

THE CONSUL

THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ASSOCIATION / UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

STEPPING INTO HEZBOLLAH

A FIRST-HAND LOOK AT ONE OF THE WORLD'S
MOST WIDELY KNOWN MILITANT GROUPS

SPRING 2016

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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 in particular. This semester, our writer Dylan Rhile has been studying abroad in Beirut, Lebanon. He was able to visit the Hezbollah museum and gain an inside look at the inner workings of the organization. I hope that his insight and experience provide our readers with a glimpse at a rarely viewed side of Middle East conflict.

In addition to traveling to Lebanon, *The Consul* staff investigated political change in South America, minority treatment in Ethiopia, and Chinese economic woes. 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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SEMESTER IN REVIEW

JAN 16: IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL GOES INTO EFFECT

The United States, along with other European nations, lifted long-standing sanctions on Iran after inspections proved that Iran had dismantled weapons as per the agreement.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



ANDRE PENNER/AP PHOTO

FEB 1: ZIKA VIRUS OUTBREAK IN THE AMERICAS

The World Health Organization declares the spread of the Zika virus, which reached South America last year, a global public health emergency requiring urgent response.



MARCH 3: UNITED NATIONS SANCTIONS NORTH KOREA

The UN Security Council announced another round of sanctions after North Korea conducted a nuclear test in January and launched a satellite into orbit in February.

MARCH 22: BRUSSELS TERRORIST ATTACKS

Bombs exploded at the airport and a metro station in Brussels, Belgium, killing dozens and wounding hundreds.



MARTIN MEISSNER/AP

FEB 1: SYRIA PEACE TALKS BEGIN

Several countries donated more than \$10 billion in aid aimed at helping the millions of refugees fleeing Syria as the country is wracked by civil war.



AP PHOTO

FEB 16: CHINESE AGGRESSION IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

China deployed missiles to disputed islands in the South China Sea. Vietnam, the Philippines, and other countries continued to express concern over Chinese activity in the area, which includes the creation of artificial islands.



CSIS/REUTERS



AP PHOTO

MARCH 21: U.S. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA VISITS CUBA

The first president to visit in 88 years, President Obama met with Cuba's President Raul Castro to discuss human rights and the U.S. economic embargo in Cuba.

WHERE IS CHINA'S ECONOMY HEADED?

BY: JOE PIRES



PHOTO BY LUO YUNFEI

In March 2015, the People's Republic of China's National People's Congress approved a five-year plan aimed at reinvigorating an economy that, from an outsider's perspective, seems like it is falling apart. The major aim is to bring annual GDP growth to a rate between 6.5 and 7 percent. However, whatever plans the Chinese Communist Party has for the economy could be just as ineffective or counterproductive as their previous economic policies over the past year.

In fact, there have been looming economic issues plaguing the PRC for the past couple of years. A perfect storm of a housing bubble, poor bond outlook, overproduction, falling exports and imports, cooked books, and a poor stock market have slowed down the GDP growth rate in 2015 to below its expected goal of 7 percent.

It all started with the Chinese housing market. Property values have been, and still are, increasing at a rapid

pace. Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing have grown in home values the most, with prices increasing 56.9 percent, 20.6 percent, and 12.9 percent respectively. However, the growth rate has been depressed in smaller cities, and policy makers in Beijing needed to prevent an asset bubble from forming.

The response from the CCP was simple: shift investment from the housing market into the stock market. At first, the measures seemed like a surefire success. Both the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange rose in value significantly after state media instilled confidence in Chinese markets. Since most of the investors within both stock exchanges are individual investors, most of whom have little to no experience, they soon went into the market, many of them doing so on credit.

Eventually, the markets started to fall, and they fell quickly. By mid-July 2015, the Shanghai Stock Exchange

had fallen thirty percent. By the end of August, it fell again by around 8.5 percent. The solution proposed by the CCP has been multifaceted: stop many companies from trading, get investment firms to start buying up stock, and stop any incoming IPOs. From official sources in China, the stock market had stabilized, and by the end of 2015, the markets seemed stable once again.

Then the market fell seven percent in the first few days of 2016.

There is a silver lining to the crash: its effect on the overall economy has been small, and the crash can be seen only a troubling, but not panic-inducing, issue within the Chinese economy. Of course, there are more troubling trends within the Chinese economy. First off, the central bank has been cutting interest rates repeatedly and rapidly over the past year. For a nation with an economy that is growing at a rate unseen in the west, the multiple reduction in

interest rates seems unnecessary, and could potentially signal a much weaker economy than projected.

Also indicating a weaker economy is the amount of capital leaving the mainland. Money seems to be pouring out of the country as quickly as it is coming in, leading to some speculators to bet against the Yuan. Generally, capital flight is not the worst thing in the world for an economy. However, in the case of the PRC, the degree that money is fleeing from the country is staggering (around \$550 billion in net outflow, versus a \$70 billion inflow).

However, the argument can be made that with the growth rates that China has, the economy will sort itself out nicely within the next few months or years. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case, especially when how such high growth rates are produced comes into question. It seems as if useless building projects and lending to assuage overcapacity is the PRC's method of keeping high growth rates. However, the building projects have led to a boom of cities that no one lives in, as well as shoddy infrastructure.

Overcapacity has also been a major issue. Simply put, China's state-owned businesses are producing much more than could be sold, and the CCP is trying to assuage that issue with lax lending, leading to an epidemic of new zombie enterprises, which had started to become an issue during Jiang Zemin's administration in the 1990s. That, atop with the emergence of markets not centered on heavy industry is bound to cause massive layoffs. Some estimates indicate that 1.3 million coal workers and up to half a million steelworkers could lose their jobs. Not only that, but 2015 has been littered with multiple labor disputes and strikes, with some workers demanding months of unpaid wages. Those who do get their wages on time have seen them stagnate.

It gets worse. As the annual official growth rates contradict more and more with the economic condition of the country, more are concluding that the official growth rates are faked. One of those doubters, according to WikiLeaks, is current Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. As head of the CCP in Liaoning Province, he privately told the US ambassador

that GDP growth rates are man-made. According to Li, the growth rate might be closer to three percent, based on the

unemployed in China, many Chinese will be dependent on the safety net, potentially putting it, and the Chinese

"An aging populace and an ailing economy propped up by cooked books, lax lending, and useless projects could create an economic disaster."

economic activity in Liaoning. Others have the actual growth rate at one percent. To compound issues, much of that growth comes in the form of cities that no one lives in, and infrastructure projects that are counterproductive. This would explain why the number of unemployed Chinese adults has increased so much over the years.

That slowdown gets compounded with an aging populace. That, in conjunction with the one-child policy could put a strain on a generation of workers and the social safety net of China. The fact that the responsibility of up to two parents and four grandparents is on the shoulders of one person could severely hamper economic life, as well as quality of life. To make matters worse, because of the sheer number of

economy, in even greater strain.

In the end, we have a perfect storm. An aging populace and an ailing economy propped up by cooked books, lax lending, and useless projects could create an economic disaster. Furthermore, the Chinese monetary system is trying to do the impossible: have a flexible monetary policy, have free flow of capital, and a fixed exchange rate. They are failing at that task. The trifecta of an aging populace, ailing economy, and mismanaged monetary system

Which brings us back to March 2015 and the National People's Congress' new five-year plan. Based on the past year of bubbles and bursts, it seems like the plan will not work. China is in for a rough couple of years, and we might all be dragged along. 🌪



PHOTO BY JOURNAL-NEO.ORG

BARRIERS TO THE FIRST FEMALE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Another obstacle for a weak UN and feminists

BY: CLAUDIA DALLY

The United Nations has historically sought out diversity amongst its leaders. As the international community approaches the end of the Ban Ki-Moon era we are forced to think of who the next Secretary-General will be. Before the UN was blessed to have had a Ghanaian Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, followed by Ban Ki-moon (who represents South Korea). While the UN has been around for over seventy years, of the eight Secretary-Generals to ever assume office as the UN chief not a single one has been female.

The United Nations has been heavily shaped by women throughout its history. The drafting of the UN Declaration of Human Rights involved key world leaders; part of that drafting committee included India's representative Hansa Mehta who served as a women's rights advocate who fought for the inclusivity of women through the declaration's language. Eleanor Roosevelt also represented the United States in the drafting of the document. Later on the international community saw more women at the forefront.

In 2006, there was finally a female candidate to replace Kofi Annan. Latvian President Vaira

Vike-Freiberga was put forward to become the next Secretary-General, which would have derailed the possibility of Ban Ki-moon's tenure. While Vike-Freiberga did not become the Secretary-General, the UN has since pushed efforts to put women's issues to the forefront. Following such a campaign for the first female UN chief, the UN continued to further focus on women's issues and issues of gender. The creation of UN Women in 2010, for one, speaks to that initiative while emphasizing the "achievement of equality between women and men as partners" in tackling the world's greatest issues of today - development, human rights, peace and security and more. In focusing on establishing that women are equals it would make sense that a woman should be elected, and her candidacy would be taken seriously. Yet there are so many thoughts that come into question when the public believes that someone deserves such a prestigious position.

The Secretary-General of the UN yields quite possibly the greatest influence over decisions made world-wide. The background of whomever assumes the role as UN chief represents who they are and much more. The international

community has many informal yet widely accepted traditions in the case of nominating and electing UN Secretary-Generals. The UN restricts that nationals of any of the permanent members, notoriously referred to as the P5, to the UN's Security Council - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States - cannot be nominated for the seat as Secretary-General because of the influence they may yield may favor their represented state. Just as those restrictions apply to members of the P5, the international community has looked favorably on geographically rotating those who may be put forwards as candidates. For the elections in 2007, it was strongly encouraged that someone representing Asia would be chosen. For 2016, the international community is looking at Eastern Europe, the only one of the UN's regional groups that has yet to be represented during the UN's 60 years of existence. The UN has upheld this tradition of diversity when it comes to geographical representation. Diversity, however, has shown itself to be inclusive with the notable exception of gender.

Can the UN practice what it preaches? The UN has devoted itself to the advancement of

gender equality, which means that opportunities should be just as equal for women when running for one of the most important and viable offices in politics. This does not necessarily mean that the UN will ensure that a female would be put into office - if this were true it would have been done long before 2016. Moreover, the UN does not have the best track

A female leader is one of the most desirable situations to have in the 21st century. It is something that a good chunk of Americans hope will be a first in 2016, if former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is elected. Many other UN member-states also have female leadership, for example, Brazil has Dilma Rousseff and Germany has Angela Merkel.

chaired by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan have are also in the fight for the future elections of Secretary-Generals to be more gender fair.

One barrier to the election of the first female Secretary-General is the vote on more than one candidate for the General Assembly. While many might nominate a variety of candidates, a good amount who may

"The UN has upheld this tradition of diversity when it comes to geographical representation. Diversity, however, has shown itself to be inclusive with the notable exception of gender."

record in being fair across the board. Yes, there are systems put into place to ensure a fair and just UN. But the UN has failed to enforce the two-state promise in Palestine, dating back to the UN's inception in the late 1940s, to prevent France and Belgium's ban of the burqa, or to stop neo-imperial interventions as done in Cote d'Ivoire and Libya. There are many things that the UN has allowed to happen, there are also many promises that have not been upheld.

Having a female Secretary-General could be symbolic for those who believe in the advancement and security of women; she would most definitely be able to identify or better understand the importance of these issues. Equality between men and women is an economic issue in both the developing and developed world - it goes far beyond health, education, political power, and more. It is will be a long-standing issue, as the Global Gender Gap Reports, notes it will take another 118 years to close the economic gender gap.

Campaigns in support for the first female secretary general are rampant; 1 for 7 Billion and The Campaign to elect a Woman UN Secretary-General are "demanding greater transparency" in the upcoming election. Just as the rotation of non-permanent members of the Security Council, and rotation of regional representation with past UN Secretary-General seek to keep less influential states and regions engaged with the UN, women too deserve to be included. Not having had a woman UN chief as of yet is a problem of inclusivity. The UN cannot put up a true fight to close the gender gap, and for gender issues altogether, if a woman herself is not giving the equal opportunity to champion for the world's population of 7 billion women. The Elders, a group of former statesmen and women, which is

be female, only one will be voted on at a time. 1 for 7 Billion is advocating for this to be bumped up to 3 candidates to be voted on at the same time, while The Elders is advocating for at least 2. While this would increase the likelihood of a female leader, if a female candidate wins she may have a hard time uniting the UN and there is greater chance for chaos in what is already a not so put together organization.

So while a female Secretary-General is desirable for the world's billions of young girls and women, it is not guaranteed to happen in 2016. Even if it does, does this mean that women's rights will have further advancement in the UN? Well that's also not guaranteed. Then again, traditions are meant to be broken and this is one UN tradition that ought to be broken. It's 2016, after all.

One thing that is for sure, whoever is selected whether that be UNESCO Director and Hungary's own Irina Bokova, Moldova's Foreign Minister Natalia Ghreman, or whomever, she will serve as a symbol for feminism - female strength, empowerment, and leadership - on the biggest stage of them all. A female voice is needed to champion not just for women's issues, but all international ones. No longer can we argue that a woman is not as qualified as her male counterpart to run the UN. 🌍



UNREST IN BURUNDI

Unpacking a year of conflict

BY: ZACH GROSS

When Pierre Nkurunziza was chosen by Parliament to be President of Burundi in August 2005, he was the democratically-elected face of a country trying to find unity after a decade of civil war in which 300,000 were killed.

Now, after a decade of relative peace, Nkurunziza stands to return Burundi to the same conditions of violence and autocracy that the people had chosen him to end in his initial mandate.

A Violent Pre-Election Period

On April 25th last year, Nkurunziza announced his fateful decision to run for a third term in office. The streets of the capital Bujumbura erupted. Angry demonstrators burned tires, threw rocks, and even barricaded roads with felled trees over weeks of fierce protest. Police responded violently. By May 1, UN aid agencies had reported at least six dead and potentially 400 detained for protesting.

Events on the ground were quickly spiraling out of his control. Though Nkurunziza had likely assumed that there would be some measure

of opposition to his push for a third term, it is unlikely he had expected the animosity he had generated.

On May 13th, while Nkurunziza was in Tanzania, Army General Godefroid Niyombare announced a coup and the deposition of the president. While Nkurunziza was ultimately able to return to Burundi and maintain his grip on power, Bujumbura descended into anarchy for days. According to CNN, the international airport was shut and gunfire and explosions ran out in the streets.

When the presidential election was finally held on July 21st, it proceeded despite calls for delay from the African Union, the United States, and Uganda. The European Union had withdrawn its election observers and funding in May and the Catholic Church had announced it would not provide critical electoral logistics.

A report conducted by an election observation mission from the East African Community after the election determined that it “fell short of the principles and standards necessary for holding fair, peaceful, transparent and credible elections”.

In the report, the mission noted, “there have been violations of the fundamental civil and political rights that limited civilian participation in the electoral process,” a voter registration that was “operationally cumbersome,” and a campaign environment that was “generally tense and characterized by fear and uncertainty.”

Despite the controversy and continuing violence and insecurity, Nkurunziza was sworn in for his third term on August 20th.

Renewed Fears of Civil War

Since Nkurunziza began his third term in August, he has maintained his grip on power largely through a brutal crackdown against dissent. According to Amnesty International, his government has been responsible for, “arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and cordon-and-search operations.” International aid organizations have also left the country.

Perhaps the bloodiest and starkest example of Nkurunziza’s campaign against opposition occurred in December in Bujumbura. According to an Amnesty report on the incident,

the day started with a pre-dawn attack on military installations, but by the time it was over, Amnesty found evidence that the government had summarily executed dozens of young, civilian males.

In response to the attack, the African Union considered sending a peacekeeping force of 5,000 troops to stabilize the country. Nkurunziza threatened to treat them as invaders, and, by consequence, they were never sent.

Though the current unrest has largely had a political focus, some see ethnic divisions as a potential fault line that could spark deeper conflict. Its recent civil war was driven by a Tutsi-minority in charge of the military against rebel groups from the Hutu majority. Rwanda, which suffered a horrific genocide in the 1990s, has a similar demographic makeup.

Refugee Crisis

The impacts of the crisis are being felt beyond Burundi’s borders. Much like how the conflict in Syria has driven large number of Syrians out of the country, the unrest in Burundi has led to a full-on refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region.

An estimated 200,000 have left the country since Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a third term in April. According to the UNHCR, 50,000 Burundians were receiving shelter at a single refugee camp, the Nyarugusu Camp in Tanzania, in October, a number that has almost certainly risen since then.

Rwanda, which along with Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo directly borders Burundi, has already reached a potential breaking point. In February, it announced plans to expel the 70,000 refugees currently living in the country. There are also reports that refugees, including children, are being recruited from camps in Rwanda to fight Nkurunziza. In his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations committee, U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes of Africa Thomas Perriello noted, “There are credible reports of recruitment of Burundian refugees out of camps in Rwanda to participate in armed attacks by Burundian armed opposition against the Burundian government.”



PHOTO BY JEAN PIERRE AIME HARERIMANA | REUTERS

Burundi’s President Pierre Nkurunziza attends the opening of a conference in the capital Bujumbura February 13, 2014.

The decentralization of military authority, from the central government to loose youth militias like Imbonerakure on one side, and to rebel groups armed in Rwanda on the other, amplifies the conditions that make a full-blown civil war more possible.

With the flow of refugees showing no sign of slowing and Rwanda already proving resistant to taking in any more, the crisis could escalate sharply in 2016. The Democratic Republic of Congo is scheduled to hold elections later on this year, which could potentially lead to the first peaceful transfer of power in the country’s history. Should President Kabila prove unwilling or unable to hold credible, free elections, Citizen Front 2016, an umbrella coalition of opposition groups, could respond by leading the country into political crisis precisely at the time when it needs to be a regional leader in its response to the unrest in Burundi.

International Response

The unrest in Burundi has been a robust test case for East African institutions. As I mentioned earlier, the African Union was willing to send a significant contingent of peacekeepers, but not at the cost of active conflict with the Burundian government. The East African Community and the United Nations Security Council have both backed peace talks mediated

by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda between Nkurunziza and the opposition, but those talks have not yet produced anything substantive.

With diplomacy stalled for the foreseeable future, international actors are considering other ways of coercing Nkurunziza’s government to be more cooperative. In November, the Obama administration on a handful of senior Burundian security officials, and, in February, the European Union announced its intention to follow suit. The Belgian government, which as Burundi’s former colonial power has helped fund many government institutions such as the justice system, announced in October it was halting much of its aid.

What’s Next?

With diplomacy going nowhere and Nkurunziza firmly entrenched in power, the short-term prospects for a resolution to the current crisis are bleak. If anything, the current geopolitical conditions of the region suggest that the crisis will deepen, rather than ease. If Rwanda and Tanzania prove unable to responsibly manage and scale their refugee support infrastructure and the Democratic Republic of Congo finds itself in yet another electoral political crisis, the possibility remains on the table for Burundi to return to its dark days of civil war. 🌐

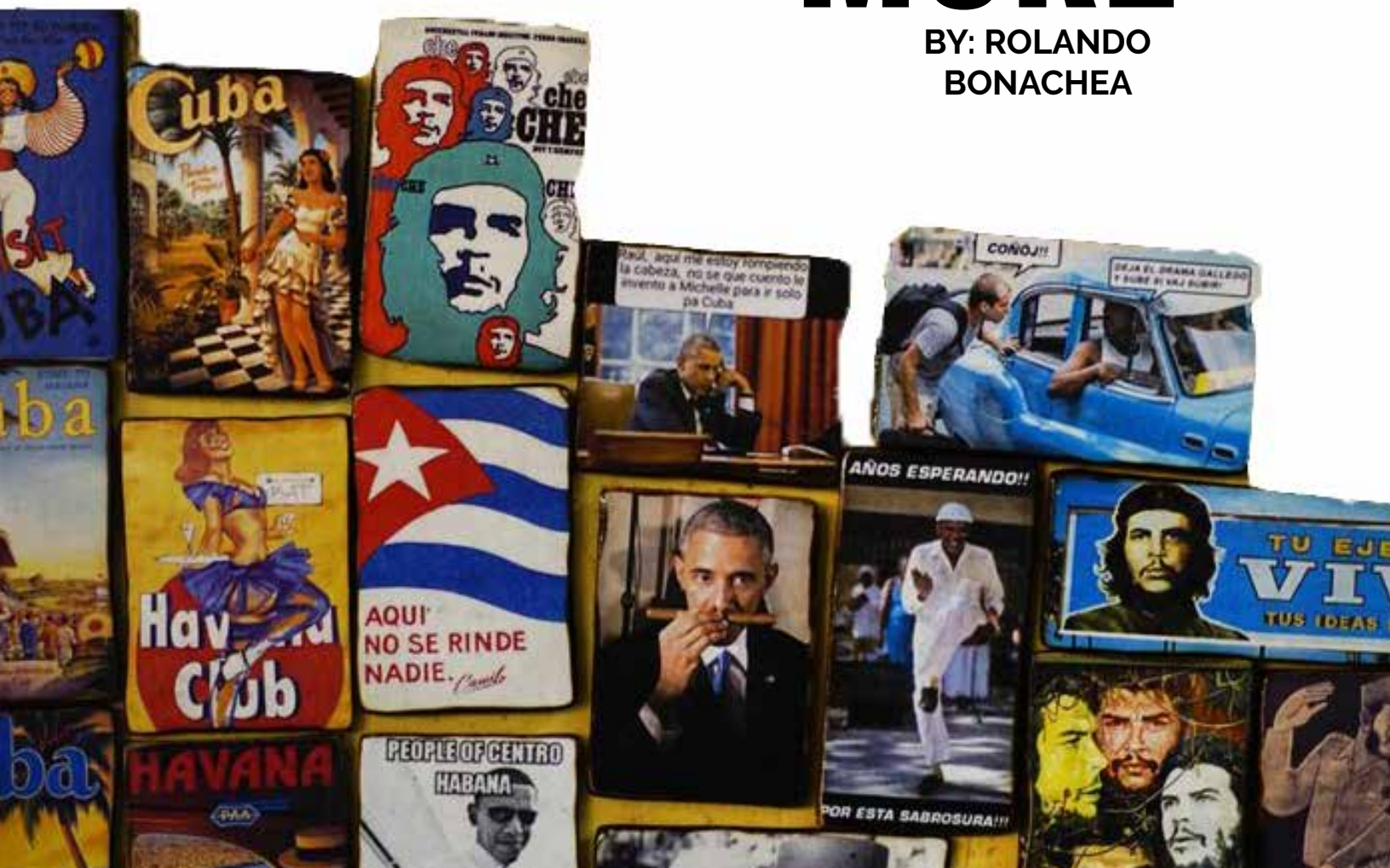


PHOTO BY THOMAS MUKOYA | REUTERS

Hundreds of protesters before clashing with riot policemen in Burundi’s capital, Bujumbura, April 28, 2015.

HOW TO MAKE THE CASTROS RICHER AND THE CUBAN PEOPLE SUFFER MORE

BY: ROLANDO
BONACHEA



On March 20th, President Barack Obama arrived in Cuba, the first President of the United States to visit Cuba since Calvin Coolidge's visit in 1928. The trip had three main highlights: The landing of Air Force One at the Jose Martí International Airport, the press conference with dictator Raúl Castro at the Palacio de la Revolución, and the baseball game held between the Tampa Bay Rays and the Cuban national team. These three events were designed to showcase the unilateral liberalization of Cuban-United States relations by the Obama Administration and to give the Castro regime an opportunity to demonstrate an ostensibly freer Cuba.

Moments before the President's arrival to Cuba on Sunday, dozens of protesters from the Ladies in White -- women protesters whose relatives have been incarcerated by the regime -- were beaten and arrested by security forces. These protests occur every single Sunday, when the women gather in a church in the Miramar suburb of Havana to protest, and are usually detained for hours or even days. After being arrested they are then taken to cells where they are stripped naked and searched, only to be released after several hours.

Merely the fact that the arrests continued until up until



PHOTO BY RAMON ESPINOSA/AP

A man overlooks U.S. and Cuban flags on his balcony in Old Havana Cuba.

importantly the Cuban people -- that the President's visit will not lead to meaningful political change in Cuba. This messaging of disrespect for the President's visit was compounded with the calculated decision to not meet President Obama immediately upon his arrival.

The press conference was carefully orchestrated to prevent too many probing questions about the nature of the regime and how exactly the President's actions would lead to more freedom for the Cuban people. After a series of weak questions, the one welcome moment in the press conference was when CNN reporter Jim Acosta questioned Castro "Why

"What America saw of President Obama's visit to Cuba was a whitewashed version of a totalitarian state."

the very moment of Obama's arrival demonstrates how little has changed, and how little Cuba will change in the future. Furthermore, they represent a deliberate attempt by the regime to show the Obama Administration -- and more

do you have political prisoners, and why don't you release them?" to which Mr. Castro responded "defiantly:" "What political prisoners? Give me a name or names. After this meeting is over, you can give me a list of political prisoners, and if we have those

political prisoners, they will be released before tonight ends." The Cuban American National Foundation promptly released a list of 47 names, not including the dozens of Ladies in White dissidents that had been detained the Sunday before. There has been no indication of whether or not they have been released.

Bob Ley of ESPN was reporting on the baseball game by downtown Havana when a Cuban dissident began shouting in protest against the Cuban regime before being promptly subdued by plainclothes police officers. Ley himself remarked that "what was amazing was the speed of the police response" before the dissidents were whisked away by the police. This is something that Western television hardly ever captures and demonstrates the severe efficiency of totalitarian repression that the Cuban people have to deal with on a daily basis. Of course, this occurred with the backdrop of the President laughing and enjoying a baseball game with dictator Castro.

What America saw of President Obama's visit to Cuba was a whitewashed version of a totalitarian state that can only be sustained through continuous



PHOTO BY PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS | AP

U.S. President Barack Obama met with Cuban President Castro during his visit to the country on Monday.

repression of dissidents. If President Obama truly desires democratic change for Cuba, he should have used the United States' leverage as a precondition for any type of liberalization. Instead, he gave away his entire negotiation position, and in turn the Castro regime gave up nothing in terms of economic and political freedom for Cubans. To add insult to injury, it must be understood to those advocating the normalization of relations will likely benefit the military and the Communist Party of Cuba solely. Since the military controls most of the major industries, including the tourist industry and the processing of remittances payments, the benefits almost entirely go to the regime, not the Cuban people, who instead live on wages of approximately \$20 a month. Permitting the use of the dollar for Cuban international transactions will not benefit the average Cuban who has no access to international currency. Instead, it will directly benefit the cronies who have the connections and

ability to use the dollar.

While the blame should be first placed on the Obama Administration for loosening the restrictions for American tourists in the first place, the responsibility lies as well on the American companies, American citizens, and Americans with Cuban heritage who implicitly choose to enrich the Castro regime. If these corporations and individuals can live with their conscience that their dollars are being used to repress, arrest, and torture the Cuban people, it is their right to go and travel there. To curb this trend, it must be made clear to the public where the money is going. If the individuals decide that their own pleasant experience on a Cuban beach is worth the repression of the Cuban people, there is little the law can do to prevent them from doing so -- at least, as the Obama Administration interprets it.

President Obama going to appease a communist dictator that stands against many of the very things Obama himself stands for

is an embarrassment to the United States and will serve to only further embolden and hand legitimacy to the Castro regime. President Obama is more interested in attempting to create a legacy and provide relief to America's enemies than he is about addressing many of the pressing foreign issues of the present day, including the steadily rising terror threat. The poor optics of the President of the United States laughing with a communist totalitarian dictator at a baseball game while an American ally (Belgium) suffers the deadliest act of terrorism in its history is astounding but hardly surprising. His aloofness was further compounded with his trip to Argentina where he was filmed doing the tango at a state dinner, but this only adds insult to injury.

It is difficult to find clear numbers on the number of political prisoners and arrests in Cuba, but in 2010 there were at least 1,100 reports of arbitrary detentions between January and August, 2,900 in 2013, 7,188 in 2014, and over 8,600 arbitrary detentions in the entirety of 2015. Finally, in an increasingly escalating fashion, 2,555 dissidents were detained in the first two months of this year.

In conclusion, at best President Obama will be remembered as the President who brought Spring Break Cuba 2020 to American college students with the status quo or minor adjustments for Cuban society. However, Cuba will change only when Raúl Castro and the Communist Party demands it. Given the dictator's taste for repression and preserving his own wealth at the expense of the Cuban people, significant change for the better is unlikely. Rather, the President's legacy will likely be remembered as the man who enabled the filling of the Castros' and their cronies' bank accounts and opened the door to more repression in Cuba. 🇺🇸

STEPPING IN TO HEZBOLLAH

A FIRST-HAND LOOK AT ONE OF THE WORLD'S
MOST WIDELY KNOWN MILITANT GROUPS

BY: DYLAN RHILE

In 1978, south Lebanon was in the midst of an invasion by the Israeli Defense Forces and the Free Lebanon Army. These attacks brought about resistance, which in turn brought violence back to a country all too familiar with the struggles of war and territorial issues. One of the main groups of resistance fighters, Hezbollah, is a private army known around the world today, having been designated a terrorist organization by the United States.

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah was touted as the main force of resistance to occupation, leading many, if not most, of

PHOTO BY DAVID GANNON

the battles against the IDF and the FLA. In order to maintain power and strategic advantage over the invading forces, Hezbollah established a military outpost on the top of a mountain in the southern town of Mleeta. From here, they could see the armies approaching from all of the surrounding valleys and maintain their stronghold accordingly. Bunkers, booby traps, and sniper posts lined the top of the mountain for decades.

The outpost was the base of operations for Hezbollah from the time of the invasion, through the civil war, and even throughout the 2006 Lebanon War. After this war, however, Mleeta was no longer necessary as a strategic stronghold, as the battles and altercations had moved elsewhere. The troops, armament, ammunition, technology, and vehicles were thus moved off the mountaintop to more strategic and necessary areas as Hezbollah continued to fight elsewhere.

Fast-forward four years. What used to be a military outpost utilized for its strategic positioning in the mountains of Mleeta is now anything but. Now, the Hezbollah stronghold is a museum. The Tourist Landmark of the Resistance. The "Hezbollah Museum".

To most people, a "Hezbollah Museum" is a very odd, if not unimaginable, concept. How can a designated terrorist organization have a museum? And more importantly, why? These answers become abundantly clear after a visit to the museum and a few short conversations with Hezbollah members. The museum is there to document the fight for Israeli expulsion, a reminder of the battles fought between Hezbollah and the IDF. It is, for all intents and purposes, a giant propaganda tool designed as a museum. Admittedly so, it is shockingly well done. This is where you hear a completely

different side of the story, the inside accounts of how Hezbollah validated its actions and why the group does what it does, straight from the horse's mouth.

At the very beginning of the tour, visitors are ushered into an auditorium where a large, movie theater-style screen opens with an introduction reminiscent of one you may see at the Franklin Institute or the Museum of Natural History. What follows is a ten-minute video, detailing the events of the invasion up to the liberation of Lebanon. Throughout the video, key figures of Hezbollah are followed, detailing the actions taken against the IDF and the cities that

"The martyrdom and devotion of the soldiers was so great that soldiers commonly dug, and slept in, their own graves to prepare them for the death to come in battle."

were taken and subsequently won back amidst a running video of scenes of war, destruction, and rallies. Finally, the video culminates to a compilation of speeches by al-Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, both threatening Israel if they attempt to take Lebanon again, and finally stating "Israel saqatat" or "Israel has fallen".

Following the video a guide leads you around the former compound. The first site is "The Abyss", which is a large pit in the ground filled with twisted and mangled Israeli military equipment, vehicles, helicopters, missiles, and weapons. The placement in "The Abyss" was used to show that Israel has fallen into oblivion and will not rise again. In the center of the abyss sits their prized

possession; the most advanced tank Israel had with the gun barrel twisted into a pretzel-like shape, showing that Hezbollah has made Israel unable to fight anymore.

Next to the tank is a tombstone with the Star of David emblazoned on the front, knocked over facing the west. In the east is a large, elevated monument. Hezbollah describes the placement of these objects as having significance. The Israeli tombstone is facing the west, the direction of the setting sun, symbolizing that the sun has set on Israel and they are now left in an eternal, evil darkness. The monument, in the direction of the rising sun, shows that

Lebanon has risen and will remain forever righteous.

The rest of the museum takes visitors through the woods to see relics of foxholes, sniper outposts, and even a 200 meter long tunnel bored into the side of the mountain, which served as a bunker. All while walking through this area, a Hezbollah member narrated the struggle against the IDF. They started with the beginning of the invasion. The guide tells visitors stories of Israelis displacing the Lebanese, taking over businesses and homes, and uprooting society. They follow by explaining that, in order to liberate Lebanon from Israeli occupation, they had to start uprising to upset the occupation and push for them to leave. After the assassination of Sheikh Ragheb Harb, a man whose leadership in-

spired the formation of Hezbollah, revolts grew and began to become militarized.

They continue on to describe the horrors of war for their soldiers, who served as martyrs for their country. They say that soldiers spent months living in the freezing forests on the mountain in Mleeta in order to fight the IDF. They tell stories of hiding their rockets and missiles from Israeli planes looking to bomb them, even setting up dummy rockets to fool the Israelis. The martyrdom and devotion of the soldiers was so great that soldiers commonly dug, and slept in, their own graves to prepare them for the death to come in battle.

The tour concludes with a walk through an indoor museum showcasing captured weapons, and a map detailing every Hezbollah victory over Israel. The battle helmets of Israeli soldiers are in the floor under plexi glass. A Hezbollah member tells visitors that the helmets are there so that "you can walk on the heads of the Israelis".

The story of struggle is well told by the guides and placards at this museum. They make sure the

"This is where you hear a completely different side of the story, the inside accounts of how Hezbollah validated its actions and why the group does what it does, straight from the horse's mouth."

harrowing efforts of their soldiers are known and the struggles of the Lebanese people are remembered. What this museum does not speak of is what has given Hezbollah the terrorist distinction it has today. Nowhere is the mention of airline hijackings or embassy bombings. Hezbollah makes sure to stress that



PHOTO BY DYLAN RHILE

Israel's most advanced weapon of the time, Hezbollah's prized capture, displayed with a knotted barrel.

it is not a terrorist group, but a just and well-warranted army fighting for the continued freedom of their young nation.

What we're left with is the question of why did Hezbollah decide to make a museum in the first place? The answer is simple; the war of violence is over for now, but the propaganda war has just begun. The best way to ensure that propaganda is effective is to control it, which, for Hezbollah,

means showing the struggles of their soldiers and the people, detailing atrocities carried out by the Israelis and making sure that the negative tactics used by them stay well removed from history. The fact is, that as crazy as it may seem, this propaganda is effective. The museum has had millions of visitors since its opening in 2010. Hez-

bollah has found an effective way to get its side of the story out there, which, is necessary as it is a side of the story that many, especially those in the states, do not hear very often. While Hezbollah has been responsible for actions viewed negatively in the public eye, they also make it clear that they fought for their people.

The allure of visiting a museum run by a designated terrorist organization is real. Curiosity draws tourists and Lebanese citizens to the museum daily. On this front, Hezbollah has shown the importance of propaganda, and surprisingly, has done a very good job at it. This is the new face of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Just as much force can be exercised with words, pictures, and monuments as they can with bullets and bombs, and right now, Hezbollah is fighting to make sure it has the upper hand in this conflict. The direction of propaganda can and will shape this conflict for years to come, and strong propaganda will inevitably lead to far greater chances of success. Hezbollah has understood this fact and is ensuring it capitalizes on that fact, right down to the gift shop. 🌐

THE PINK TIDE RECEDES

A shake-up in Latin American foreign relations

BY: EDUARDO COCCARO

Ten years ago, Latin America found itself in a unique situation in its history: for the first time, left-wing governments had come to power in the vast majority of countries in the region. Even more singularly, they had all done so in a democratic and peaceful fashion. From Chile's Michelle Bachelet to Ecuador's Rafael Correa, left-leaning leaders sat in the same presidential offices that had just a few decades ago been occupied by military juntas propped up by the Condor Plan, the CIA's anti-communist regime-toppling strategy in Latin America.

Fueled by a commodities bonanza, the pink tide at first enjoyed enormous public approval. China's voracious appetite for iron ore, soybeans, and oil sustained a decade of growth throughout the region. In particular, the high price of oil allowed Venezuela's Hugo Chávez to splurge with a series of regional integration projects such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, or ALBA. In addition to that, friendly regimes such as the ones in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua received ample support in terms of petrodollars, all of which helped solidify the rise of what Mr. Chávez termed as his "Bolivarian revo-

lution." Namely, Latin American governments received a financial and ideological incentive to distance themselves from Washington and heed to Caracas' call for "twenty-first century socialism."

Such largesse, however, met a dead end with the plunge in global oil prices. As the flow of Venezuelan petrodollars stemmed, countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia were forced to look elsewhere for cash. Invariably, this meant institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund,

which implied a return to both fiscal and monetary orthodoxy. The grand schemes dreamed up by Mr. Chávez and his Bolivarian acolytes ended up never fully materializing, as the left gradually loses its clout over the region. In Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's peronistas were ousted last year by the liberals led by Mauricio Macri. Brazil's Dilma Rousseff, of the Workers' Party, is in the mire of a corruption scandal and a political crisis that could yet bring about her impeachment; in any case, her par-



PHOTO BY RAMON ESPINOSA | ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro wave to the crowd following their joint news conference in Havana on March 21. Obama's visit to Cuba marked the first time a sitting president had visited the island nation in 88 years.

ty has long distanced itself from its grass-roots in order to favor specific financial and agro-industrial interests. Even in Venezuela, the opposition won by a landslide in last year's legislative elections

Even Cuba, the lone communist island nation in the Western Hemisphere, has warmed up to American dollars in recent years. Barack Obama's March visit to Havana has set a milestone in the relationship between the world's foremost capitalist country and its red neighbor. The thawing of the American-imposed embargo would bring with it enormous economic benefits to Cuba, and Washington policymakers expect political liberalization to follow economic openness.

The present state of Latin America's foreign relations scenario is therefore subject to significant alterations. For example, look at Macri's election vow to exclude Venezuela from the South American Common Market, MERCOSUL, because of its disrespect for democratic norms and human rights. Although Macri has since rescinded on his promise after taking office as a gesture of goodwill to Nicolás Maduro's government, who recognized the opposition's latest electoral victories, the animosity between the chancelleries of both countries is palpable. Rumors that the MERCOSUL might temporarily suspend Brazil's membership in the event of Rousseff's impeachment sent little shock through Brazilian society, partly because the organization's reputation has been significantly discredited by mainstream publications over recent years as a result of its chavista influences.

Issues that have long dominated foreign affairs in the region are now coming to a close, bringing other matters to the fore. Colombia's long struggle with drug

cartels nears its end, with the last decade seeing significant advances in the level of safety provided to Colombian citizens and a drastic decrease in the cartels' power. At the same time, Bogotá nears the completion of a peace deal with the FARC guerrillas, bringing an end to decades of brutal fighting with the Marxist rebels. As Co-

Chinese forces are being trained by the Brazilian military in jungle warfare.

Perhaps more so than ever before, the United States will have to interact with civil societies south of the border if it is to maintain its regional clout. The U.S. is advantageously positioned for this task, given its large Latin

"Perhaps more so than ever before, the United States will have to interact with civil societies south of the border if it is to maintain its regional clout."

Colombians enjoy greater peace, the U.S.-backed Plan Colombia will be gradually down-phased. Similarly, as relations between Havana and Washington warm up, the issue of the Cuban embargo will finally stop inflaming tempers in Latin America.

New issues will emerge related to China's greater weight in regional affairs. Chinese economic slowdown has already sent the Brazilian and Venezuelan economies on a tailspin; if it proceeds unabated, many other Latin American countries will see their present economic woes worsen. Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador, who denounced the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance as an instrument of American imperialism, may be tempted to seek security assurances from Beijing. Given Chinese ire over what it sees as American interference in its near abroad, this hypothesis may not be too far-fetched. Chinese investors are building a competitor to the (until recently U.S.-controlled) Panama Canal in Nicaragua, and

American diaspora and the influence American social media companies yield throughout the region. As the Bolivarian specter is relegated to the past, the U.S. has the opportunity to chart new relations with several countries where its prestige ran low in the past decade. However, American policymakers seem to relegate little attention to the region at present. As Dr. John J. Mearsheimer told this writer, "You [Brazilians] should be happy the U.S. isn't interfering in the region." Certainly, American intellectual and public policy opinion remains split regarding further active political engagement south of the border.

The current political shake-up is healthy. Democratic societies thrive on the alternation of power. Social justice will remain a guiding principle of Latin American development for years to come, if current leaders' words are anything to go by. As regional democracies mature, they will forge strategic visions that go beyond the plans of the political parties in power at any given moment. 🌐

NOT JUST A BORDERLAND

Why Ukraine Still Matters

BY: JAKE COHEN

The world has moved on from Ukraine. Our minds have been distracted by topics ranging from the conflict in Syria, to the Chinese economy, to ISIS' increasingly global presence and the US presidential election fiasco. As much as the crisis in Ukraine has disappeared from our minds, it is still very real in the hearts and minds of those still living the nightmare in the shadow of war.

Background

To truly understand the Ukraine crisis, we must start at the beginning. Known to the Soviet Union as “the Ukraine” (the borderland), Ukraine emerged from the Cold War in 1991. Just thirteen years later, political upheaval ignited the famous “Orange Revolution” in protest of the obvious vote rigging in Viktor Yanukovich's election as president. As a result of the protests, the far more Western-friendly Viktor Yushchenko replaced Yanukovich. In 2006, Yanukovich rose to the position of Prime Minister, but was again ousted in December of 2007 – the time by another pro-West politician, Yulia Tymoshenko.

In 2010, dire economic straits and a poor relationship with Russia again led to Yanukovich's election as president. After his installment as president, Tymoshenko was arrested for protesting the results and remained in jail until the successful 2014 revolution. Between 2010 and the end of 2013, Yanukovich was forced to balance a deteriorating economy with economic relief options offered by Russia and the EU. The situation came to a head in November 2013 when Yanukovich announced a sudden change of heart and vetoed plans to sign an association agreement with the European Union.

The failure of Yanukovich's corrupt regime to break from Russian dependence was the last straw for the Ukrainian population. Beginning in November 2013, nearly 800,000 Ukrainians took to the streets and occupied government buildings in Kiev in the “Euromaidan” protests. After months of violent clashes between security forces and

protesters, Yanukovich was ousted from office and forced to flee to Russia on February 22, 2014.

Here the current Ukraine crisis begins. After the success of the revolution in ousting Yanukovich, Moscow intervened against the new anti-Russian government. During the last days of February, “pro-Russian” forces seized government buildings in Crimea and declared the territory to be a new annex of Russia. By mid-March, a referendum alleged that 97 percent of Crimean citizens supported annexation. Putin was quick to absorb Crimea as new sovereign territory of Russia. He also announced that he would protect Russian interests in Ukraine.

By April, a full-blown military conflict was underway in eastern Ukraine, with pro-Russian militants and Russian military forces battling the Ukrainian military in the provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk. The conflict made international headlines, and was briefly propelled to front pages across the world after pro-Russian rebels shot down a Malaysian Airlines flight, killing nearly 300 people. The bloody conflict continued for several months, and with slowly rising body counts and minimal territorial shift, reporting by Western media outlets fizzled.

A ceasefire was signed September 2014 in Minsk, only to be broken by November. Another ceasefire agreement, Minsk II, was signed in February 2015, but this has yet to bring hostilities to an end. Minsk II created a 30-kilometer buffer zone between the separatist territory and Ukrainian-controlled land.

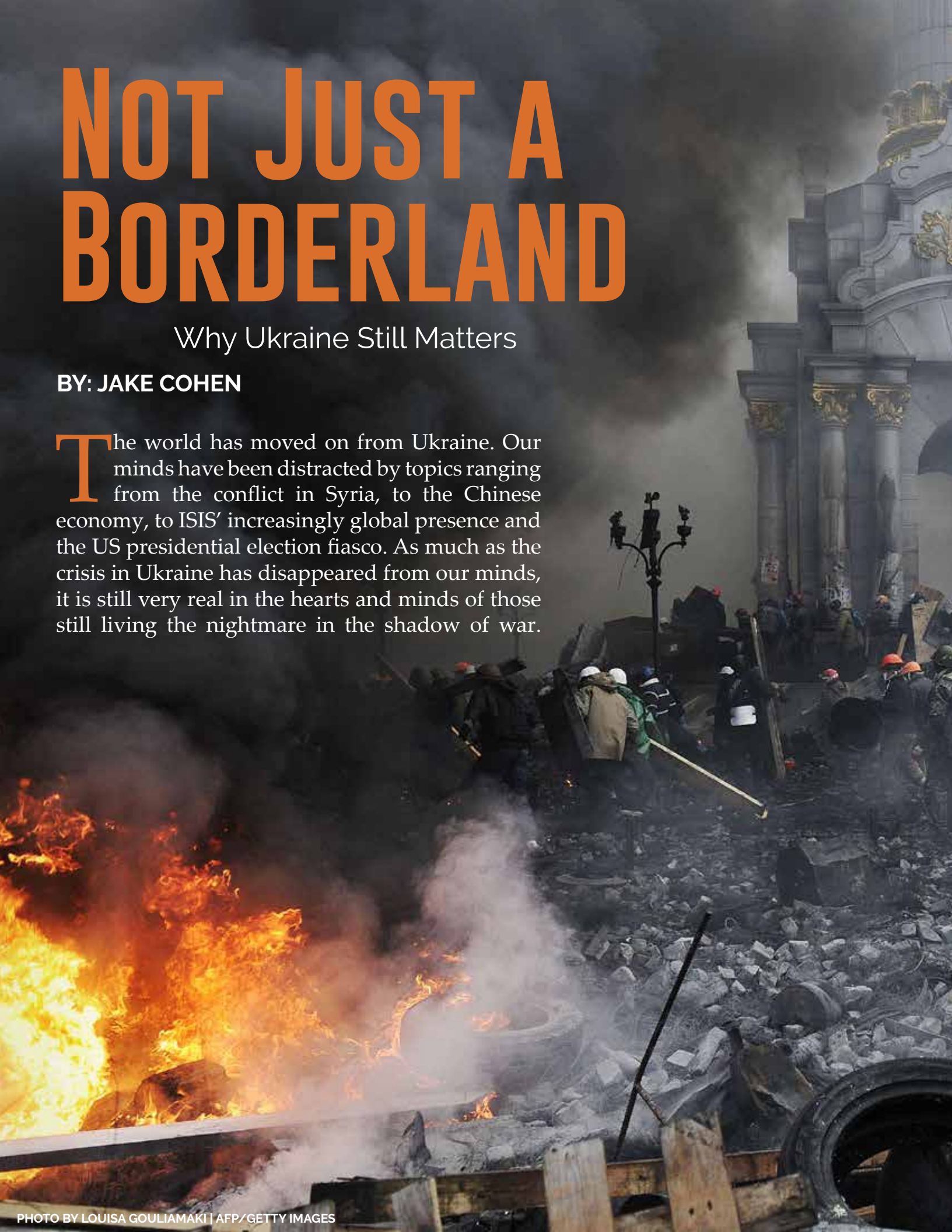
While major bouts of fighting appear to be over, those living in the disputed territory in Ukraine are still forced to endure military occupation and near-constant violence.

Current Situation

Since Minsk II, it has been difficult to get real news about the Ukraine crisis. As Russia has become more deeply involved in the Syrian conflict, Ukraine seems to have fallen by the wayside. However, more attention should be given to the first prolonged military conflict in Europe since the Second World War. While Russia has scaled its military involvement back since Minsk II, the fighting in disputed territory continues with no clear end in sight.

One of the few news sources still following the Ukraine crisis is a project of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty called “The Interpreter.” With daily blog posts and updates about major developments in Ukraine, “The Interpreter” is focused on translating Russian news into English. As of April 8, 2016, the blog was on day 781 – an indication of the escalation of fighting along the ceasefire line created by Minsk II. Indeed, the situation in Ukraine has been getting worse in the past month.

While the military alterations drag on, the political sphere has not remained free of conflict. On March 22, Russia sentenced Ukrainian Pilot Nadiya Savchenko to twenty-two years in prison for her alleged involvement in the deaths of two Russian journalists. Savchenko has become a hero to many in Ukraine – a symbol of the oppressive Russian regime's tactics for controlling Ukraine. The U.S.



State Department condemned the verdict for showing “a blatant disregard for the principles of justice.”

The toothless response to the Savchenko trial is representative of the Western attitude towards Ukraine. Plenty of rhetoric has come from US and EU leaders criticizing the unfair and illegal trial; however, no significant action to right the situation has been taken. Russia and her proxies have continued to send soldiers and weapons into Ukraine, kill Ukrainians, annex Ukrainian land, and even shoot down a


civilian airliner. The response from the West since the first Russian annexation in March has been steadfast and entirely ineffective: sanctions, sanctions, and more sanctions.

Trends

There are two key trends to monitor in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, and both have to do with Russian policy priorities. Putin’s Russia is worried about economic loyalty in former Soviet states and military positioning against the NATO axis. While Moscow likes to tout the principles of “Russian

interests” and protecting “ethnic Russians” in Ukraine and Crimea, there are much broader political and economic incentives for Russia to perpetuate the Ukraine Crisis.

Natural gas has played one of the most critical roles in disputes between Moscow and Kiev. Ukraine relies on large quantities of Russian gas to heat its homes, and Putin has been effective at exploiting this dependence. Russia has repeatedly cut off Ukrainian access to natural gas since 2006, using it as a tool to coerce more favorable contracts, a permanent naval base in Crimea, Yanukovych’s election, and even to appease

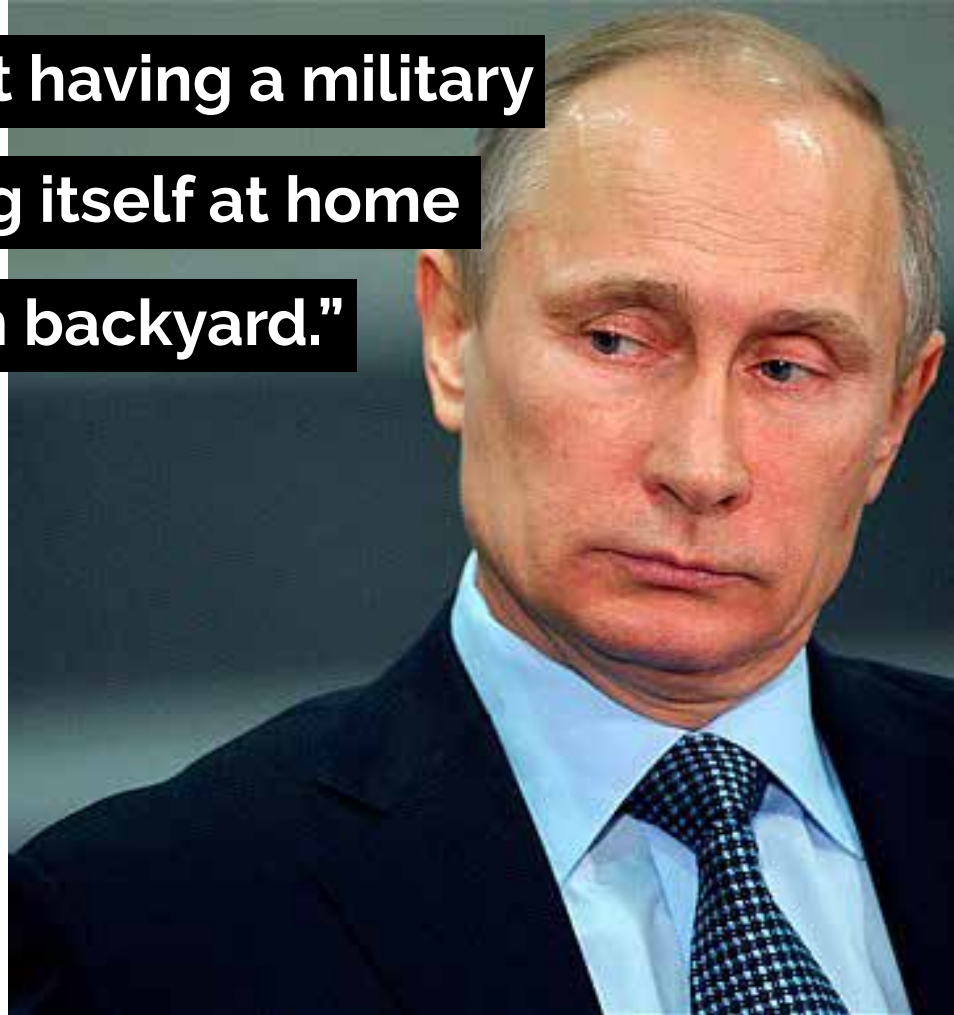


“The response from the West has been steadfast and entirely ineffective: sanctions, sanctions, sanctions.”

protesters during the Euro-maidan. Most recently, in June 2015, Moscow briefly cut off the supply in response to months of unpaid bills.

These natural gas cutoffs serve a clear political purpose. However, they more broadly underscore a Russian sensitivity to Ukrainian economic decisions. Gas is only one component of the strong trade ties — largely Russian exports to Ukraine — that developed in the wake of the fall of the USSR. In 2013, when Yanukovych was prepared to sign a landmark association agreement — effectively a trade deal — with the EU, Moscow was threatened. Strengthened Ukrainian asso-

PHOTO BY CREATIVE COMMONS



“We are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our own backyard.”

ciation with the EU meant less trade with Russia.

Apart from Moscow’s economic interests, we cannot underestimate the perceived threat of NATO expansion. The Russian historical memory lasts far longer than American memory — to Russians, the threats and dangers of the Cold War are still part of their reality. The mere fact that NATO still exists, and is more powerful than it was during the Cold War, looms large in Russian national security concerns.

Putin has been vocal about his opposition to NATO expansion eastward. In a speech defending Russian actions in Crimea, he declared, “NATO remains a military alliance, and we are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our own backyard.”

As the EU continues its eastward march, NATO has also expanded into former Soviet territory. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined the alliance in 1999, followed by the Baltic States, Romania, Slovakia, and Lithuania, among others, in 2004. Russians view the US-led alliance as a concerted block against Russian interests. The economic and security threats posed by the EU and NATO expansion are important factors in Russian actions in Ukraine

that cannot be understated: Putin and Russia will not feel comfortable allowing yet another former Soviet state “fall” to the West.

What comes next?

The short- and mid-term prospects for Ukraine are grim. As the conflict continues to drag on and body counts rise, Russia continues to accomplish its policy goals. Moscow is resilient enough to weather sanctions, which will eventually lose their political punch as Western publics shift their attention elsewhere. Putin will continue to justify his actions with the protection of “ethnic Russians” to the domestic Russian population, and Ukraine will be satisfactorily punished

for seeking economic independence.

The months of continuous fighting in Ukraine are showing no signs of resolution. The de facto border established by Minsk II has barely shifted, and the populations on both sides are gradually losing the will to sustain the war.

So when will the West care about Ukraine again? In all likelihood, it will be when Putin tries to yet again distract the international community from other dimensions of Russia’s aggressive foreign policy. Although Western powers seem to have lost focus on the Ukraine crisis, it still has powerful political and military implications for the foreseeable future. ☹

PHOTO BY RIA NOVOSTI | REUTERS

ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRACY AND SELECTIVE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: OROMO SUFFERING

BY: HALLE ABRAHAM

Ethiopia is a country that has often been the face of African democracy and resistance to imperialism. As the only country besides Liberia to never be colonized by a European power, and as the victors of the 1896 battle of Adwa (the first victory against a European power by an African Country), throughout its stand-alone and diplomatic history, Ethiopia has garnered the support and respect of the African diaspora. Moreover, in the western world, Ethiopia is seen as a democratic nation that is cooperative in international institutions, especially for an African country. However, the political and ethnic situation in Ethiopia is much more convoluted than one may expect—the instability of the region of the Horn of Africa, and the domineering power dynamic within its relationship with the United States has allowed for many political and ethnic clashes to go unnoticed and unattended to.

Ethiopia is the home to over 80 different ethnic groups, all of which are recognized by the Ethiopian government. The most populous four groups are the Oromo, Somali, Am-

hara, and Tigray, with the Oromo's leading at 34.4%. Currently, Ethiopia is governed by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front—which is heavily controlled by the Tigray—and has a 547 member constituent assembly.

The Oromo are one ethnic group that have faced discrimination in their country for centuries. Following a century of Oromo monarchical rule over the highlands of Ethiopia, the Amhara, who were considered ethnically and politically superior, consolidated their power over the Oromo, and killed them in large numbers—especially during the rule of emperor Menelik II. In the 1980s during the rule of the Marxist Derg, Oromos were moved into concentration camps in large numbers. During Ethiopia's 30-year-war with Eritrea, Oromos made up the majority of those drafted. Between 1992 and 2001, and estimated 66,000 Oromos were killed or had “disappeared.”

In January of this year, the Capital of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa)'s Administrative control set out to expand into the Oromia region of Ethi-

opia. Oromia is the largest region surround Addis Ababa, so the speculation was met with outrage and a commitment to stopping the action. As a result of the concern that the expansion would displace farmers and their land, members of the Oromo ethnic group organized peaceful protests in their communities, catching the attention of lingering government officials. The peaceful protests were met by the police's use of tear gas and live bullets. The Human Rights Watch is accusing the Ethiopian government of killing at least 140 people, but judging by videos that have circulated on social media, this is a gross underestimation.

The Oromo's concerns did not simply begin at the Capital's administrative plan of expansion and its concern for farmland. The Oromo ethnic group's largest legally registered political Party is the OFC—or the Oromo federalist Congress—which has no seats in Ethiopian parliament. Prominent Oromo activists have expressed the ethnic group's disdain with being the largest ethnic group in the country and all the while completely deprived

of any economic or political power.

Furthermore, the tension has not ceased at the police brutality. Although the government has regressed in their plans to expand Addis Ababa into Oromia following the Oromo massacre, the government has still arrested and detained prominent Oromo intellectuals, like Bekele Gerba. Gerba is currently in Maekalawi Prison under allegations that he is a terrorist because of his opposition to the Ethiopian government by speaking out and organizing peaceful protests. The government is now accusing Oromo protests of fostering links with terrorist groups.

Bekele Gerba said, “Prison is... also the other way of life as an Ethiopian; unfortunately it has become the fate of many of our people... Especially when it comes to the Oromo, they are there in great numbers.” Gerba has said that the injustices he and other members of his ethnic group have faced as victims of corruption, police brutality, and censorship have been normalized in the country.

Ethiopia and the United States

Ethiopia and the United States have a very close diplomatic relationship: The United States has made its support for Ethiopia known on the global stage and has heralded Ethiopia as a champion of democracy and

human rights in the horn of Africa. America's relationship with Ethiopia became particularly significant after the September 11 attacks, in which the United States trained Ethiopian troops for an invasion of Somali in order to fight terrorism—specifically al-Qaeda—in the region. The knowledge that a government body with 547 seats had been taken over by the ruling party and allied constituents has had virtually no effect on their relationship. So, when Ethiopia began to repress and abuse an ethnic group that represents 25 million out of 75 million people in the country, the United States and other allies' speak-

cal proponent, but it is also Ethiopia's greatest monetary supporter. This is Ethiopia's compensation for doing the United States' difficult and intensive work in Ethiopia.

However, the aid is not reaching the people so much as it is funding the violent campaigns of the political majority: much of the Southern Ethiopia population (comprised of Oromos, among other ethnic minorities) have received absolutely no food aid or government support. On the contrary, the Oromos continue to be detained at huge numbers, and are suffering more than any other group in arrests and killings correlated with the

“Prison is...also the other way of life as an Ethiopian; unfortunately it has become the fate of many of our people... Especially when it comes to the Oromo, they are there in great numbers.”

ing out—or failure to do so—was highly anticipated and a topic of contention.

Since its elections in 2010, America has given Ethiopia over \$2 billion US dollars in aid. The United States is Ethiopia's strongest ideologi-

2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.

Consequently, donors have been ignoring and downplaying the severity of the Oromo Massacre and subsequent repression: In fact, in 2011 while this “ethnic cleansing” of sorts was occurring, the United States was flying drones from its base right next to an Oromo region.

Ethiopia is playing its cards carefully in order to avoid serious consequences regarding human rights abuses in the international arena, but it is uncertain as to whether the United States will ever sacrifice the convenience of their relationship with Ethiopia to denounce human rights of a minority group. This situation highlights the inefficiency of aid in corrupt countries, but it also speaks to the integrity of major Western superpowers, who say they support democracy, but often turn a blind eye to torture, repression, and systemic negligence. ☹



PHOTO BY GADAA.COM

IMPENDING EU REFERENDUM DIVIDES THE UK

BY: SERENA HAJJAR

On June 23, 2016, residents and nationals of the United Kingdom will vote in a referendum, the outcome of which will determine whether the UK remains a member of the European Union. The official question will be worded as follows: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"

The topic rose once again to the national conversation with the Conservative victory in last May's elections. The combination of Euroscepticism within his triumphant party and the growing popularity of the rival UK Independence Party led Prime Minister David Cameron to make the promise of a referendum. However, many pundits argue that if not for these factors, Cameron would not have pushed for a vote.

In February, Cameron and fellow EU leaders convened in Brussels to renegotiate Britain's terms of membership. The result was a landmark deal which Cameron claimed would grant the UK "special status" in the EU by increasing the country's sovereignty over its own affairs. The Prime Minister was able to negotiate the UK's explicit exemption from the founding goal of "ever closer union" in addition to concessions on migrant workers' welfare rights and safeguards for the City of London financial center. He is now determined to ensure the UK's place in the organization.

"In an uncertain world is this really the time to add a huge new risk to our national and our economic security? I don't believe that is right for Britain. I believe we are stronger, safer and better off inside a reformed EU

and that is why I will be campaigning with all my heart and soul to persuade the British people to remain in the reformed EU that we have secured today," he said following the summit in Brussels.

Eurosceptics, however, are not convinced.

"David Cameron always wanted to campaign to stay in the EU so he only ever asked for very minor changes. He will now declare victory but it is an entirely hollow one: the EU courts are still in control of our borders and our laws, we still send £350 million a week to the EU instead of spending it here on our priorities and we have not taken back any control," said Matthew Elliot, Chief Executive of the "Vote Leave" campaign.

The debate over the UK's membership in the EU goes back several decades. In 1973, under Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath, the UK joined the European Economic Community, which would later become the EU. In 1975, a referendum was held to determine the future of the UK's participation in the Union. All three of Britain's major parties -- the Labor Party, the Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats -- its national newspapers, and 67 percent of the populace voted in favor of the UK retaining its membership. Yet in the past 40 years, there have been growing calls both from the public as well as politicians who claim that the organization has changed significantly since the last referendum. Indeed, the EU is now comprised of 28 nations (the UK was only the ninth country to enter in 1973) and has gradually extended its authority



PHOTO BY DAVID SIMONDS | THE OBSERVER

Cameron's upcoming challenge will be to prepare for a modified referendum on Europe.

over various aspects of its constituents' daily lives.

Currently, the UK is already the Union's most semi-detached member, having exempted itself from several major EU policies. It has elected not to use the Euro, the single currency shared by 19 EU member states. The UK has also opted out of the Schengen Area, which guarantees free movement by enabling citizens of the Union to cross international borders without being subjected to border checks.

The UK is the second-largest economy in the organization and one of two EU countries that holds a permanent spot on the United Nations Security Council. A British exit -- or "Brexit," as it has come to be known -- would mark the first time a member country has voted to leave the organization. Symbolically, it would abolish the concept of the EU as the natural home of European democracies and undo the continent's post-WWII commitment to achieving an "ever closer union."

Because a potential Brexit places the UK and the EU in uncharted wa-

ters, it is difficult to predict the consequences of such an outcome. Regardless, certain facts are undeniable. Leaving the Union would relieve the UK of its responsibility to contribute to the EU budget, yielding an immediate saving in spending. In 2015, the UK paid £13 billion while receiving £4.5 billion, resulting in a net contribution of £8.5 billion. This figure represents about 7 percent of the government's annual spending on the National Health Service.

The bigger question lies in whether the financial advantages which accompany membership, such as free trade and inward investment, exceed the upfront expenses. Because the Union operates as a single market, no tariffs are levied on imports and exports between EU nations. As a current member of the organization, the UK sends over 50 percent of its exports to countries in the Union and has a voice in the formulation of trading rules. In addition, Britain benefits from trade deals between the EU and other world powers. While leaving the Union would put the UK at risk of los-

ing some of that negotiating power, it would be free to institute its own trade agreements.

Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party, believes one option would be to follow Norway, which has access to the single market without being bound to EU laws on areas such as agriculture, justice, and home affairs. Others disagree, maintaining that the UK would remain bound by virtually all EU regulations while giving up its influence over the content of the latter.

In terms of investment in British banks, pro-Europeans argue that if the UK is no longer seen as a gateway to the EU for the likes of US banks, it will lose its position as one of the world's biggest financial centers. Eurosceptics, on the other hand, contend that a Britain free from the Union's rules and regulations could regenerate itself as a Singapore-style revved-up economy.

As June looms nearer on the horizon, these considerations weigh heavily on the heads of British politicians and nationals who will determine the future of the UK's role in the EU. 🌐



PHOTO BY REUTERS

TURKEY'S TERROR PROBLEM

String of terrorist attacks tears through the nation

BY: MENA SHANAB

A 660 pound car bomb consisting of RDX, TNT and ammonium nitrate was detonated in a public square in the middle of Ankara on March 13 killing at least 37 and injuring over 125 others. This bombing is the latest in a string of brutal terrorist attacks that have destabilized Turkey over the past several months.

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons, or TAK—a branch of the pro-Kurdish group PKK—claimed responsibility for these attacks by publishing a statement on their website that stated that they attacked on Sunday “in the heart of the fascist Turkish republic.” The PKK, also known as the Kurdistan Worker’s Party, is a separatist group

that has been engaged in a violent struggle with the Turkish government for many decades and has been labeled as a terrorist group by Turkey, the EU and the United States.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan asserted that terrorist organizations were targeting civilians due to their dismay with the fighting against the security forces of Turkey. The bombing has made many citizens question the Turkish government’s security capabilities. The attack on the capital happened a mere two days after the United States Embassy informed Turkey that a possible terror plot might unfold in Ankara.

Turkey has increasingly succumbed to violence due to calamitous attacks from both the extremist Islamic State and Kurdish militants—who are engaged in a long-term insurgency against Turkey. These Kurdish militants have been targeting the government, the military and even activists. However, this most recent attack was different in nature; it targeted civilians in a bustling transportation center.

Less than a month ago, a deadly bombing on a military convoy in Ankara killed 28 people and exacerbated the country’s vulnerabili-

ty to both the Kurdish insurgency and the Syrian War. The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons also claimed responsibility for attack. Tensions were raised when the Turkish government put the blame on a Syrian Kurdish militant group which was backed by the United States in the struggle against ISIS. Turkey believed that bombing was in response to Turkish counterinsurgency action in the Kurd-dominated southeast. “Turkey has been shelling positions held in northern Syria by Kurdish militias that it deems to be extensions of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party”, details a New York Times post. The PKK has been in a struggle with the Turkish government over autonomy for more than 30 years.

The attack on March 13 that specifically targeted civilians has incited fears of violence erupting in large metropolitan areas. The attack rocked Kizilay Square—one of Ankara’s busiest and most popular commercial hubs. However, in October Ankara was attacked by what many say was the deadliest bombing in Turkey’s modern history. ISIS claimed responsibility for this specific terror attack that killed over a 100 people, mostly Kurds. Similarly to the other attacks that have occurred in Turkey, authorities banned local media coverage of the event and later, a court issued a block on social media outlets in hopes of stopping the spread of pictures from the bombing site.

Dispelling accusation of having connection to the PKK, the pro-Kurdish party with representation in Parliament condemned the attack on March 13, saying that they “shared the huge pain” experienced by the rest of Turkey. This statement is important because recently PM Davutoglu attempted to strip the senior party members of their immunity in order to charge them for having ties to the PKK.



PHOTO BY SEDAT SUNA | EPA

Relatives of Elvin Bugra Arslan, one of the victims of the 13 March car bomb explosion in Ankara, mourn over his coffin during a funeral ceremony in Ankara, Turkey, 15 March 2016.

Violence has increased in southeastern Turkey since the 2013 PKK ceasefire collapsed in July. This latest attack in Ankara exacerbated fighting between Kurdish militants and Turkish security forces. Diyarbakir witnessed some of the deadliest violence in the week following the bombing. Conflict between PKK fighters and security forces erupted and resulted in the death of one police officer and three militants.

Along with violent clashes, curfews have been imposed in parts of Diyarbakir from “3 a.m. (0100 GMT) after militants began to set up barricades, dig ditches and plant explosives,” authorities said. Tensions remained high all throughout southeast Turkey as clashes continued in the morning with tanks and police in armored vehicles were utilized against the PKK. The Turk-

ish military also launched airstrikes against the PKK main military bases in the mountainous area of northern Iraq on March 14 which killed about 45 PKK militants.

This latest bombing has many questioning the state of Turkey’s government. It has endured four major terrorist strikes in the last five months alone. In recent months, Ankara has failed to protect its citizens from enemies who are entering from Syria as well as brutal attacks in the center of its capital. Will Turkey slip into a dilapidated state? It all depends on if the Turkish government is able to curb the surging violence with Kurdish militants as well as the Islamic State in Syria. What is abundantly clear, however, is that Turkey needs to revitalize and reform its security in order to eradicate this entrenched terrorist infrastructure. 🌐



PHOTO BY MEHMET OZER | REUTERS

A vehicle burns after an explosion in Ankara, Turkey, on March 13, 2016.

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