was rejected. In contrast, Park's fortunes have soured even more, with some protestors creating a satirical nude portrait of her and Choi.

By now, the main issue revolves around what to do next. It is almost certain that Park will be kicked out of office, and there is a good chance that she will be arrested soon after. She will be the first

The right-wing party that she leads, the Saenuri Party, is in deep trouble for the upcoming 2017 elections. As of right now, the Saenuri Party does not have a majority in parliament, and the scandal surrounding Park has almost guaranteed that the party will have neither parliament nor the presidency. Right now, it seems likely that the center-left Moon Jae-in and the centrist Ahn Cheol-soo. However, there is a chance for the conservative former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to run for the presidency, although the current scandal has damaged the chances for any center-right or right-wing candidate to win the presidency.

Finally, there is the relationship between the government and business, which has always been a sore spot in South Korean society. Although Park's impeachment and the string of arrests are long overdue, it seems unlikely that the corruption plaguing the nation will change due to this. The failure for the head of Samsung to be arrested is probable evidence of this.

Between the cult leaders, corruption, and Viagra, the scandal rocking South Korea has shone a spotlight on the massive corruption plaguing the nation since its inception. Although the most egregious suspects have been dealt with, it remains to be seen as to whether any systemic changes will be made. 🌀



AFP / GETTY IMAGES

A nude painting of Park Geun-hye depicts her sleeping while the Sewol ferry sinks in the background.

POPULISM RISES

Populism as a political ideology has a long and complicated past. While many trace it to the rallying cries of mid-19th Century American politicians, people have used nationalist agendas to play on the public's fears for centuries. Just as South America was swallowed up in the throws of populism last decade, so too does the Western world find itself succumbing to the growing tide of nationalism and populism that resonates with so many frustrated voters. While Donald Trump's election has shaken-up politics around the world, France waits precariously for their nation to possibly follow-suit. The UK's successful referendum to the EU and the victory of Poland's Law and Justice party were early warning signs, and now the world must deal with the repercussions of such a strong and fast-spreading ideology. How can we handle the rise of populism? What lessons can we learn from how it has spread? What does the future hold?

POPULISM: PAST AND FUTURE **PG 18**

Jake Cohen

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Jordan Dewar

POPULISM: PAST AND FUTURE



BY: JAKE COHEN

The Broadway play *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* tells the story of America's seventh president through the lens of an Emo rock star. The show opens with a musical number titled "Populism Yea Yea" in which the cast proclaims "we're gonna take this country back" and "take a stand against the elite." Proudly, the lyrics belt out: "we will eat sweet democracy."

Populism has taken many forms in the past two centuries. While Andrew Jackson was never formally considered a populist in his day, he was the first American president to truly embody the spirit of the movement (a movement that didn't manifest itself by name until half a century later).

A populist envisions a government "of the people, by the people, for the people" in its purest sense – that is to say a government that runs differently than the established norms. Generally speaking, populism is opposed to incumbent members of government, and wealthy people in key points of influence in power. In the United States, populism manifested itself in the platforms of two newcomers to the 2016 Presidential campaign – one who represented each of these two major characteristics of the ideology.

Donald Trump embodied the xenophobic ultra-nationalist populists in the US who were tired of eight years of the Democrats' leadership, while Bernie Sanders led the socialist democrats who despise the wealthy and the financial sector's

connection to politics. The two could not be more different, but under the banner of populism – a movement that promises to fight those in power and bring that power into the hands of the "people" at large – both politicians' messages thrived.

To many in Europe and the United States, the rising populist sentiment (with its accompanying xenophobia, discrimination, and nationalism) is an evil slowly sweeping over Western civilization. From Syriza in Greece to Brexit to Trump's election, western nations are yielding to populist sentiment.

In order to grasp the true repercussions of this political shift, it is crucial to understand the philosophical and historical underpinnings of populism. For a movement that is so difficult to define, it is necessary to contextualize our perceptions and assumptions about populist movements.

POPULISM IN SPIRIT

Andrew Jackson rode his national celebrity and political inexperience directly into the most powerful seat in American government. Waving the banner of a man determined to limit the power of the rich and incumbents over the American people, his inauguration party lasted all night and allowed average Americans the chance to dine and mix with Washington's political elite.

In its most basic sense, populism is the purest philosophic form of democracy. In Jackson's own words, he represented "the planter, the farmer, the mechanic, and the

laborer [...] are the bone and sinew of the country – men who love liberty and desire nothing but equal rights and equal laws." The Presidency was simply the vessel through which he executed the people's will. Taking this philosophy to heart, Jackson worked tirelessly in eight years in office to quash the National Bank, exile Native Americans, and dramatically expand the powers of the executive.

Of course, the history of populism is so much more than a single American president. Latin America, Europe, and the US have all experienced their own waves of populism. While the ideology seems to come and go, each region has its own unique experience and history that mark populism's special place in their development.

POPULISM OUT IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, populism has most frequently taken the form of far-left dictators promising a break from the burden of policies decided by the rich living in population centers. Chavez, Perón, Bachelet, Morales, and dozens more Latin American leaders have marked populist surges across the region in the 1940-50's, 1980's, and again between 2006-2016.

The most recent wave of populist sentiment in Latin America rode a strong message that opposed the widespread government corruption and promised dramatically increased government entitlement programs. In the early 2010's, massive government deficits and unsustainable spending led

to economic decay and calls for reform.

In just over a decade, populism had swept into the region, wreaked havoc on the weak financial and welfare systems in place, and disappeared back into the shadows. Chavez died in Venezuela, Fernández lost power in Argentina, Correa is out in Ecuador, and with them populism has followed.

POPULISM RISING IN EUROPE

On the heels of populism's quick exit in Latin America, the movement has dramatically picked up steam in Europe over the past two years. In Greece, Syriza took power in 2015 – representing far-left populists promising to fight back against creditors while simultaneously refusing to cut any government spending on entitlements. Hungary and Poland saw far-right populists take over in 2015, promising strict nationalist platforms that put the nations at-odds with immigrants as well as foreign powers and institutions.

In the summer of 2016, the UK's referendum to leave the EU shocked the world and led to the takeover of British government by the far-right populist UKIP. In Italy, the Five Star Movement led by Beppe Grillo – an Italian comedian and TV star who now leads his nation's far-right populists – is gaining ground rapidly over the incumbent socialists. Germany is experiencing its own far-right and far-left populist pushes, however the leftists have generally been absorbed into center-left parties while AFD – Alternative for Deutschland – has been steadily



AP PHOTO

French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen leads the Front National Party, a movement based in populism and nationalism.

developing a following on the right.

Perhaps most important for the future of populism in Europe is the French presidential election set for April. Marine Le Pen is the leader of the boastfully xenophobic and ultra-nationalist Front National (FN), and she is considered a guaranteed participant in the two-candidate run-off race in May. Her opponents include a socialist, independent, and moderate conservative who all represent the “establishment” in their own way.

Le Pen has been preaching for years that France is losing its white catholic identity – if this message can ring true in the hearts of enough French people who have been scared by spikes in immigration and terrorism over the

last several years, France may well be the next nation to turn over to the populists in Europe. If France elects Le Pen, this may open the floodgates of populism in Europe.

AMERICAN POPULISM IN PRACTICE

In the last two decades of the 19th century, American farmers banded together to combat the growing influence of northeast and west coast industrial and economic titans. Farmers targeted Wall Street much as left-wing populists target the same financial institutions today, and their frustration with the established economic system led to the official founding of the Populist Party.

In the early 1900’s, populist

movements made their way to the newly industrialized cities in the United States. Thomas E. Watson, a prominent populist figure, blamed immigrants (mainly Italian, Jewish, Polish, and Irish immigrants) for taking the jobs away from the Americans who deserved them. Of course, as a populist leader Watson also blamed the establishment – manufacturers were to blame for hiring cheap laborers, while the government was to blame for allowing the immigrants in the first place.

In just a few decades, American populism had altogether transformed from an anti-wealth stance to a similar xenophobic and protectionist line to that of today’s right-wing populists. Eventually, the Progressive Party absorbed most populist rhetoric and supporters as it pushed its aggressive agenda of change. While the exact form of American populism has changed rather dramatically over the decades, the same tropes remain.

Between the start of the Great Depression and the final days of the Soviet Union, populism was largely absent from American politics. The Depression kept American politics focused on fixing the economy, the Second World War united the nation, and then the Cold War made communism the enemy – leftist populism and communism shared too many characteristics for populism to remain relevant during the Cold War.

When populism returned, we first saw it in the presidential campaigns of “outsiders” promising to push back against established politics – namely, Ross Perot,

Ralph Nader, and John Edwards. In the aftermath of the recession, “Occupy” movements across the country represented a resurgence of left-wing populism. Around the same time, the Tea Party pushed a right-wing populist narrative that rejected the Democratic Party’s recent reforms and increases in Federal power. Both movements never gained much ideological traction until the Sanders and Trump campaigns of this past year.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION

Many who have observed populism’s rise (and fall) around the world ask this one simple question: how can people possibly vote for him/her/them? It is understandable why populist rhetoric and fervor – on both sides of the political spectrum – can sound spiteful and irrational. Why do left-wing populists hate wealth and financial success? Why do right-wing populists hate outsiders and immigrants?

The answer lies in understanding the history of world populism.

Two key threads tie together populist movements throughout the centuries and continents of its spread: scapegoats and simple solutions.

The populist movements of today target immigrants and the wealthy because these simple messages satisfy people’s desire for these two concepts. Populists prey on anger and dissatisfaction within a nation – whether that be manifest in fear, discontent, or hatred.

In Europe, weak economic growth and recovery in the wake of the double-dip recession has left

much of the middle class without work; and in the Mediterranean states this has compounded with their governments’ uncontrollable debts and deficits. In the midst of the Syrian Civil War, millions of refugees have also flowed into Europe over the past six years.

in nearly all Western political dialogue, it seems to resonate with people where more “logical” arguments seem to fall short. In order to confront and combat this trend of populism, it is absolutely critical that we recognize where it is coming from. Populism at it’s

“Two key threads tie together populist movements throughout the centuries and continents of its spread: scapegoats and simple solutions.”

Given this correlation, it is relatively easy for politicians to prey on the fear of terrorism, frustration of economic stagnation, and distrust of politicians who ‘let it all happen.’

Populism in Europe offers simple solutions to this problem by finding simple scapegoats. They offer a narrative that blames the politicians in charge, the wealthy who allegedly hoard the money, and the immigrants who allegedly steal jobs and subvert the nation. If these are the problems, the solutions are just as simple to identify for a populist: elect different politicians, take from the wealthy, and ban/kick out the immigrants.

While this logic contradicts with moral and logical values

core is not a message of hate – it is not designed to only attract hateful people – it cleverly plays on the insecurities and discontent under the guise of nationalist sentiment.

As we enter a new stage of Western politics, we can only hope that populism is a brief wave from which we may earn a quick reprieve. Unfortunately, partisan politics that refuse to compromise and work towards moderate, cooperative agendas will never successfully beat back the winds of populism. While it is easy to simply denounce populist agendas and movements, understanding the history and motives behind these movements will go a long way in eventually reversing this momentum. 🌐



THE WORLD REACTS

MARK WALLHEISER/GETTY IMAGES

Global populism in the era of Trump

BY: KAVI MUNJAL

Donald Trump's presidential campaign in the United States brought the populist movement to headlines across the world. Yet, xenophobic parties have been on the rise across the European continent for some time. Though the migrant crisis has launched their rise, their presence has been increasing for some time. The 1990s saw the beginnings of anti-Islam and anti-integration sentiment, but the parties fell off through

the first decade of the twenty-first century. The start of the euro crisis in 2011 reinvigorated the populist movement in Europe. Populists across Europe began targeting Greece and the EU, drawing on support from voters who felt they were unnecessarily affected by the crisis in the form of tax hikes, benefit cuts and unemployment. When the refugee crisis rose to the forefront of global issues, populists revived the anti-immigration campaign. These

voters, as well as voters in the United States, feel that they are no longer being represented by the governing elites who write the rules. But these voters also like how the parties "say what people think". They complain that refugees seem at times treated better than citizens, and appreciate that the populists are not afraid to echo such a "politically incorrect" sentiment. The result has been the prospect of political overhaul across major Western European countries.

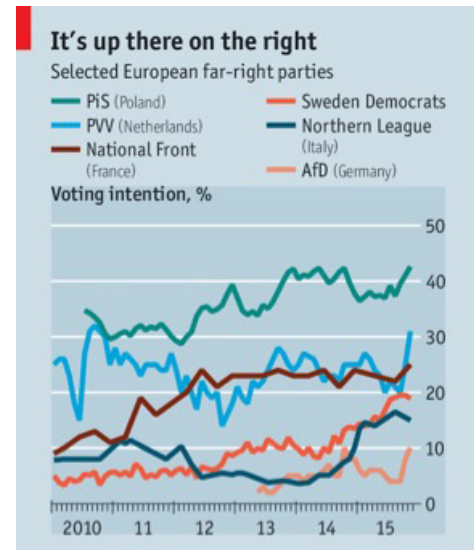
RISE OF POPULISM

As Donald Trump settles into the White House, Europe's populists are more inspired than ever to stand front and center among the usual political powers in their respective countries. The ability to achieve such a position quickly becoming within reach across Western Europe, with one of the most recent examples being the resignation of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi following the rejection of his constitutional referendum. The far-right Northern League and anti-establishment Five Star Movement are among those vying for power, with promises for a referendum to scrap the euro and leave the European Union.

A similar power surge has occurred for many far-right parties across Western Europe, largely in a pushback against immigration. Groups such as the Law and Justice (PiS) party in Poland and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany have benefitted strongly from this venture, and the PVV in the Netherlands has shot up by over ten percent in the polls. The PVV manifesto preaches a "de-Islamification" of the Netherlands, including shutting down all Islamic schools and closing the nation's borders to migrants from Islamic nations. These parties back their opposition to immigrants, and Islam, by combining with left-wing economic policies that favor the older and less-educated. For instance, France's FN supports lowering the retirement age. The FN never held a single seat in parliament until 2012, when it received fourteen percent of the vote. In first-round returns

in 2015, however, the FN snagged nearly 28 percent of the vote by utilizing campaign rhetoric similar to that of the Trump campaign. The recent terror attacks in the country have also caused support for the FN to soar.

The United Kingdom has been in the headlines since last June, when the nation voted



THE ECONOMIST

to "Brexit" from the European Union in the most dramatic act of recent populism. While the United Kingdom Independence Party still managed to win only one seat in Parliament due to Britain's voting system, the support for the party more than quadrupled from 2010 to 2015. Even in Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel has enjoyed prolonged backing and success for her country, the Alternative for Deutschland (Afd) has snatched support with its anti-immigration platform.

REACTION TO TRUMP

Donald Trump's presidential victory has certainly received mixed

reactions around the world, but the populist leaders of Western Europe have nothing but praise for the new leader of the United States. With the additional rejection of the Italian referendum on constitutional reform in December, radical European parties have been invigorated in their drives to overhaul Europe's political order.

Beppe Grillo, an Italian comedian and head of Italy's Five Star Movement, praised Trump's campaign strategy. He claims that the mainstream media has treated his party in the same way, calling the group "sexist, homophobic, demagogues" and populists. Grillo believes, however, that Trump capitalized on the media's failure to realize that "millions of people no longer read their newspapers or watch their TVs". The comedian warmly refers to Trump as "Pannocchia", meaning ear of corn, from the visual similarities between the American's hair and corn silk.

Marine Le Pen, the highly controversial and radical leader of France's National Front, declared Trump's victory as "good news for [France]". It is a sign to all that what was previously impossible is now possible. She hopes for new inspiration for those who are anti-globalization and are sick of a political sphere led by elites.

In the Netherlands, radical party leader Geert Wilders lauded the United States for the choice of its next leader. He called the election a revolution and a reclamation of democracy, as the people finally rallied against politicians who "ignore the real problems". Wilders believes that the United States has

regained its national sovereignty and identity through the election of Donald Trump.

Populist leaders in Germany hold a similar opinion. Frauke Petry, leader of the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), called the U.S. election a “triumph of the American people”. In a variety of aspects, she sees the election as a victory of the ordinary over the elite: the people over the establishment, over the politically correct, and over the globalist elites.

on a populist wave, conceded to his left-wing opponent in December. Populists leaders are still confident in their prospects, however, with poll numbers to support them.

Geert Wilders is up for the top position in the Netherlands in March. Though Wilders was found guilty in December of inciting discrimination, polls still suggest that the same anxious, rebellious mood that granted Donald Trump victory in the United States may do the same for Wilders.

In Germany, Angela Merkel’s

up call”. Further parliamentary elections are set to take place across the country by the end of October, with the AfD currently possessing 15 percent support nationwide. The result of such fragmentation could be a diminishing of the consensus-oriented political culture in Germany.

The most critical vote of the election lineup may take place in France in April and May, where Marine Le Pen may by default have the best opportunity at taking the presidency. Former president Nicolas Sarkozy and current president François Hollande have removed themselves from the race due to primary losses and record low approval ratings, respectively. This leaves Le Pen to deal with Sarkozy’s replacement, conservative François Fillon, and middle ground candidate Emmanuel Macron. But such severe distaste for the current president has turned voters towards Le Pen, who vows to scrap the euro, renegotiate France’s position in the EU and organize a referendum to see if the EU will lose one of its founding members.

Across Western Europe, Donald Trump’s victory in the US presidential election has served to validate an already popular movement. Populism continues to garner support amongst Europeans who are disgruntled with their fragmenting governments, and far-right politicians are using Trump as an exemplar to follow in order to capitalize on such feelings. With several important elections to take place in the upcoming year, populism and the future of Europe will be on the ballot in 2017. 🌐

“German party leader Frauke Petry called the election a ‘triumph of the American people’”

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Over the upcoming months, several elections are slated to take place across Western Europe, the results of which could create a populist Europe. In Italy, where former prime minister Matteo Renzi resigned after his referendum was rejected by the Italian people, calls are being made by populists like Beppe Grillo for a snap election in the near future. Recent returns of some elections have helped to temper expectations; Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party of Austria, who had risen to power

party has lost popularity over her open-arms policies on immigration. The party, the Christian Democratic Union, was embarrassed as it fell to third place in local parliamentary elections in Merkel’s own home state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, behind the rising AfD. The opposition Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) took 30.6 percent of the vote and the AfD received 20.8 percent, while Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union won only 19 percent. Leaders of Merkel’s own party directly blamed her for the loss and called it “a wake-

Le Choix Français

Marine Le Pen, the Front National, and the Future of France

BY: ETHAN WOOLLEY

2016 was an extraordinary year full of political upheaval in every corner of the globe. In Europe, far-right candidate Norbert Hofer narrowly lost the Austrian presidential election and his Dutch counterpart Geert Wilders gained seats in the parliament, though failing to secure a majority, in the Dutch general elections. In June, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, shocking the world and leading to the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron. Six months later, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned after losing a referendum to amend Italy’s constitution. In Asia, Rodrigo Duterte became the president of the Philippines following a campaign of anti-Americanism and populism. After advocating for the killing of suspected drug dealers in the streets, thousands of suspected criminals and gang members have been killed extrajudicially since his ascension to power.



In South Korea, President Park Geun-hye was impeached after allegations of extreme corruption surfaced. And finally, in America, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States in a major upset, defeating Hillary Clinton to become the leader of the free world.

After the wild ride that was 2016, all eyes are on France's presidential election. Marine Le Pen and her party, the Front National, or National Front (FN), represents the next potential populist upset. Le Pen is a divisive, controversial, and outspoken French politician who has shocked some and energized others with her nationalistic rhetoric. So, who exactly is Marine Le Pen?

Born in 1968 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, just west of Paris, Marine Le Pen grew up in the political arena. Her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, founded the FN in 1972 on a platform of economic protectionism, hard euro-skepticism, and opposition to immigration. France uses a two-round electoral system, and in 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen shocked observers when he made it to the second vote. Although he lost in a landslide to incumbent Jacques Chirac, who won with over 80% of the vote, the FN was thrust onto the national stage. His progress to the second ballot on April 21st, 2002, became known as the "21st of April" and left a permanent mark on French politics. Now, just three election cycles later, his daughter will almost certainly survive to the second ballot and could very well become the next

president of France.

Marine Le Pen already ran for president once before, coming in third in the 2012 election with just over 17% of the vote, having taken over the party just one year earlier in 2011. In 2015, her father was expelled from the FN after he made inflammatory comments minimizing the Holocaust and defending a wartime Nazi-collaborator, saying that the gas chambers were a "detail" of history. This was not the first time the FN patriarch made controversial statements regarding the Second World War: in 2012, he was fined €10,000 after being convicted of "contesting crimes against humanity" by saying that the Nazi occupation of France was "not particularly inhumane". France has very strict laws against Holocaust denial and contesting crimes against humanity.

The FN has been marred by overtones of anti-semitic sentiment since its inception, and the 2015 expulsion of its founder was meant to help Marine Le Pen and the party move forward. In April, Le Pen made headlines after she said that "France was not responsible for the Vel d'Hiv [round-up]" in 1942, in which 13,000 Jews were handed over to the Nazis for transport to concentration camps. Until 1995, every French president maintained that the true French government was in exile in London under Charles de Gaulle and that the Vichy government, which collaborated with the Nazis and committed the Vel d'Hiv round-up, was not the true French state.

In 1995, Jacques Chirac changed that, formally recognizing France's responsibility for the tragedy, a recognition which was repeated by Presidents Nicholas Sarkozy and François Hollande after him. Le Pen's comments resurfaced the Front National's relationship with antisemitism and drew into question her own views, leading some to conclude that she was not much different from her father.

Le Pen kicked off her campaign in February by warning supporters of "two totalitarianisms", Islamic fundamentalism and globalization, that threaten to "subjugate France". She praised Donald Trump and the Americans who elected him, calling the 2016 American election "an additional stone in the building of a new world." Le Pen takes a hardline on immigration, saying that "[illegal immigrants] have no reason to stay in France, these people broke the law the minute they set foot on French soil." She has vowed to arrange for non-citizens convicted of crimes in France to serve prison sentences in their home countries. Le Pen has suggested ending free education for the children of undocumented immigrants and has said that housing, welfare, education, and other public services should go to native French before immigrants. In 1998, FN mayor Catherine Megret implemented a similar policy which gave a family allowance for French and EU citizens that was later struck down in court.

Le Pen has proposed stripping dual-nationality Muslims of their French citizenship if they

have extremist views. For France, a country which has suffered three major terrorist attacks in the past two years, Islamic terrorism and immigration is of great concern to many voters. Between the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, the November 2015 Paris attacks, and the Nice truck driver on Bastille Day in 2016, over 230 people have been killed by terrorists and over 720 injured.

In response to the flood of refugees into Europe from Syria and Iraq, Le Pen has proposed leaving the Schengen Area, which has essentially created a borderless Europe, and has promised a referendum on EU membership within six months of taking power, what some are calling a "Frexit". Le Pen is against the euro, preferring instead to reinstitute the franc, and opposes supranationalism, instead envisioning a "Europe of the nations", a loose confederation of sovereign states. She opposes EU membership for both Turkey and Ukraine, and has vowed to pull France out of NATO, which the FN has opposed since its inception. Le Pen wants France to leave NATO's integrated military command and to instead build up its own forces to provide for its own defense.

Until recently, polls indicated that Marine Le Pen would ultimately lose in the May 7th run-off election to former-Prime Minister François Fillon, a

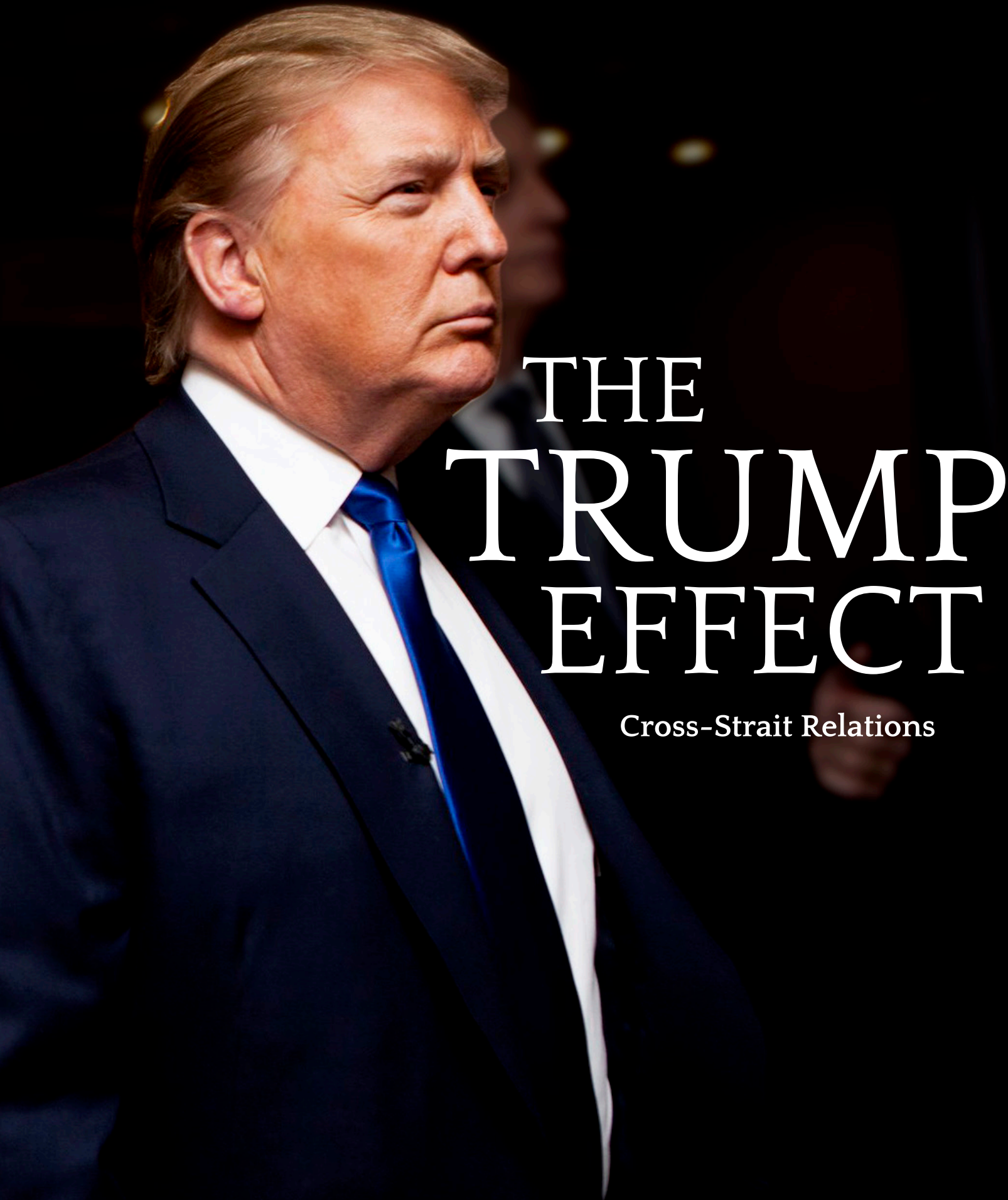
conservative and top contender. However, in early February, police opened an investigation into Fillon and alleged "fake jobs" for his family. Investigators are alleging that Fillon's wife and two children were given €900,000 in public money for work they did not do as parliamentary assistants. The scandal, nicknamed "Penelopegate" after Fillon's wife, has significantly hurt Fillon's standing in the polls, and may ultimately cause him to lose on the first ballot.

As Fillon fell in the polls, the

“Le Pen kicked off her campaign in February by warning supporters of ‘two totalitarianisms,’ Islamic fundamentalism and globalization, that threaten to ‘subjugate France.’”

youthful Emmanuel Macron rose, rivaling Le Pen and threatening Fillon's first ballot-survival. A 39 year-old former economy minister and investment banker, Macron studied philosophy before attending Sciences Po and the École Nationale d'Administration, the time-honored civil servant post-grad path. Macron came out of nowhere, presenting himself as an energetic outsider. Progressive on social issues yet interested in stimulating growth and pro-business, Macron wants to protect France's strong social safety net while freeing up the economy. Not a member of any established party, Macron resigned as economy minister to start his youth-driven movement En Marche!, or Let's Go!

Polling has indicated that Macron and Le Pen will likely be the two candidates to move on from April 23rd's first ballot to May 7th's second ballot, where Macron is polling 64-36 over Le Pen. Macron's second ballot popularity is likely due to the appeal of his centrism to left and center-right voters who are looking for an alternative to Marine Le Pen and the Front National. However, one-third of voters are still undecided as all candidates make their final appeal as the first ballot election draws near. No matter which candidate wins, this election will truly be a decisive moment for the future of the French Republic. 🇫🇷



THE TRUMP EFFECT

Cross-Strait Relations

BY: SHERRY TSENG

On January 20th, 2017, Donald J. Trump was formally inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. This transition of power marked a significant change not only in policies concerning domestic affairs, but also the field of international relations. In particular, the new presidency has opened up a new chapter in cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan.

Relations between China (People's Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China) have long been studied and disputed. However, many historians and experts would agree that such relations trace back to the Chinese Civil War. Fighting this war was the Communist Party of China (CPC), the current ruling party in the People's Republic of China, and the Nationalist Party of China (KMT), the ruling party at the time of the war.

After the tide turned in favor of the CPC, then led by Mao Zedong, in 1949, the KMT under Chiang Kai-Shek retreated to Taiwan. In December of that year, Chiang Kai-Shek, the leader of the KMT, declared Taipei to be its temporary capital.

During this period, the Taiwanese government continued to be internationally recognized as the legitimate government of both the mainland and island, despite the continuous claims of the Communist Party otherwise.

The change came in 1971. Hoping to exert more diplomatic

pressure on the Soviet Union, U.S. President Richard Nixon sought to establish relations with the Communist Party, which then was closely allied with the Soviet Union. His efforts resulted in the formalization of relations between the two nations. Realizing the role of the Communist Party in potentially alleviating the tensions of the Cold War, members of the United Nations requested the "Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations."

On October 25, 1971, the General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, effectively recognizing the People's Republic of China as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations" and expelling "the representatives of Chiang Kai-Shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all organizations related to it." From this, many countries, including the United States adopted the One-China policy, building diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and breaking such relations with the Republic of China.

Although the United States officially broke relations with the Republic of China in an effort to counter the growing influence of the Soviet Union, in 1979, U.S. President Jimmy Carter signed into law the Taiwan Relations Act. This act provided for the establishment of unofficial relations with Taiwan. Today, any economic or cultural interaction between the United States and Taiwan is conducted through the American Institute

in Taiwan, a private nonprofit corporation alongside the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office. Since then, the United States has been Taiwan's #3 trade partner, with the United States constituting 10.3% of Taiwan's exports and 9.5% of its imports.

As to cross-strait relations, Taiwan has very much been stuck in a quagmire. It has attempted to leverage U.S. support in keeping China from engaging in hostile economic and military activity. At the same time, it has tried to maintain its economic ties to China as a means to satiate the economic dependence on trade.

However, the status of these relations are by no means fixed. Throughout Trump's presidential campaign, the new president had faulted China for "using our country [America] as a piggy bank to rebuild China," devaluing its currency, and engaging in state-sponsored cyber hacking. In fact, in a 2012 tweet, Trump claimed that the "concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing noncompetitive."

Trump's position on China is clear. China's increasing power in the international field must be returned to the former status quo. How? Target Taiwan.

On December 3rd, the then president-elect Donald Trump accepted a congratulatory call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen. It was the first communication between leaders of the two governments since 1979. Although many have criticized the move as

a foreign policy blunder for the novice politician, others have noted it as a strategic hardline approach in line with Trump's proposed policies in regards to China. Moreover, in a Wall Street Journal interview, Trump indicated that the U.S. does not have to be bound by One-China policy. Many critics have called him bluff, but in the interview, Trump suggested that he would be open to negotiation on the legitimacy of Taiwan depending on China's stance on trade among other issues.

Since then, Beijing has warned Trump to abide what a foreign ministry spokeswoman calls, "the premise of... Sino-US relations." In fact, the "US government should limit communication between the U.S. and Taiwan to an unofficial category."

All of this is further complicated by Tsai Ing-Wen's recent election. Traditionally, the Democratic Progressive Party, the current party in power, has maintained Taiwan's independence and sought greater economic independence from China. This has marked a great shift from the previous presidency's policies, in which President Ma Ying-Jeou of the KMT party had publicly stated his goal was to lead Taiwan to "eventual reunification" and advanced the economic interdependence of the two disputing governments.

Since assuming office, Tsai has tried on numerous counts to establish more and stronger diplomatic relationships in an effort to diversify Taiwan's economic partners. She has made

diplomatic tours around Central America, in which she attended the inauguration of Nicaragua's president, Daniel Ortega, toured Antigua in Guatemala, and visited the shrine of Honduras's patron saint. During this tour, she had planned to make transit stops in the United States. Of course, Beijing was greatly enraged, even urging Washington to block these stopovers.

At the same time, though many legislators in the Taiwanese government were delighted at the progression of U.S.-Taiwan relations, many are also skeptical. This had led many in Taiwan to see themselves as merely a bargaining chip for the American interests in China. Even more worry about the

possible military actions China may take in the event that the U.S. does end up reconsidering its adaptation of the One-China policy. In that aspect, many Taiwanese, even those fiercely loyal to the DPP, are wary of the potential to finally come forth as an internationally recognized and legitimized nation.

The situation is hardly set in stone, with Trump's continuously wavering policies and statements. Though the historical complexities of the cross-strait relations make it such that the relations will not seem to budge much, the potential for a new era has been unleashed. Whether or not that potential will be fully realized- well, that's up to Trump. 🇺🇸

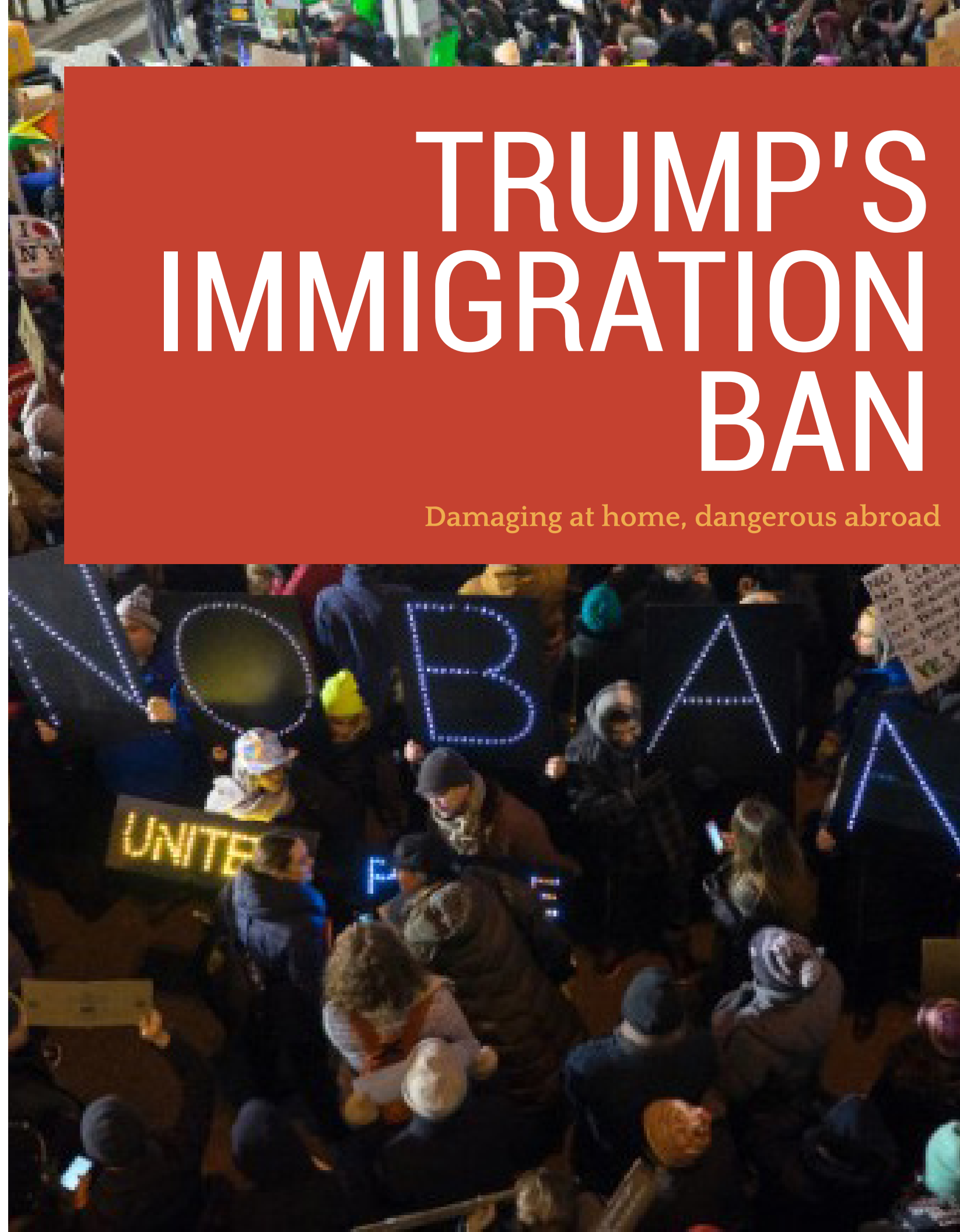


CARLOS BARRIA / REUTERS

President Trump met with Chinese President Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-lago estate in Florida in April.

TRUMP'S IMMIGRATION BAN

Damaging at home, dangerous abroad



BY: JORDAN DEWAR

Less than one month into his new job, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order 13769, which indefinitely suspended the entry of Syrian refugees and blocked the entry of citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen except for those allowed entry on a case by case basis. It was replaced by Executive Order 13780, which reduced the number of refugees to be allowed entry into the United States to 50,000, suspended the US Refugee Admission Program for 120 days, and suspended entry into the US of nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, notably

become increasingly focused on counterinsurgency, be it against the Viet Cong or Al-Qaeda. With this increasing involvement of the US in counterinsurgency efforts, the ability of the American government and the American military to win the hearts and minds of those affected by insurgent groups is more important to US security than ever before. By providing recruitment fodder for insurgent and terrorist groups and undermining the legitimacy of the United States, the recent immigration ban has weakened the position of the United States abroad and damaged US security and weakened the relationship between the United States and

even more essential in the post-9/11 era. From the rising threat of the Islamic State to the continued fight against Al-Qaeda, the relationship between the United States and countries of the Middle East has been and will likely continue to be dominated by issues of counterinsurgency and the need to combat rising terrorist threats. Thus, American forces and their security abroad will likely depend not only on American military capabilities but the ability of American soldiers to perform necessary counterinsurgency actions. However, this new travel ban hinders this ability. Firstly, it provides recruitment fodder to terrorists and insurgents alike. After the issuance of the first travel ban, multiple jihadist groups hailed it as “proof the United States is at war with Islam” with ISIS leaders calling it a “blessed ban”. This demonstrates how the travel ban has, instead of increasing US security, provided ammunition to American allies to recruit more fighters. By appearing to target Muslims, especially since there is a stated exemption for “religious minorities” to be determined on a case by case basis, the Trump government gives ISIS and other insurgent and terrorist groups another tool to claim that the West is at war with Islam.

A key element of counterinsurgency, and an element hindered by the travel ban, is the crucial importance of knowledgeable locals willing to work with the American

counterinsurgent forces. Given that few American soldiers are fluent in the native languages of these local communities, translators, both cultural and linguistic, are essential for both the security of US forces and their ability to carry out essential missions. However, anyone assisting US forces runs the risk of the insurgents finding them and harming them or their families. In the past, American soldiers could promise them a new home and safety in the United States in return for their assistance. But with the issuance of the first version of the travel ban, this possibility was eliminated, leaving them to a dangerous and uncertain future.

This means that American soldiers are less likely to be able to get the translator help they need, both now and in the future, as prospective translators might no longer believe American promises of safety especially since the US President has expressed a preference for the terms of the first travel ban. This not only further damages US national security interests by hindering the work of American counterinsurgents but damages the relationship between the US and those in the Middle East who depend on the Americans to protect them and their families from insurgent threats and the Middle Eastern states that desire American help in fighting insurgencies.

Furthermore, the security of the United States is damaged through this ban because of the harm this ban causes to the

perceived ability of the United States to uphold previous agreements and promises. The first ban prevented visa holders and permanent residents from returning to the country many of them called home. In doing so, the Trump administration went back on a promise that had been made to those given permanent residency status and visas. Furthermore, it banned refugees from entry into the United States, which meant that the Trump administration reneged on a promise made under Obama to allow in 20,000 Syrian refugees. Traditionally, foreign governments and foreign citizens alike could rely on the new US administration following an election to adhere to foreign policy commitments even after power had shifted hands. However, this ban ended that assumption. This damages the credibility of the United States government and thus harms the ability of the US to negotiate and form treaties. This further damages US security by preventing the US from exercising all diplomatic options in cases of crises.

Additionally, the credibility of the US administration was further damaged because the initial ban and its successor have both been halted. This exposes a division inside the United States that was not nearly as obvious under previous administrations. Traditionally, international actors regard one another and make decisions as a unitary “black box,” with internal politics being subsumed under the need for national unity. The fact that

after a federal judge blocked an executive order, but then executive branch proceeded to a new, only slightly amended or “watered-down” version, while questioning the legitimacy of the judicial branch highlighted the lack of respect some members of the US government have for the checks and balances outlined in the Constitution. This diminished the credibility and unity of the US, as well as the legitimacy of the US in the eyes of foreign governments. Due to this and the inability of the United States to behave as a unitary actor, as exemplified by the internal division caused by the ban, the credibility of the US has been greatly diminished from what it once was, decreasing the security of the United States.

Finally, the ban has diminished domestic stability and prosperity and, in doing so, diminished the security of the United States and its capacity to deal with potential threats in the following ways: i) it has harmed the integrity and stability of the US higher education system by greatly disrupting the ability of foreign students from affected countries to travel to and from school and home, ii) has tarnished the perception of the US to be an advantageous place to do business, thus harming the US economy overall as foreign entrepreneurs cannot be certain of the US being a good place to do business when they and their clients might be barred from the country without warning, and iii) it has diminished the trust between certain domestic groups and the

“The ban has diminished domestic stability and prosperity and, in doing so, diminished the security of the United States and its capacity to deal with potential threats.”

exempting Iraq as well as US permanent residents and visa holders.

In the post-World War Two era, US foreign policy has

the countries of the Middle East.

Counterinsurgency has become a more prominent part of US foreign policy since the Vietnam War but has become



GETTY IMAGES

On January 27, President Trump signed Executive Order 13769, restricting immigration from several Middle Eastern countries.

US government. The protests that emerged after the ban, spreading from airports to college campuses to other centers of American civil society, all reflected not only discontent regarding the ban but tensions between facets of American society that have been deeply divided since the election.

US-Middle East relations can only be stable so long as the United States has the capacity to conduct international negotiations with the full strength

of the American people behind it and so long as the US is seen as a trustworthy international actor. Furthermore, US-Middle East relations depend on the ability of the United States to successfully carry out counterinsurgent actions, largely with the support of locals in the affected regions. However, the travel ban has disrupted the stability of these relationships and the credibility of the United States government. From handing insurgent groups,

easy recruitment material to harming the ability of the US to recruit foreign locals for counterinsurgency operations to increasing domestic tension to diminishing the ability of the United States to make credible commitments, the immigration ban has weakened the relationship between the United States and the countries of the Middle East in a way that, even if the ban remains blocked, will last for a substantial period. 🇺🇸



A SIREN SONG

AMERICAN POLICY IN SYRIA

BY: ZACH GROSS

2016 has been a complicated year for American policy in Syria. There were undeniable gains in the war against Islamic State, yet violence continued unabated. Given the murky, complicated, and constantly shifting dynamics of the conflict, how can we fairly evaluate the Obama administration's policy with respect to Syria?

Let's start with its stated objectives. Robert Malley, a senior advisor to the President on the counter-ISIL campaign and the White House director for the Middle East and North Africa, succinctly laid out three key goals for the administration in Syria in an interview with Foreign Policy magazine: defeating terrorist organizations, ending the violence against the Syrian people, and achieving a transition that preserves state institutions and avoids chaos.

the terrorist group directed and carried out multiple terror attacks abroad, it is quantitatively much weaker than it was at the start of the year. According to Coalition statistics, IS has seen its territory shrink, its revenue slashed, and its access to foreign fighters diminished to virtually zero. Importantly, the Coalition has also derailed Islamic State's attempts to establish outposts and acquire territory in other failed states: the group was pushed out of its stronghold in Sirte, Libya and has largely been kept in check in Afghanistan, for example.

The territorial gains achieved by the coalition were the result of a very deliberate calculation: arming and providing air support for the Kurd-dominated Syrian Defense Forces even in the face of increasing opposition from the government of Turkey. Turkey views the SDF as a proxy organization of the Kurdistan Worker's Party, a terrorist

critical "boots on the ground" for the coalition in northern Syria, delivering an important victory in Manbij and laying the foundation for a future offensive on Islamic State's de facto capital Raqqa.

Despite these very real successes, Islamic State carried out major attacks in Belgium and Turkey and inspired numerous attacks across the world, including in the United States. Still, it will be more difficult for Islamic State to execute and inspire attacks in the west in the future than it was in 2015 and 2016. The group's capacity to execute and influence has been slashed in two key ways. Firstly, its midlevel leadership has been decimated. According to the Coalition, nearly all of Baghdadi's deputies have been killed, including the head of Islamic State's external operations, Abu Muhammad al Adnani. Secondly, the terrorist group's ability to inspire attacks through propaganda has been curtailed. Twitter suspended 400,000 Islamic State-linked accounts this year, and early research has shown that the suspensions reduced the influence of English-language propaganda on the social network.

REACHING A CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL TRANSITION

The administration's effort to secure a ceasefire and political transition away from Assad was largely a failure. Over the course of 2016, there were three attempted ceasefires in Syria, including two reached between the United States and Russia. Both



MANU BRABO / AP PHOTO
A man cries over the body of his son in Aleppo in October 2012 following an attack by suicide bombers

US-negotiated ceasefires clearly failed in the long-term to advance American interests. The first, the February Cessation of Hostilities agreement, on paper appeared to reflect much of what the United States wanted to achieve in Syria. It called for, among other things, an end to the fighting between non-terrorist opposition groups and the Syrian government as well as a "rapid, safe, unhindered, and sustained" flow of humanitarian aid. In practice, the deal proved to be ineffectual: by April, heavy fighting between the government and opposition resumed throughout much of the country and by May only 160,000 of the 1 million people in critical need of assistance could be reached by aid organizations. The second attempt at a deal, negotiated in September, never even truly took hold.

It's worth reflecting on why the February ceasefire did not stop Assad's obduracy. Russia proved either unable or unwilling to convince Assad to abandon his strategy of siege and strategic relocation, an approach fundamentally incompatible with improved aid access and a reduced level of violence. Yes, in the immediate aftermath of the deal, humanitarian aid access did improve in certain areas, but Assad did little to even feign compliance when an actual military advantage was on the line. Aid only reached the strategic Damascus suburb of Darayya once in May, for example, and the town was barrel bombed until it struck an evacuation agreement with government forces in August.

The administration's fatal diplomatic misstep in 2016 was misreading Russian incentives.

Anthony Blinken, the Deputy Secretary of State, argued in September that "Russia has a profound incentive in trying to make [the September ceasefire agreement] work. It can't win in Syria, it can only prevent Assad from losing. If this now gets to the point where the civil war actually accelerates, all of the outside patrons are going to throw in more and more weaponry against Russia. Russia will be left propping up Assad in an ever-smaller piece of Syria." With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that this prediction did not verify. Assad's non-compliance with the deal strengthened, rather than weakened, his military and political standing. With the ability to bomb without consequence and deny aid access with impunity, Assad and his Russian patrons were able to grind out a critical victory in Aleppo.

Blinken, and the Obama administration he represents, assumed that this would lead to a redoubling of efforts by rebel sponsors such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Instead, Turkey decided to come directly to the negotiating table with Iran and Russia, sharply limiting American influence in shaping a potential final settlement to the conflict and all but guaranteeing more favorable terms for Assad than would have been negotiated had the February agreement succeeded. Assuming Russia had planned to fully support Assad regardless of a deal, it then follows that its willingness to conduct negotiations over the

“By May only 160,000 of the 1 million people in critical need of assistance were able to be reached”

COUNTERING ISLAMIC STATE

America made real progress towards achieving its goal of defeating Islamic State. While

organization, and considers an independent Kurdistan on the other side of its border with Syria a major national security threat. Still, the SDF served as

past year was largely a charade and Secretary Kerry's well-intentioned efforts were in vain from the beginning.

There is no way to sugarcoat this. The administration's failure to recognize that Assad would gain more from noncompliance than compliance with both deals impeded its capability to lower the level of violence in Syria and achieve an acceptable political transition in the coming year.

MILITARY INTERVENTION: A SIREN SONG?

To be fair to the administration, it's important to point out that the alternatives proposed to its 2016 strategy were high cost with no guarantee of success. One mainstream proposal, outlined in a dissent memo signed by fifty-one State Department diplomats in June, called for the "use of military force as an option to enforce the Cessation of Hostilities and compel the Syrian regime to abide by its terms as well as to negotiate a political solution in good faith."

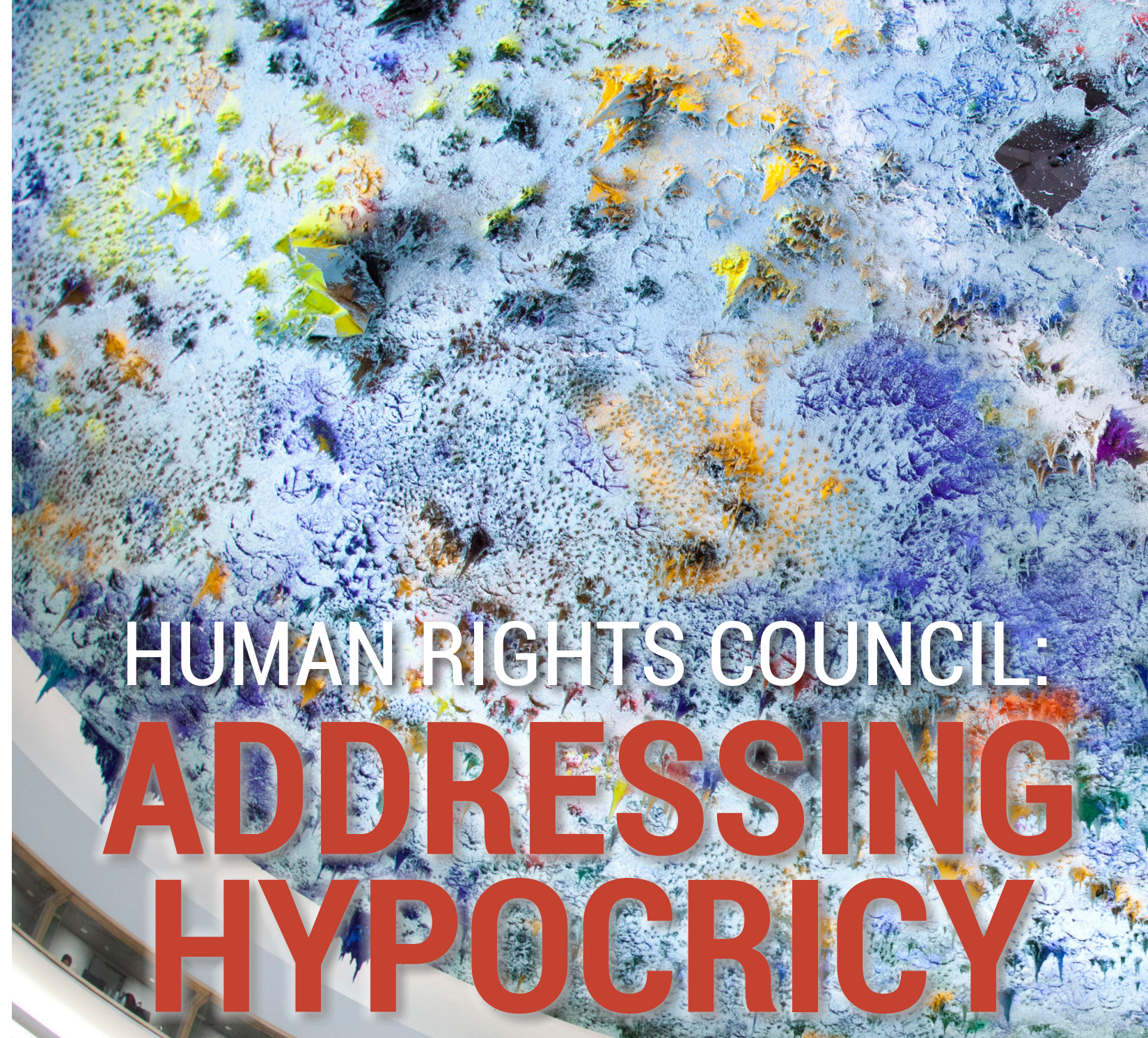
While this suggestion correctly targets the biggest obstacle towards American success in Syria – Syrian and Russian noncompliance with the ceasefire – it's not clear that the threat of American air strikes would have changed Assad's incentives in a cost-effective way. In the spring of 2016, Secretary Kerry repeatedly said that

if Assad did not comply with the Cessation of Hostilities, the United States would look at "Plan B" options to boost its support for the Syrian opposition, including the possibility of using military force. Still, as we know now, these threats were not enough to convince Assad and Putin that compliance with the deal was in their interest. Critics argue that these threats were not credible because of the administration's failure to intervene after Assad used chemical weapons in 2013 and because of the risk-averse

“Critics argue that these threats were not credible... but it's not clear that more bellicose rhetoric from the administration would have meaningfully changed Assad's thinking.”

nature of Obama's decision-making as a whole, but it's not clear that more bellicose rhetoric from the administration would have meaningfully changed Assad's thinking.

Looking to the future, actually using force to reach a deal or political transition would come with an array of costs. Refugees flows to Europe and overall violence might increase. Russia and Iran might use it as an opportunity to deepen their regional cooperation, presenting a long-term threat to American interests outside of Syria. Additionally, the burden of any intervention would not be shared much by allies. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, key American partners in any theoretical military intervention against Assad, downgraded their support for the opposition over the course of 2016. Turkey, roiled by serious internal divisions, is more concerned about preventing the formation of a Kurdish state along its border with Syria than starting a direct conflict with Assad. And Saudi Arabia, bogged down in a costly war in Yemen and facing a large budget deficit due to persistently low oil prices, is not in a position to substantially deepen its commitment. Neither of them could support substantial push against Assad in 2016, a trend that will continue into the future. 🌐



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: ADDRESSING HYPOCRISY

BY: PAT WILSON

In October of 2016, the United Nations General Assembly convened to elect the 2017 to 2019 members of the Human Rights Council. Created in 2006, the Human Rights Council claims to be responsible “for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.” In keeping with this obligation, the General Assembly gave Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Rwanda, Egypt, Cuba, and China

the right to influence the United Nation's international policy on human rights. These nations execute apostates, imprison “witches,” murder journalists, and torture homosexuals.

Something seems amiss.

Indeed, in a well-meaning but clumsily executed attempt to placate multiculturalists, the UN has honored 11 countries rated as “not free” by Freedom House – a watchdog that grades nations on their human rights policies – with a seat at the HRC. On average, member states earn

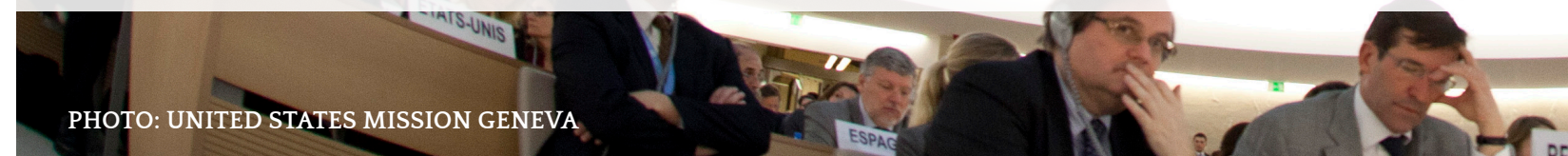


PHOTO: UNITED STATES MISSION GENEVA

a measly 55 out of 100, meaning that most nations considered essential to the global protection of human rights hardly respect them domestically. Given the despotic makeup of the HRC, one might suspect that it accomplishes little in its triannual sessions.

Quite the opposite is true.

During each of last year's regular sessions, the HRC published numerous resolutions condemning international human rights violations, nearly all of which targeted Israel or spoke nebulously of its obligation protect liberties worldwide. None targeted Saudi Arabia. None targeted China. None targeted Qatar. None targeted Cuba. This bizarre selectivity is not new to the HRC. Throughout the HRC's ten year history, Israel has remained the only nation permanently targeted under its agenda, suggesting that the world's only Jewish state is also the world's only consistent violator of human rights. Of the 11 countries that the HRC has condemned in its history, all but Israel have been autocracies or in the midst of violent domestic conflict. Put simply, Israel stands out as the lone politically stable democracy subject to strict scrutiny for its human rights policy.

This Israeli obsession is reflected in numerous bizarre UN declarations. For example, the UN Commission on the Status of Women denounced only Israel as a violator of women's rights worldwide. The well-documented and governmentally supported rape of women throughout the Middle East and South Asia was, apparently, insufficient evidence to condemn

even one other country. The International Labor Organization fanned the flames of anti-Israel sentiment when it criticized Israel alone for breaching the rights of workers. Qatar's institutionalized use of slaves mysteriously flew under the radar. Even the World Health Organization stepped in, castigating solely Israel for violating "mental, physical, and environmental health."

That Israel abuses the rights of Palestinians is unquestionable, and if the UN at least condemned the vicious crimes of other nations, these denouncements and resolutions would be understandable. But, as former Secretary Generals Ban-

regionally, with 13 seats reserved for both African and Asian states, 6 for Eastern European states, 8 for Latin American and Caribbean states, and 7 for Western European and other states. This policy solidifies anti-Semitism. In a worldwide poll, the Anti-Defamation League discovered that three quarters of people in the Middle East and North Africa are anti-Semites, and approximately a third of Asians, Latin Americans, and Eastern Europeans are similarly bigoted. So, the HRC's policy of regional apportionment does not merely offer anti-Semitism a seat at the table; it seats anti-Semitism at the

“ It is difficult to keep any country off of the HRC forever, meaning that its structure guarantees tyrants international legitimacy on the subject of human rights.”

Ki Moon and Kofi Annan have both acknowledged, the UN disproportionately targets Israel while letting the world's most prolific violators off scot-free.

Unfortunately, little can be done to fix this problem. The UN apportions seats on the HRC

head of the table. Additionally, regional apportionment ensures that all types of countries can voice their opinion on human rights. Since seats regularly rotate, it is difficult to keep any country off of the HRC forever, meaning that its structure guarantees tyrants international

legitimacy on the subject of human rights.

The simple solution to this problem would be scrapping regional apportionment and basing membership on each country's support for human rights. Still, such a move would spark an international crisis. The Middle East would be barred entirely from membership, as would most of Asia and Africa. The HRC would more or less comprise Western and Latin American nations along with a smattering of states from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. The developing world would cry colonialism, and the UN's moral authority would immediately evaporate in the regions that most desperately require humanitarian reform.

So, the United Nations is caught in a Catch-22. If it removes despotic regimes from the HRC, it loses the ability to influence humanitarian policy in the developing world. If it keeps despotic regimes on the HRC, it has the potential to promote human rights globally but can do little to act on it. This dilemma might encourage sympathy for the UN, but such sympathy is misguided.

The UN goes far beyond just tolerating the presence of anti-Semitic and tyrannical nations on the HRC; it actively empowers them. The United Nations Human Rights Council Consultative Group confirms this fact. It is a five member committee that advises the President of the HRC on which human rights experts ought to testify on any given issue. In June of 2015, the Consultative Group appointed Saudi Arabia's

representative chairperson before its predecessor had even served a full year. In other words, the CG broke with precedent to designate Saudi Arabia's representative as its chairperson. Having already undermined its legitimacy by offering Saudi Arabia leadership, the CG made matters worse in its most recent session, when Egypt's representative was appointed chairperson. The CG quite literally informs the UN's human rights policy. So, for the foreseeable future, a military dictatorship holds the

candidate. However, the election of Donald Trump along with a slew of imprudent incursions abroad have undermined America's international reputation. This leaves a variety of European nations along with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Canada with the ultimate responsibility and capability to speak up for the oppressed people of the world. Unfortunately, the rise of isolationist populism and a series of economic crises have crippled the European Union's ability to influence global affairs. Japan has

“ The UN goes far beyond just tolerating the presence of anti-Semitic and tyrannical nations on the HRC; it actively empowers them.”

most important role in determining what constitutes a human rights violation.

The UN's unjustifiable focus on Israel as well as its structural empowerment of tyrannical regimes has created a leadership vacuum in the global struggle for human rights. It is time for the liberal democratic world to fill this vacuum. The only question remaining is: which nation ought to lead the charge?

Given American military hegemony, the United States seems to be the most attractive

no military, and South Korea is in the depths of its own political crisis. As well, Australia currently confronts its own rising tide of anti-migrant, isolationist sentiment, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke admiringly of Fidel Castro, calling into question the seriousness of his commitment to human rights.

These difficulties compound the global absence of moral leadership and this void seems unlikely to be filled for the time being. 🌐

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