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On The Decentralized Nature of the Egyptian Revolution

Whereas Neoliberal norms tend to be enforced from an authoritative center, the Egyptian Revolution suggests that resistance to Authoritative Neoliberalism may tend to be decentralized in nature

By Adam Goldstein

In 2011 the Egyptian protest movement rocked not just the Middle East, but the world as well. A population long deemed to be pacified and satiated demolished the Mubarak Regime, challenging the preconceived notions about the region held by many. We still feel its repercussions today, as the Egyptian government doubles-down on its authoritarian modality. Despite its ostensible unpredictability, there was a clear tension and method of political agitation that contributed to the revolutions we understand to be a key part of the Arab Spring.

This essay asserts that first, neoliberalism is the world’s dominant economic system, and thus places certain pressures on governments wishing to participate. Second, authoritarianism is the mechanism to enforce and maintain the neoliberal structure, and in doing so, prevented neoliberalism’s traditionally coherent opposition, labor, from forming. Third, opposition took a decidedly decentralized and broad path toward agitation. To expand on the relationship between the three points, authoritarianism is utilized to maintain Egypt’s neoliberal structures, and in doing so, created the movement(s) that ultimately overthrew the government. We cannot pinpoint one specific cause to explain the Egyptian protests. Instead, it is the synthesis of systems of economics and government, the institutions that reinforce those systems, and the subversive responses to those paradigms that explains the events of 2011.

Neoliberalism, Authoritarianism, and Opposition

Before assessing how these points synthesized to produce the Egyptian Revolution, a great deal of operationalization is necessary. Forming an accurate comprehension of the Egyptian Revolution demands an understanding of the interplay between neoliberalism and authoritarianism and how they might generate a specific type of opposition. While these points are likely applicable to other situations, they manifest most clearly in Egypt and thus offer us the best opportunity to form an exegesis of the Revolution.

To begin, Neoliberalism as an economic theory refers to the freeing of markets and fiscal conservatism, and in essence, the expansion of capitalist policies. These principles generally manifest in deregulation, privatization, and com-
mercialized social programs. So, for example, a baker receiving subsidies from the government to keep bread prices low would have them revoked, forcing them to sell their product at the market price, which may potentially be too high for the baker’s customers.

The result of neoliberal policies is the subordination of labor to capital, in which individuals in the subaltern, or urban underclass; lose agency and power to those in the capitalist class. Neoliberal policies are often a quixotic endeavor, and are typically used to develop the global south. Rather than distributing development gains equitably, benefits of the new system are distributed in the opposite, amplifying spatial disparities, or, geographically stratified wealth distributions. Essentially, neoliberalism’s evisceration of the social safety net obliterated the Fordism-Keynesianism compromise of capitalism plus social welfare and replaced it with a new trickle-down ideology in which pure economic production would (supposedly) increase the general welfare of everyone. What ultimately happened was the widening of wealth disparities and the alienation and severe marginalization of the subaltern from their former capacity to exercise agency.

The main driving force behind the amplification of spatial disparities is the idea of the mega-project. Neoliberalism places specific pressures on governments and economies to remain attractive to industry. Cities are reimagined for the outsider (consumers, tourists, investors, etc.) while those who actually live there are forced to suffer the consequences of the urban space’s sanitization and gentrification. Amplified spatial disparities sans an effective safety net concentrated Cairo’s subaltern into certain areas without a guarantee of a certain quality of life, creating densely packed areas of disenfranchised and alienated individuals lacking access to resources and thus the means to exercise agency. Indeed, Egyptians likely joined protest movements en masse to increase agency, highlighting the link between agitation and alienation.

Understandably, the subaltern did not respond positively to the neoliberal system. While the Egyptian urban bourgeoisie enjoyed their newfound access to international capital, Cairo’s subaltern were increasingly alienated from their access to resources they had long enjoyed. Yet, the state’s coercive apparatus subverted attempts at political agitation. The authoritarian state’s ability to suppress opposition depends on the “strength, coherence, and effectiveness” of its coercive institutions. Democratic opposition manifests when coercive apparatuses are weak, incoherent, and ineffective. Indeed, utilizing security apparatuses to violently repress the masses is a commonly considered strategy for authoritarian regimes. A strong security service will violently suppress organized opposition and in turn, fomenting disorganization.

Securitization of civil society in Egypt was the process in which the security organizations regulated and confined the assemblages of the general population. Security organizations utilized torture and forced disappearances to dissuade organized opposition. The targeting of specific groups prevented opposition consolidation and kept dissidents from coordinating too closely. This strategy undermined cohesive opposition and forced dissent into localized and individualized incidents. While this process is far from unique to Egypt, it played a key role in creating the type of agitation that manifested during the revolution.

Due to the Egyptian Revolution’s origins in the neoliberal transformation and its policies of structural adjustment (the reorientation of the economic system toward neoliberalism in exchange for outside funding), the grievances of the protesters’ opposition to the neoliberal system and its oppressive reinforcement mechanisms originally manifested in labor oriented agitation. Yet the state’s coercive apparatuses, the preponderance of which is a hallmark of the governments that the Arab Spring challenged, prevented large-scale labor mobilization against the neoliberal system. Opposition, thus, took a less cohesive approach, and instead, followed a decentralized and flexible path. It was more a rage against the systems oppressing the subaltern than a specific call to action.

While this section pinpoints the neolib-
eral source of the grievances, the mechanism to enforce the neoliberal system, and classifies the modes of opposition, the following utilizes the Egyptian case to demonstrate how the three factors synthesized to produce revolution in 2011.

**Egypt**

Beginning in the 1970s, Anwar Sadat’s Egypt underwent a neoliberal transformation (Infitah), in which the government remade urban centers, cut social spending, and privatized jobs and social services. As Egypt continued its neoliberal transition, urban development became one method to attract industry, facilitated by the mega project. A mega project should be understood as a massive reorganization of private and public space. In essence, these mega projects force the subaltern into informal residential quarters built on public or agricultural land. Urban redevelopment projects are a direct result of the pressures placed on the neoliberal state. When entering the capitalist space, competition becomes a driver of action. To attract business and skilled workers, the state needs to create an “attractive” place for them to live and work, as the plans for the development project Cairo 2050 showcase. So while these programs certainly generated wealth, the de facto exile of the subaltern from their traditional homes to informal or grossly inadequate public housing, combined with social security’s evisceration meant that the subaltern became increasingly alienated and marginalized, creating the main demographic behind the 2011 revolution.

To reinforce and secure the tenability of Egypt’s developmental authoritarian project, the state increasingly relied on security services such as the State Security Investigations Service (SSI). The SSI tortured dissidents, kidnapped troublemakers, and specifically targeted Islamists but continued to harass other groups, spreading fear and doubt and keeping opposition from consolidating. Egypt’s Emergency Law, a 1981 provision after Sadat’s assassination granting emergency powers to the state, has been in effect since its passage. The Emergency Law provides legality to the SSI’s actions. Under the law, the SSI could arrest anyone at anytime, without warrant. Especially germane to this essay’s aim is the SSI’s targeted harassment, kidnapping, detention, and torture. The fear that this strategy sows prevents neoliberalism’s traditional counterweight, labor, from mounting a cohesive, sustained, open and effective opposition to the state’s policies.

Two aspects created the opposition that drove the 2011 protests, the effects of neoliberalism, and the SSI’s abuse of state power. Kefeya, Egypt’s alternative to labor centric protests, was officially created in 2004, although its origins can be traced back decades before. The Egyptian Kefaya (Enough!) movement showcases the difficulties and alternative tactics necessary when protesting through institutions such as labor organizations is impossible. Kefaya’s lack of specificity is also demonstrative of the subaltern’s grievances. The subaltern was upset at a broad and complicated system and the coercive mechanisms used to reinforce it. Kefaya is more an expression of the general outrage at an inequitable system than a pointed critique of specific issues. It is open to all political trends and ideologies as well as all party members (only if they remove party insignia and other identifiers at meetings). While neoliberalism created the necessary demographic for opposition, the state’s ability to suppress specific countercurrents meant that the opposition became a decentralized, bottom up collage of multiple ideas, identities and strands.

Neoliberalism’s push to reimagine the city to attract foreign business resulted in the alienation of the subaltern. Forced into densely packed areas with inadequate or nonexistent public services, and without a safety net to fall back on, alienation swiftly spread. Labor, which was the traditional outlet for agitation on behalf of the poor, was unable to consolidate and thus opposition formed in the decentralized Kefaya movement, which became the major force behind the 2011 protests.

While well known political scientists such as Joel Beinin purport that labor was the main driving force behind the 2011 protests, they are only half right. Beinin and his ilk understand that the main grievance of the protests, whether explicitly stated or not, is the subordination of the proletariat to capital, but his claim that labor took
the central role in the Egyptian protests is incorrect. In actuality, it is the synthesis of the neoliberal system (creating the protestor demographic) and the securitized authoritarian enforcement of the neoliberal system (creating the method of agitation) that explains the 2011 Egyptian protests. Pinpointing a single explanation, as Beinin supposes, does not offer us the full picture. It is the pressures of neoliberalism and authoritarianism that made the mélange of individualized and localized beliefs that manifested in Kefaya and spurred change in 2011.

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Astana, Kazakhstan buzzed with diplomatic ambition on the morning of March 15th. Delegations arrived, with legal advisors and security teams in tow, with the hopes of concluding arguably the most intractable conflict of our generation: the Syrian war. It was the fourth time a conference convened to address Syria’s tragedy; Geneva, Switzerland hosted talks in 2012, 2014, and 2016, all of which yielded little concrete action. Yet, Astana seemed different. The conference was the first to involve a diplomatic coalition wholly comprised of rebel faction leaders, bringing crucial narratives of on-the-ground combat experience to mediation. The negotiating table had narrowed, as Astana proved selective to only the key players in Iraq and Syria: The Syrian Government, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Free Syrian Army, and the Army of Islam. But most importantly, as top diplomats stepped out of their black SUV’s and into the hallowed halls of conflict negotiation, the cameras could not follow. Astana was established to alleviate six years of Syria’s nightmare, delegates asserted, and was not as image-conscious as conferences of the past.

While the talks defied many established norms and bureaucratic conferences of the past six years, Astana proved to be no exception. The talks concluded March 17th with little resolved -- a trilateral talk between Russia, Iran, and Turkey, scheduled in May. One of the most paramount militant factions on the ground, the Free Syrian Army, publicly retracted their invitation out of discouragement with Russian and Iranian cease-fire violations and the powers’ compliance with the Assad government in disrupting the Wadi Barada water supply. While Astana was envisioned as an exclusive launching pad towards peace in the Levant -- striking the ‘right’ balance between integral actors, short-term objectives, and discussion of strategic ambitions -- the inclusivity of the talks proved artificial. Militant leaders had a seat at the table, but their voices muted in the face of a trilateral monopoly; a stake in the game did not equate to political influence in the eyes of Russia, Iran, and Turkey. With the conclusion of Syria’s civil struggle will come a very new geopolitical landscape in the Levant -- one dominated by a growing sense of Russian influence and a question of waning American regional presence.

In this piece, I envision the motives and strategic ambitions behind Russia’s prowess in Syria, and analyze the possible political consequences of a Russian-led solution to U.S. foreign policy. Two questions must first be asked regarding the trilateral dynamic, survival of the Assad regime, and role of a retracted United States. First,
is the war in Syria a crucible of the relationship between Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara, and one that will define external transactions? It’s crucial for both scholarly and policy communities to assess the delicacy of the relationship, using Astana as a looking glass into future trilateral decisions. Secondly, the Trump administration declined their Astana invitation, refraining from sending any formal delegation. The U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan occupied a seat at the table, but a ceremonial one at best, leaving the primary decision-making to Russia, Iran, Turkey, Syrian government, and rebel factions. Is this decision a product of an isolationist administration, or the acknowledgment that the United States has prolonged large-scale involvement to where all stakes have been lost? A lack of American participation in the largest conflict of the 21st century marks a new era -- a new regional order -- that U.S. Foreign policy will have to navigate.

**Trilateral Fragility**

Ties held between Moscow, Tehran, and Astana age beyond the start of Syria’s violence in 2011, and all three powers share a history of foundational relations through extensive trade of oil, practice of joint-military exercises, and mutual geopolitical threats. However, such close collaboration in the Syrian conflict is somewhat of a phenomenon in the region; the trilateral relationship is an odd coupling of the international liberal order’s largest ‘wild cards.’ Their heavy presence in the region has yielded them seats at the negotiating table, but their vast resources and established statehood statuses have given them the capability to mold and regulate the conversation at Astana.

Ellie Geranmayeh and Kadri Liik argue in “The New Power Couple” that the relationship between Iran and Russia is not solely grounded in opportunity, but also in commonalities. Tehran not only provides an airbase out of which Russian aerial reconnaissance forces operate out of in Syria, but both powers share a distinctive outlook on the Levant -- a perspective not shared by Turkey, Assad, or even pro-Shiite and regime rebels in the region. With Syria as a “crucible of cooperation,” Putin and Rouhani wish to prop the despot, avoiding the democracy-building escapades of the past. On the first day of the talks, the Russian delegation proposed that a constitutional tribune be established to begin governmental reforms, all while cushioning Assad and his regime. Russia first introduced this draft constitution in January, 2017 at the intra-Syrian Astana Talks, where they established a framework for governance to then be approved by the Syrian people. While this approach was denied by many at Astana, the proposition sheds light on a premature Russian objective to rebuild Syria in its image, far beyond any cessation of violence. This approach still, technically, delivers regional stabilization, but at the sacrifice of many of the values and principles the international liberal order has prided itself upon. The Astana Talks reflected this pivot; the prioritization of maintaining the status quo reflects an ethical experiment, with Russia, Iran, and Turkey at the helm.

This experiment has constructed a smaller diplomatic environment for the three powers to maneuver. While a war of words was exchanged between the rebel delegation and the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, the focus of the talks remained primarily on maintaining the December 29th ceasefire agreement as a first step towards temporary stabilization. Constructed by Turkey and Russia and exclusionary to many jihadist and rebel forces, such as the Kurdish YPG and former al-Nusra front Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the ceasefire served as the foundation for January and March Astana peace talks, but on the condition that the truce would hold. The nature and conditions of the ceasefire explain the trilateral monopoly at Astana; Russia and Turkey were able to regulate the participants, conditions of peace negotiations, and framework of discussion by design. Just as in December, 2016, the trilateral dynamic has found it successful to operate in a more intimate environment, and will continue this strategy with a May 2017 meeting. While this was the only concrete solution produced by the Astana Talks, it demonstrates that the talks’ inclusionary aspect was a mirage; the fate of Syria has and will be determined by the trilateral powers.
U.S. Vulnerability

A week after Kazakhstan was abuzz with talks of ceasefire and proposed amnesty deals, the United States’ Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, was familiarizing himself with the ropes of diplomacy at the first session of the ‘Anti-ISIS Coalition.’ Convened in Washington, Tillerson served as the face of a new, revamped effort to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in all existing strongholds. The day was a reflection of the new Trump administration’s adamant vow to eradicate the terrorist faction, in the interest of national security, from the face of the Levant. While a week apart, the two conferences reflected a deep contrast the strategies towards the Levant -- a side encompassed in restructuring Syria’s institutional makeup, and another side centered around new approaches to counterterrorism, protecting national borders instead of transcending them. While separate thematic issues, the war against extremism and the alleviation of Syria’s civil conflict should become an intertwined strategy for Astana’s powers and U.S. foreign policy.

The United States did not send a formal delegation to the Astana Talks, despite receiving an invitation. They cited the “demands of the transition” as to why a negotiating team was not assembled, sending the American ambassador to Kazakhstan, George A. Krol, to the conference. This decision marks an interesting pivot in the normative and institutional structure of Middle Eastern diplomacy; the United States has spoken softly, but has carried a large stick in the region over the last half-century -- particularly since the 2003 Iraq intervention. It is important for scholars and policymakers to analyze exactly why the new administration withheld participation from Astana, as it was seen as an open door for American foreign policy to enter, after six years of tentative activism in the region through funding and supplying Sunni rebels against the Assad regime. However, the White House would have deemed Astana a failure for U.S. interests from the start, as they did not prioritize counterterrorism through their dialogue -- in fact, they invited many of the individuals that the Trump administration deems ‘terrorist’ factions.’ Astana was a conference rooted in the survivability of a ceasefire the United States was not included in, and therefore there was no national interest in active participation.

A Looming Question

On the morning of April 4th, President Bashar al-Assad’s forces deployed chemical weapons on Khan Sheikhoun, a small town in the Idlib province, killing 85 civilians. The chemical used appeared to be an active nerve agent, similar to Sarin gas. Men, women, and children were strewn across the streets, gasping for air and shaking uncontrollably. Hospitals were flooded with victims, utilizing the scarce resources they had. The day was immensely reminiscent of August 21, 2013, when nearly 1,400 were gassed in the Ghouta agricultural belt just outside of Damascus, and met with a ‘red line’ ultimatum by the Obama administration, that later proved incredulous. President Donald Trump’s White House reinforced this red line through authorizing the launch 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles from US warships, targeting a Syrian government air base. where the chemical agents were deployed. This decision has been widely accepted by the scholarly and policy community as one of the largest moments in his presidency -- the first use of a hard power tool by an isolationist president that has repeatedly chanted ‘America first’ as his doctrine in foreign policy.

The decision is accompanied by a series of serious questions. The first question that policymakers and scholars should examine, is what preconditions led Assad to perceive the opportunity to use chemical weapons without consequence. Brookings Institution fellow, Dr. Thomas Wright, has stated that the new administration’s uncertain objective in the Levant and receding participation in the conflict signaled a green light to President Bashar al-Assad. It was, in many ways, a test to the credibility of the ‘red line’ Trump’s predecessor had drawn, as well as the new president’s prowess in his first crisis situation. While the missile strikes signal greater commitment to preserving the human rights of the Syrian people and exercising an anti-Assad agenda, the exact role of the United States in the conflict is still a looming uncertainty. The first use of hard power in Syria by the Trump administration is not equivalent to a new White House strategy in the Levant -- ‘America first’ still
reigns as the chief doctrine, ruling the chance of intervention and active military presence unlikely. While the cruise missiles have preserved the credibility of U.S. policies, they serve as merely a slap on the wrist; President Bashar al-Assad’s regime is still largely uncontested by American militarized action and its survivability cushioned by the Iran-Russia alliance.

Conclusion

In May of 2017, Russia, Iran, and Turkey will exclusively convene around the negotiating table, behind closed doors. While the continuation of December’s ceasefire is still in a delicate state, much evidence points to a keener focus on Syria’s future political order. The intimacy of these talks demonstrates the artificiality of the Astana Talks’ democratic inclusivity; rebel voices and non-state narratives are welcome, but muffled under the resources and capability of the tri-lateral powers in the region. The future of Syria is still unclear, and will continue to be. The state of Turkey still opposes the durability of an Assad presidency and opposes any inclusion of Kurdish participation at the table, such as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) at Astana. Rebel factions and extremist forces still characterize much of the conflict, and their refusal in many proposed ceasefires and political propositions stand as a powerful bulwark against cooperation in the region’s political order. Most importantly, the exact role that the United States will play in Syria is not certain; ‘America first’ will continue to indoctrinate the level of engagement U.S. forces will have in Syria -- but for the time being, the American seat at the table remains ceremonial.

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The Trump Administration’s foreign agenda for the next four years is easily summed up in two words: America First. What’s already being described as the “Trump Doctrine” represents a stark departure from decades of American foreign policy orthodoxy, putting aside traditional internationalist and moral principles in favor of an agenda that seeks to maximize American interests and power abroad. Several defining planks have already emerged from the President’s rhetoric outlining his radical policy agenda, including a new economic isolationism that involves pulling out of the TPP and renegotiating NAFTA; a crackdown on immigration from Mexico and Muslim countries; a realignment of the United States towards Vladimir Putin’s Russia while easing American obligations to NATO; an all-out war on what Trump insistently calls “radical Islamic terrorism” with distinctly anti-neoconservative pledges to target civilians, reinstate torture, and seize Iraqi oil.

Trying to gauge how the American public feels about “Trump Doctrine” at this point in his presidency is no easy task, however. Given the choice between President Hillary Clinton, who likely would have represented a continuation of the Obama Doctrine, and President Donald J. Trump, 62,985,106 Americans opted for the latter—a number which represents a substantial portion of American voters, yet at the same time a minority of the popular vote. Furthermore, at barely over two months into his term President Trump has had little time to demonstrate the effects of his policies, nor has he been presented with a real test of his leadership capabilities in an international crisis situation. It also remains possible that moderates in the State and Defense Departments could nudge the White House towards a more conventionally conservative policy agenda, should the Trump Doctrine run into major obstacles once it’s enacted in proper.

What we know now, however, points to complex and often contradictory feelings among the American public regarding President Trump’s foreign policy agenda. According to HuffPost Pollster, public approval for Trump’s foreign policy currently stands at around 47% disapproval to 40% approval—hardly outstanding numbers, but an improvement over his dismal 54% job disapproval rating. On specific policies and principles espoused by Donald Trump, polls have shown a mixture of support and opposition from the...
American public, narrowly divided on many topics and heavily tilted towards or against Trump in others. The President does not carry a mandate from the public on foreign policy, nor does he face overwhelming indictment.

In terms of principles, it’s clear that the American public has not embraced “Trumpism” on one of the defining elements of his foreign policy: isolationism. Gallup has reported all-time highs of Americans who view foreign trade as more an opportunity than a threat to the nation, at 72%, far beyond even the late Clinton years in the heyday of NAFTA. The CNN/ORC poll has also found a growing majority of Americans in favor of a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants in the United States, up to 60% in mid-March, a repudiation of the President’s pro-deportation stances. Contrary to popular talk of a new era of economic isolationism, Americans seem to be growing even warmer to open trade policies for the US since Donald Trump’s election.

Opinions become less clear when Americans are asked about specific policies promoted by the Trump Administration. Though recent polls show consistent majorities opposed to the President’s proposed Mexican border wall, 80% of Americans also support deporting illegal immigrants arrested for other crimes, a policy strongly advocated by Donald Trump. Meanwhile, several polls have indicated both narrow support and opposition to the executive order restricting travel to and from several majority-Muslim countries originally imposed in February. As Harry Enten discusses at FiveThirtyEight, respondents to online polls have demonstrated greater support for the travel ban than in live polls, indicating a sizable portion of Americans who support the ban but hide it out of concern for “political correctness.” Americans are similarly cooler on free trade in practice than in theory: voters are evenly split on whether NAFTA is good or bad for the United States, and when asked if the US pulling out of trade deals such as the TPP and NAFTA is a good idea, 43% said they “don’t know enough to say” while support and opposition to the proposal received just 28% each.

Americans are similarly conflicted on the issue of the United States’ involvement around the world. A 2016 Pew Research Center study found broad skepticism about the US’s role abroad, with 57% of Americans saying the nation should let other countries deal with their own issues and a 41% plurality believing that the US does too much in solving international problems. Another poll from NBC News found two-thirds of Americans worried about the country becoming involved in a new war during Trump’s term as President. At the same time, the Pew poll also shows a majority of Americans fearing that the US won’t go far enough to defeat Islamist militants, broad concerns that the United States is less respected internationally now than in the past, and growing support for increases in military spending. And while American support for remaining in NATO is overwhelming, opinions on the UN are more mixed, with the organization enjoying favorable approval ratings but also broad agreement that it has done a “poor job” in solving the problems it’s faced. The contradictory opinions felt by many Americans on the nation’s activities overseas could dovetail nicely with President Trump’s own rhetoric, as the President has vowed to stop wasting US resources abroad while at the same time promising to defeat ISIS and restore America’s status on the international stage.

The Trump Administration’s relationship with Russia is another area where polls show Americans holding mixed feelings about the President. A Quinnipiac University poll showed an overwhelming 72% of voters supporting an investigation into connections between Donald Trump’s campaign advisors and Russian officials, and disapproval ratings for Russia and President Vladimir Putin are at historic highs according to Gallup. However, recent polls have also shown little confidence among the public when it comes to indicting President Trump himself: a recent NBC News/WSJ poll, for example, showed a third of Americans having no opinion on whether or not Donald Trump is “too friendly” with Vladimir Putin. Less than 1% of Americans consider Russia the top issue facing the nation today, and only 20% believe that President Trump has done anything criminal in his relations with Russia. Americans may generally disapprove of Russia and Trump’s
friendliness towards the country, but it appears that few are ready to press the issue against the President without further evidence of wrongdoing.

Another major development in the Trump Doctrine era of foreign policy is the striking partisan divide over several key foreign policy issues. While Putin's approval ratings remain abysmal in the US overall, they’ve seen a marked increase among Republicans compared to four years ago, when Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney described Russia as the nation’s “number one geopolitical foe.” Similarly, ninety percent of Democrats consider Russian interference in the 2016 election to be somewhat or very important, while forty percent of Republicans consider Russian interference to be not important at all. Free trade, once a calling card of the Republican Party, has also emerged as far more popular among Democratic voters than among Republicans, with a growing rift between the parties since Donald Trump’s election. President Trump may enjoy a built-in policy insulator in Congress, where Republicans up for reelection in 2018 will likely hesitate to waver from a President so disproportionately supported by their constituents. At the same time, Trump will have an even harder time reaching out to congressional Democrats, whose voters oppose the President’s policies almost instinctively, which could pose a major policy obstacle should either house of Congress flip to Democratic control after the midterm elections.

Conclusions

While Donald Trump is struggling with public opinion to a degree unseen by most newly-elected presidents, there is no guarantee that it will cripple the President’s radical foreign policy agenda. Americans disagree with Trump in principle on many issues including immigration, free trade, and Russian relations, but they also seem to agree with the President’s instincts on American involvement abroad. When it comes to specific policy issues, many Americans also seem to be more convinced by the Trump Administration’s arguments, or at least less willing to hold their ideological disagreements against the President. And in light of the complex and contradictory foreign policy opinions felt by many Americans, Trump’s unorthodox and often self-contradictory rhetoric may prove to be a unique asset in advancing his foreign agenda.

It appears likely that approval for the Trump Doctrine will hinge on how effective the President is at enacting his policies. If Donald Trump can easily roll out his foreign policy agenda and show returns for Americans at home, he may enjoy public support in the foreign policy realm even as his job approval ratings continue to fall. In addition, without a single “smoking gun” that blows his credibility wide open, Trump is unlikely to face real indictment from Congressional Republicans over the slow drip of stories involving his administration’s connections with Russian oligarchs. If Trump’s policies are unsuccessful or unactionable, on the other hand, then he may face substantial backlash from the public; a majority of Americans already believe that Trump should stop trying to pursue the travel ban and move on to bigger issues, including a fair number of voters who initially supported the ban. The Trump Doctrine could face a collapse in support from Americans who agree with it in theory, but who would become disillusioned with President Trump’s leadership if he can’t get what he wants with his signature deal-making and bravado.

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The Legal Regime and Political Ramifications of Leaks

“A few months ago, leaks were getting him elected -- now they are destroying [his presidency]” - John Pike, director of Globalsecurity.org.

By Jeremy Clement

Leaks of sensitive information to the public have plagued presidential administrations since George Washington. The modern system of leaks began in 1957 when Colonel John C. Nickerson was prosecuted for “perjury, violating the Espionage Act, and 15 counts of security violations.” Multiple other big name leaks have occurred including the Pentagon Papers, the Chelsea Manning leaks, the Edward Snowden leaks, and most recently the Democratic National Committee and Donald Trump Administration leaks.

The severity of punishments for these whistleblowers ranges from no charges for the Pentagon Papers case, to multiple years in prison for Chelsea Manning, to self-imposed exile for Edward Snowden. The laws surrounding leaks and whistleblowers are complex and laxly enforced. The following sections will clarify where the laws on the books stand regarding leaks, how investigations occur, why leaks lack strong enforcement, the political nature of leaks, and the current Donald Trump Administration’s stance on leaks.

Clarification of the Law

The law surrounding government leaks revolves broadly around five U.S. statutes. These are the Espionage Act of 1917, 18 U.S.C. § 798 which applies to communication intelligence, the Intelligence Identities Protection Act, the general theft statute 18 U.S.C. § 641, and 18 U.S.C. § 1001 which relates to false statements made during investigations.

The bulk of leak prosecutions rely on the Espionage Act, specifically 18 U.S.C. § 793. The Espionage Act prosecutes leaks of “national defense information” (note that this does not specify classified information). However, the Supreme Court has ruled that national defense information does not only pertain to the military, but security in general. Professor Patricia Bellia from Notre Dame Law School writes that “... the ‘phrase national defense information’ ... is not coterminous with the phrase ‘classified information’.” However, she also notes that the classification status of a document can imply that the document contains information relevant to national defense, and therefore is evidence against the person who committed the leak.

To build upon the Espionage Act, 18 U.S.C. § 798 adds to the list of information that can be prosecuted. Under this law further classified information is protected, including “information ‘concerning the communication intelligence activities..."
of the United States or any foreign government.” This would cover diplomatic communications, not just military communications. Further protected are the identities of covert agents under the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. For an example of this act in action, take a look at John Kiriakou’s case regarding the CIA’s interrogation methods.

The last two laws relate to prosecutions for crimes unrelated to the actual information that leaks contain. 18 U.S.C. § 641 protects the physical documents that contain the information, regarding them as government property that can be stolen. Lastly, 18 U.S.C § 1001 has the power to prosecute an individual for making false statements during the course of an investigation. Many are prosecuted for 18 U.S.C. § 1001 because it is easier to prove than the other statutes.

The Nature of Leaks and Their Investigation

A big issue for the government when investigating leaks is what opening an investigation implies. When an agency harmed by a leak and becomes a “victim agency,” they will send a complaint to the Department of Justice. The decision to open an investigation is left to the discretion of the DOJ. The catch is that an investigation will only be opened “when the leaked information is accurate.” Opening it otherwise would make no sense, since it would not be a leak, only a made up statement that anyone could produce. The implication of this leads us to the realization that once an investigation is opened regarding leaked information, the truth of the information is confirmed to the public. The enforcement of laws protecting government information has been lax due to this issue, but also because leaks can be beneficial to the same government that is harmed by them.

Aside from the unauthorized disclosure of information, there are “authorized leaks.” Authorized leaks are strategic releases of information used to “avoid damaging errors or to protect sensitive information or sources from further disclosure.” Therefore, the disclosure of information can be beneficial to the government, public, and press. A quote from the Chicago Tribune puts it best,

[The government] needs leaks as much as the press does. The legitimacy of government requires sunshine and the practice of governance sometimes requires darkness -- and in the face of that contradiction, leaks are a kind of informal workaround.

Aside from the leaks most detrimental to the government, law enforcement is rather permissive due to their dual nature.

The Donald Trump Administration

Donald Trump and his administration have changed the way the government uses leaks from previous administrations. Leaks from the White House regarding improprieties with former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn’s contacts with Russia were met by counter leaks in the other direction by the Trump Administration. Instead of using leaks to reveal truth, or make an administration look good (as was the case when the Osama Bin Laden raid was made known to the public in 2012), his leaks have been used to obscure the truth about improprieties. The obsession with finding the whistleblowers within the Trump administration has also led many staffers to use a confidential conversation app, in violation of the Presidential Records Act, to hide evidence of leaking.

The President’s Stance on Leaks

Leaks helped Donald Trump win his Presidency. During the election he praised Russia for hacking the DNC, and called for more leaks. The President was in support of a foreign power using illegal means to influence a U.S. election in his favor, a charge which is more serious than simple leaks that inform the public of policy, according to a recent Politifact article by Louis Jacobson.

In 2013, President Trump tweeted “ObamaCare is a disaster and Snowden is a spy who should be executed—but if it and he could reveal Obama’s records, I might become a ma-
jor fan.” Now, the President is criticizing the New York Times and the intelligence community for the leaks. The conclusion that Jacobson reaches in his article is that the President does not have a stance on leaks, whistleblowing, unauthorized disclosures or however you would like to refer to them. The President did not flip-flop on this issue. “Flip-floppers change their mind; Trump has showed that he doesn’t have a stance on leaks independent from his interests.”

**Conclusion**

The law surrounding government leaks is complicated enough as it is, and adding in the discretionary prosecution and juxtaposition of benefit and harm to the administration further muddles the field. I hope that this article helped clear-up the major laws that regulate this field, and why they are not being used as much as they could be. I further intended that the mindset behind the current administration’s behavior regarding leaks has been at the very least sufficiently introduced for further consideration.

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An Exotic, Yet Surprisingly Appropriate Government: A Look at Consociationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

To Americans, it may seem a fantastic idea to govern a country explicitly based on ethnic distinctions, but the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina may show us precisely why that might be a good idea.

By Matthew Chakov

Imagine a government with three presidents who have veto power over each other, all of whom represent different minorities in the country. A government where all three presidents simultaneously serve a four-year term and switch off every eight months when it comes to who holds the ultimate power. A government where the highest constitutional court is not appointed entirely by people in the country itself, but rather partially by an international body. A government where there is a foreign leader chosen by an international body who has the power to remove any elected official in this country on their own accord. A government with a constitution that contains an amendment process, but an amendment process which could only modify certain parts of the constitution and not others.

This hypothetical government probably evokes a number of reactions in the reader: certainly it’s exotic, but also strange, unconventional, probably ineffective, and seemingly the conception of somebody dead-set on watching the world burn. However, this quirky governmental style is not hypothetical at all. It’s alive and kicking in the small Balkan country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has had this form of government since the mid-1990s. Contrary to what may have been the reader’s instinctual reaction, this actually makes a lot of sense for the country’s situation, and while rare, this type of government known as a consociational democracy has existed throughout history in many countries all over the world such as Cyprus, Lebanon, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Macedonia.

The Solution to Insurmountable Divides

According to the Encyclopedia of Governance, consociationalism is a “stable democratic system in deeply divided societies that is based on an elite cartel.” Upon reading the definition, one might underestimate the level of division in a society to warrant the need for a consociational government. One might think the United States is a “deeply divided society.” After all, Pew Research has found that partisanship is currently at its highest point in modern American history. However, “deeply divided” in the context of consociationalism means that the different groups in society were literally killing each other, which was exactly the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s (Democrats and Republicans are not killing each other... yet.) Or it can mean that the groups in question had differences and animosities that walked the line between solvable and insurmountable.
Consociationalism works because all of the groups who normally have trouble getting along get a say in the government through the elites that represent them and their interests. These elites get a say through constitutional provisions that mandate that institutions share power between the very diverse groups. This works in practice by having a constitution that says Group X must have Y number of members in Z Legislative Body or Council, regardless of the numbers of votes cast for each group in an election. Once again, this sounds foreign to Americans who are so used to the first-past-the-post plurality voting system in the United States, but even some institutions like the Federal Election Commission use a power sharing system derived from consociationalism as only three of the six commissioners are allowed to be from the same political party. While the FEC is not a particularly impactful body (at least as compared to the institutions that usually feature power sharing structures in the divided countries), it shows that even relatively integrated societies sometimes want to ensure that one group does not garner too much power.

**Turmoil in Bosnia and Herzegovina comes to a Resolution**

As alluded to earlier, the transformation of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian government to a consociational democracy came about after the country’s large-scale civil war. Prior to the 1990s, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a part of the former Yugoslavia that was made up of six distinct republics, and the entire country was united behind the Communist Party. However, the dissolution of Yugoslavia caused war in Bosnia and Herzegovina for many reasons. Among those reasons was the deep animosity and mutual distrust of the three largest ethnic groups in the country: the Bosnian Muslims, the Croats, and the Serbs. Over 100,000 people died in the Bosnian War between 1992 and 1995, but eventually the United States and other countries stepped in to help the parties come to a resolution and an eventual modus vivendi.

In 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords were agreed upon by the parties involved, which stopped the fighting and created a Bosnian and Herzegovinian Constitution. This constitution formed a central government for the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but most of the power was left to the two states contained in the country. On the one hand, there was the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (different than the Republic which is the overarching central government) which was territory controlled by the Bosnian Muslims and the Croats, and on the other, the Republic of Srpska controlled by the Serbs. The power that was allocated to the overarching central government was to be shared between the various ethnic groups, and interestingly also with foreign entities. Fred L. Morrison describes this power sharing in an article in the Constitutional Commentary Journal.

The central government is organized on a federalist scheme - but one driven to an extreme of states’ rights. Everything is apportioned in thirds - one part Serbian, one part Bosniac, and one part Croatian. The Presidency consists of three individuals, one from each group. The bicameral legislature consists of an upper house (House of Peoples) with five from each group, and a lower house (House of Representatives) with fourteen from each group. Each of these bodies is to have three presiding officers who rotate in office.

However, this gets even more complicated because one member of the presidency could say that a decision by the other two is “destructive of a vital interest of the Entity from the territory from which he was elected,” and then essentially veto it if two thirds of those in the legislature of the ethnic group representing the dissenting president agree. The upper legislative body also has what Morrison termed an “ethnic veto” because the individual ethnic groups have the ability to tank any legislation they do not like irrespective of the other ethnic groups.

Perhaps more interesting than the power sharing between domestic ethnic groups is the power sharing between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world. Below is a bar graph showing the number of foreigners in the various government entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The constitutional court is made up of
nine members: two from each of the three ethnic groups and “three foreign neutrals, appointed by the President of the European Court of Human Rights after consultation with the Presidency.” It must be odd living in a country where foreigners make up a significant portion of the highest court and therefore make decisions that govern your life. However, as stated before, the Bosnian and Herzegovinian government is decentralized with little power at the federal level as most of the power is reserved for the entities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska. Nonetheless, it may be surprising to learn that the individual with the most power is actually a foreigner who is appointed by the international community. The Office of the High Representative is occupied by a foreigner who has the power to dismiss elected officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, enact “substantial legislation,” annul decisions by the highest constitutional court, and amend any Bosnian legislation. This kind of ultimate power is yielded to foreigners to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina is developing the way that the international community would like it to.

The Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Countries tend to move away from consociationalism after they become more stable as we see in cases like Colombia, Malaysia, and South Africa. I suspect that Bosnia and Herzegovina is moving in this direction and soon could be rid of these rules and institutions that undermine their sovereignty. The Office of the High Representative will shut down, but only after the international community agrees that the country has met the necessary conditions including the “Fiscal Sustainability of the State” and the “Entrenchment of the Rule of Law.” The country is also working on joining the European Union with a membership application accepted by the bloc in September, although the process to fully join will be long as many reforms are necessary. The stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina is reason for optimism and, even though their consociational government may be exotic, it makes sense for their situation and hopefully they will grow out of it in the near future.

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As the 2016 Presidential Election rushed toward its inevitable conclusion, James Comey stepped back into the spotlight and played his hand. A long-time Republican, the timing of his announcement that the Hillary Clinton email saga was in fact, not over, seemed to cement the Director’s position in Donald Trump’s camp. In the months since the election though, his party pendulum has swung; with his recent testimony before the House Intelligence Committee, Comey garnered democratic support and republican ire when only 6 months ago the opposite was true. To view the Director only through the lense of the 2016 campaigns and subsequent administration would be akin to assembling a puzzle while missing the majority of the pieces. At only 52 years of age, Comey’s rise through the Department of Justice has been nothing short of meteoric, and it began long before Trump filed his primary registration forms.

James “Jim” Brien Comey Jr., was born on December 14th 1960, the second of four Irish children in a small borough of Bergen County, New Jersey, where his father worked in real estate and served on the town council. The mayor described the family as being very involved in community organizations, from church events to Girl Scout troops. His first brush with the criminal world came in 1977 when Comey, then a 17 year-old high school senior and his younger brother were held hostage by a suspected serial rapist and robber.

The assailant broke into the house while the brothers were alone for the night; the two managed to escape and were nearly recaptured before successfully fleeing and calling the police as the attacker vanished into the night. In speaking about the experience Comey said, “At one point, I thought—I knew—that I was going to die that night...It gave me a sense of how precious and short life is. Second, it gave me a keen sense for what victims of crime feel. I know that in some sense, they never get over it. That’s helped me as a prosecutor. I survived that experience, as did my brother, and we became—we hope—healthy adults. But it stayed with me for a long time.” No one was ever charged for the crimes.

Comey would graduate high school the following spring, go on to the College of William and Mary with a double major in chemistry and religion, and then complete his Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the prestigious University of Chicago Law School in 1985. After graduation, Comey clerked for then-United States District Judge John M. Walker, Jr., in Manhattan and worked briefly in private practice. In 1987, the same year he married his wife Patrice, he transitioned to the U.S. attorney’s office where he became an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York in
Manhattan under Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

By 1993, Comey was deputy director of the office’s criminal division and worked on high profile cases such as the six-month prosecution of John Gambino of the Gambino crime family. However, he and his wife sought calmer territory to raise their five children. That year he resigned and the Comey family left New York, bound for Virginia.

Comey again attempted to work in the private sector but found himself unsettled after successfully defending a corporate client on a case where they were accused of using machinery that caused asbestos injuries. Subsequently, Comey rejoined the U.S. attorney’s office, accepting an offer from a Clinton appointee to the Eastern District of Virginia to serve in the Richmond office. While there, he drew praise and national attention for his successful efforts to lower Richmond’s notoriously high homicide rate. His team’s strategy, known as Project Exile, was to federalize illegal gun possession. This enabled his office to try individuals charged with illegal gun possession in federal court, where the sentences are longer and harsher than state courts.

Another professional victory for Comey came early in the Bush administration when, in 2001, then-FBI Director Louis Freeh shifted the investigation of the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers, a US military facility in Saudi Arabia in which 19 US Servicemen were killed, from stalled Washington attorneys to Comey in Richmond. In three months, Comey and company returned 14 indictments which previous prosecutors had failed to deliver for five years, and six months later an impressed George W. Bush nominated him to the position of United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. He remained in the office until only December 2003, when Comey was confirmed as Deputy Attorney General following an October nomination, again by President Bush. Comey’s new position would set up his role in a confrontation which, in no small part, shaped Comey’s public image until the 2016 election.

In March of 2005, Attorney General John D. Ashcroft had to undergo emergency surgery to remove his gallbladder. In his absence, the deputy attorney general assumes the position of acting attorney general who was, at the time, James Comey. At the same time, senior White House counsel Albert Gonzales (who would later be appointed U.S. Attorney General) and presidential Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. were seeking to re-up a warrantless and highly controversial domestic wiretapping program known as Stellar Wind. Comey, Ashcroft and other senior justice officials, including the Director of the FBI, Robert Mueller, were on the brink of resignation in defiance.

The discussions leading up to the program’s expiration date became increasingly hostile, with one last standoff at 1600 Pennsylvania ending when according to one account, Comey claimed that there was no legal basis for the order, that ‘no lawyer would reasonably rely on it,’ to which Vice President Cheney’s lawyer responded, “Well I’m a lawyer and I did.” Comey returned, “No good lawyer.” The room descended into silence.

Ultimately, Comey, as the acting Attorney General, denied the White House’s extension request. Unwilling to accept this, the Gonzales and Card attempted to circumvent Comey’s temporary authority by getting the hospitalized Ashcroft to sign off himself. Unbeknownst to them, Comey caught wind of their scheme and it became a race to Ashcroft’s bedside, with Comey arriving at George Washington University Medical Center moments prior to the senior White House staffers to inform his ailing boss of the situation. A tense standoff took place in which Gonzales and Card pressured Ashcroft to sign off himself. Unbeknownst to them, Comey caught wind of their scheme and it became a race to Ashcroft’s bedside, with Comey arriving at George Washington University Medical Center moments prior to the senior White House staffers to inform his ailing boss of the situation. 

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The order expired.

Although only days later a version of it, rewritten to circumvent the authority of the Justice Department, was signed by Gonzales. The incident became the stuff of Washington legend, and
Comey would later testify about it during the confirmation hearings for Albert Gonzales to become U.S. Attorney General.

James Comey would remain deputy attorney general until 2005. Seven months into Gonzales’ tenure as USAG, Comey departed for Lockheed Martin, a private defense contractor where he was a senior vice president and general legal counsel from 2005 to 2010. From there he moved to the Connecticut-based hedge fund Bridgewater Associates. He left Bridgewater in 2013 to teach national security law at Columbia. In a speech to NSA staffers in 2005 Comey said,

“It can be very, very hard to be a conscientious attorney working in the intelligence community. Hard because we are likely to hear the words, ‘If we don’t do this, people will die’. ‘No’ must be spoken into a storm of crisis, with loud voices all around, and with lives hanging in the balance. . . . It takes an understanding that, in the long run, intelligence under the law is the only sustainable intelligence in this country.”

Comey remained in New York until his appointment as Director of the Federal Bureau of Intelligence in 2013.

At a commanding 6-foot-8-inches, James Comey towers over most in his presence. When announcing his appointment, President Obama joked that Comey is, “a man who stands very tall for justice and the rule of law. I was saying while we were taking pictures with his gorgeous family here that they are all what Michelle calls ‘normal height’” (The former first lady stands at an impressive 5’11 herself).

James Comey became the seventh FBI director on July 31, 2013 when he was confirmed by an overwhelming margin of 93-1 (Rand Paul was the only nay vote), taking the place of his good friend and ally Robert Mueller III. Comey is contracted for a ten year term, ending in 2023. He is among the very few government officials who remain from the Obama administration, as most have resigned or are being replaced with officials from the new Administration.

Now in his fourth year as Director, Comey has long since emerged as a powerful player on the Washington circuit; engaging in highly publicized dealings with figures including of course, Secretary of State turned Democratic nominee for President, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Their turbulent and often contentious relationship, which began after the Benghazi attack and continued, under heavy scrutiny, through her 2016 presidential campaign, drew massive media coverage and at times placed Comey at the forefront of public attention.

There are four situations which stand-out in understanding the current public uncertainty over Comey’s allegiances. The first was discussed previously, his 2007 testimony regarding the events of Comey’s time as acting AG, pitting the White House against himself and Ashcroft over Stellar Wind. The results of this incident and the outstanding moral character displayed by Comey were a significant factor in President Obama’s decision to nominate him in 2013. The next two were in regards to the Clinton email scandal. First, after months of intensive investigations, Comey addressed the press and in a display highly uncharacteristic of the Bureau, laid out what the FBI had searched, what they had discovered and what they would recommend to the prosecutors at the Department of Justice. After stressing how boisterous outside opinions had played no role in his investigations, Comey stated that the FBI would recommend no charges be filed against Clinton.

Democrats were, generally, satisfied. Republicans focused on the harsh description of Clinton’s “carelessness” which Comey included in his address.

In 2016, about a week before the general election James Comey sent a letter to Congress notifying them of the FBI’s intent to investigate new emails found from Clinton’s time as Secretary of State. The fallout would be disastrous for the already flailing democratic campaign.

When Hillary Clinton was stunningly defeated days later, many placed the blame squarely on Comey’s head. Citing his letter, many claimed he intended to tip the electorate in the Trump
campaign’s favor. Forgotten was the Comey who stood up to the the highest echelons of the Bush administration, or who sought a full and fair investigation of Secretary Clinton’s emails in the face of rabid public attention. It would only be acknowledged by the media months later that it is routine for federal investigations to find new information after their official conclusions, and that the new information is always studied to ensure it does not alter the facts of the case as they were understood.

The most recent shift in Comey’s supposed political alliances came only weeks after President Trump’s inauguration; winner of the election so many felt Comey handed to him. The new president infamously tweeted shocking and baseless claims that the outgoing Obama administration had wiretapped Trump tower during the campaign. Comey, as Director or the FBI was testifying before the House Intelligence Committee on the separate issue of Russian interference in the presidential election. Via Trump’s live tweets, Congressman were able to question Comey real time about these new allegations and Trump’s characterizations of Comey’s responses to them.

Comey stated there was no evidence to support Trump’s wiretapping tweets.

While the Director was still testifying, the President tweeted, “The NSA and FBI tell Congress that Russia did not influence electoral process.” A Congressman read aloud the tweet and asked Comey to respond, to which he said “It was not our intention to say that today.”

Now, if James Comey is wielding his power to serve his own political inclinations, who is he supporting? Some claim he shattered Clinton’s hopes of winning the election; some claim he is attempting to sink Trump’s credibility and turning on him publicly. The truth is while James Comey was long ago registered as a Republican he no longer is now. But more importantly, the Director is non-partisan.

The Director swore that he would uphold the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. There was no mention of discriminating along party lines. The Director addressed his Bureau and said, “I expect that you will work hard. Your work, no matter what you do here, is to do good. Your work is to protect the innocent from harm of all kinds.”

The Director, as the man James, as a United States Attorney and as a Deputy Attorney General, has worked fastidiously to better the United States. He is a man of great moral character and of remarkable integrity. He is the kind of man you want standing between the USA and her enemies. He serves no master but justice.

“Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor—by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.”
- Raymond Chandler

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It Runs in the Family: Latent Dutch Disease in the Arctic

The resource extraction industry has been an economic boon for Arctic economies recently, but could this short-term boon also represent a long-term curse?

By Samuel Woods

Although one may decry the environmental circumstances that allowed it to happen, the economic possibilities of the Arctic have never been more interesting. Warming temperatures and receding summer ice coverage have expanded the menu of economic opportunities that the region could previously support, and countries and companies around the world have taken note. According to a 2008 U.S. Geological Survey assessment, the Arctic holds 13 percent of the world’s undiscovered oil resources (approximately 90 billion barrels of oil) and 30 percent of the world’s undiscovered gas resources (approximately 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids). As receding sea ice and technological investments render the Arctic region increasingly accessible, this vast reserve of resources has become an attractive commercial opportunity for multinational corporations and state-run entities alike. According to estimates by Northern Economics, an Alaska-based economic consulting firm, oil and gas extraction in Alaska’s Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea sites alone are estimated to be capable of generating between $193 and $312 billion in state and local tax revenue through 2057, assuming oil prices remain between $65 and $120 per barrel. Even at the current $55 a barrel Brent Crude benchmark, Alaska and the regions around the two sites still stand to bring in roughly $165 billion in tax revenue from these two sites alone. Additionally, these two sites stand to bring an average of over 28,000 jobs to Alaska from now until 2057.

In addition to oil extraction, mineral- and other resource-extraction exploits promise greater economic returns with a warming Arctic. In Alaska alone, exports of mineral resources (such as gold, lead, zinc, etc.) generated $1.3 billion in 2010, and it is estimated that one mine, the Red Dog mine in northern Alaska (which accounts for 5 and 3 percent of the global zinc and lead production respectively), “has contributed $558 million to the statewide economy and $66 million to the Northwest Arctic Borough” between 1989 and 2011. Receding summer ice has also expanded the area available to fishing, and yields have grown steadily in recent years.

In the United States, much of the Arctic extraction activity has come following federal land leases to the highest-bidding commercial company. Between 2003 and 2007, the Bush Administration issued 241 leases covering over a million and a quarter acres in the Beaufort Sea, receiving $97 million in bids. In 2008 alone, 487 leases covering almost 3 million acres of the Chukchi Sea were issued for a total for $2.66 billion. In 2011, the...
Obama Administration authorized three more areas in Alaska to be available for leasing between 2012 and 2017, but these lease sales were later postponed due to environmental concerns. In addition to the initial revenue from bids, federal, state, and local taxes all allow the U.S. to extract revenue from the process.

Unsurprisingly, the United States is not alone in the race to capitalize on newly-extractable Arctic resources. In Russia, where as much as half of state revenue is derived from oil, the government offers special tax rates to encourage Arctic exploration and drilling, in addition to funding university research on special drilling methods and materials, such as supermagnets. Russia has also planted their flag at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean at the North Pole, symbolically indicating their intention to maintain a presence in the region. Concurrently, Norway has recently offered a new round of oil leases in the Barents Sea, continuing an over 50 year practice of selling off drilling rights in explored areas. For its part, Finland looks to capitalize on the rush for Arctic resources through its world-leading icebreaker industry. In Greenland, optimists are even suggesting that tapping into its vast Arctic reserves might allow Greenland to become financially self-sufficient enough to formally split with Denmark and become an independent nation.

Though Greenlandic independence powered by oil extraction may be a slight oversell, for a region like the Arctic that has never seen large-scale economic activity, the ability to capitalize on existing reserves of natural capital represents an unprecedented opportunity for development. However, the abundance of natural capital in a given region can prove to be a curse if not managed proactively. A resource curse – or alternatively referred to as “Dutch Disease”, named after the role that oil wealth played in the decline of the Dutch manufacturing sector – refers to the tendency of communities to over-invest in a specific profitable sector of the economy at the expense of maintaining a diversified and stable long-run portfolio. While lucrative in the short-run, this approach tends to concentrate wealth in small communities and discourage balanced long-run growth. When the resource is non-renewable, such as oil and natural gas in the case of the Arctic, the country or region with Dutch Disease finds itself unable to compete in the long-run, as the region’s natural capital has not been properly re-invested into more sustainable economic endeavors. In a previous issue of The World Mind, Deborah Carey described this counterintuitive phenomenon in the context of Africa.

While it is difficult to definitively diagnose a given country or region with Dutch Disease, the data coming out of much of the Arctic region is symptomatic of a resource curse. In Alaska, a full 36.8 percent of the state’s 2010 foreign export earnings came from mineral resource extraction. More strikingly, petroleum extraction and other mining directly accounted for 30.6 percent of Alaska’s Gross Regional Product (GRP) in 2012, including the value added from transporting the resources across the state via pipeline. Indirectly, taxes on petroleum and mineral activity contribute the lion’s share of the state’s revenue, rendering the state budget heavily dependent on external demand for the state’s oil, gas, and minerals. For comparison, only 0.4 percent of Alaska’s 2012 GRP could be attributed to non-fish or oil extraction-related manufacturing, and only 6.2 and 1.9 percent can be attributed to health care/social work, and financial/insurance services respectively.

A similar story is also playing out in Russia, where over half (51.7 percent) of the entire Russian Arctic region’s GRP in 2012 came exclusively from the extraction of petroleum and other natural resources. In contrast, a mere 4.0, 3.0, and 0.1 percent of GRP came from the manufacturing, healthcare and social work, and financial and insurance service sectors respectively. Like Alaska, much of the economic benefit from resource extraction is realized by companies located outside of the region, and the local population realizes little economic benefit outside of what any local taxes levied may pay for. Not only do Arctic Russia and Alaska rely heavily on natural resource extraction for generating wealth, but the wealth generated by resource extraction in these areas is not being re-invested in other, more sustain-
able sectors of the economy, but transferred out of the region entirely. Just as over-investment in oil production led to the neglect of other sustainable Dutch industries in the 1960s, it appears as though Alaska and Russia – who together make up over 60% of the land area of the region – appear to be forgoing a sustainable growth plan in exchange for the promise of short-term riches.

However, while diagnosing Dutch Disease is difficult on its own, it is equally difficult to propose a workable cure for a region so rich in natural resources and capital-starved in just about every other sector. Nevertheless, some Arctic countries seem to be developing more balanced portfolios. Sweden’s Arctic region, for instance, relies on petroleum and mineral extraction for only 10.9 percent of its 2012 GRP, compared to 11.7 and 11.8 percent on manufacturing and healthcare and social work respectively. Others, such as Canada, have ensured that local regions receive transfers from southern regions in exchange for petroleum and mineral extraction.

Yet, in order to construct a compelling long-term growth plan for the Arctic that does not rely exclusively on non-renewable resource extraction, one must identify other comparative advantages that the region may exploit in lieu of resource extraction. Surprisingly, some argue that electronics manufacturing and data storage have a natural long-term home in the Arctic, simply due to the Arctic’s year-long cold temperatures. The idea is that the natural, year-round cold of the Arctic substantially reduces the cost of keeping electronics from overheating, thereby reducing a major cost involved in large-scale data storage. With the global data center construction market expected to increase from $14.6 to $22.7 billion and the global fiber optics market expecting to grow 9.5% by 2020, the gains are there for Arctic countries who are able to exploit their unique climatic advantage. Tech giants like Facebook and Google both seem to be convinced of the advantages of Arctic cold, as the former recently opened a data center in Luleå, Sweden, to service its European traffic, and the latter has begun the process of repurposing an old paper mill in Hamina, Finland, to serve as a data storage center.

Not to be outdone, the Finnish government has already taken significant steps toward developing an electronics manufacturing operation in Oulu, a university city in northern Finland. Feeding off of the pre-iPhone success of Nokia (a Finnish company), Oulu has become a regional hub for the electronics industry. Though the city and region endured a painfully long period of contraction after the 2008 crisis and Nokia’s significant loss of marketshare, it has appeared to have bounced back. According to local economic development officials, over 500 tech startups have opened shop in the area since 2014, helping to support about 17,000 high-tech jobs, including around 7,500 in research and development. Additionally, Nokia and the University of Oulu recently announced their intent to collaborate on a new project to develop a 5G test network, which will include a 5G hackathon in June, promising to attract top tech talent to the Arctic town.

More ambitiously, the algorithmic stock trading industry may also be moving North in the near future. Quintillion, an Irish fund administration company, is currently heading phase 1 of a project to build an underwater fiber optic cable network that connects London with Tokyo through Canada's Northwest Passage. Currently, it takes about 230 milliseconds for data to travel through the network of cables connecting London to Tokyo through the Suez Canal. However, Quintillion claims that its cable will cut this time by just over 26% to around 170 milliseconds, simply by virtue of the shorter distance that the data must travel between points A and B. While this speed boost may offer little more than a nice convenience for most users, to algorithmic stock traders this slight speed advantage is everything. Given that traders in this industry have historically fought to be physically closer to financial centers, it is not inconceivable that the existence of a faster cable in the Arctic may entice this industry to move North, giving Arctic regions a realistic chance to woo traders (and their tax dollars) to their cities. In addition to Quintillion's Northwest Passage cable, the Finnish government and the Russian company Polarnet have discussed plans to build a submarine cable from Europe to Tokyo via an eastwardly route around Northern Russia,
though the plan looks to be impossible without financial backing from the Russian government. Regardless of the ultimate profitability of submarine cable projects like these from the perspective of algorithmic stock traders or city governments, the provision of fast, high quality internet needed in order to facilitate meaningful economic and human development is a boon for the Arctic region that is already being realized.

Of course, transitioning from an economy driven by resource extraction to a digital economy hosting premier electronics manufacturing, data storage, and high-speed trading operations is not straightforward or guaranteed. Perhaps the Arctic climate will keep companies from being able to attract top tech talent, or the data storage or electronics manufacturing markets do not grow as quickly as anticipated. However, if Arctic governments are serious about pursuing healthy long-run growth, they must find a way to keep from over-investing in natural resource extraction, no matter how tempting the short-run gains from doing so may be.

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Contributing Editor Bill Kakenmaster reviews Richard Jackson’s “Writing the War on Terrorism”

By Bill Kakenmaster

Richard Jackson’s Writing the War on Terrorism is a useful study into American political discourse surrounding terrorism and counter-terrorism but ultimately self-defeating in simply trying to argue against the dominant narrative with its own idea of the truth, and ineffective in its proposed alternatives. In mapping the power relations between the dominant and non-dominant discourses, Jackson argues that “the ‘war on terrorism’ is now the dominant political narrative in America,” and is thus “highly successful” in both generating consent for U.S. military campaigns and normalizing militaristic counter-terrorism practices (pp. 2). However, Jackson’s critique of the “war on terrorism” fails to address the underlying power structure he himself cites, and which marginalizes alternative discourses. Furthermore, Jackson’s broader thesis—that such a discourse was not inevitable, but rather strategically deployed—and corresponding alternatives do not necessarily imply greater protection for human rights.

Jackson solves two important puzzles for post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy debate. First, he identifies the specific language of the “war on terrorism.” The “war on terrorism,” according to Jackson, consists of a multi-layered discourse which constructs the attacks on 9/11 as an act of war which victimized America; the “enemy” terrorists as an intrinsically inferior, barbarian “other;” the threat of attack as all-encompassing across time and space; and military aggression as a “just war” (pp. 31, 61, 96, 122). Jackson suggests these attacks were deliberate—although sometimes hyperbolic—constructed elements of the discourse, aimed to generate an artificial political consensus for both domestic policies, like the PATRIOT Act, and military operations abroad, such as the Iraq Invasion (pp. 181). He further suggests these linguistic instances are part of “a dialectical relationship between” language and policy, which thus explains the explicit and implicit worldviews embedded in U.S. policymaking (pp. 24). In fact, labelling the debate itself as pertaining to terrorism, not “a long-running cycle of violence and counter-violence between the American government and al Qaeda” decontextualizes the 9/11 attacks in favor of a political narrative that enables the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (pp. 43). The utility in Jackson’s work here lies in its locating U.S. political discourse.
In other words, citizens understandably want to know and understand their national leaders’ positions. Therefore, Jackson usefully holds contemporary U.S. policymakers accountable for the conscious and unconscious, explicit and implicit meanings they fix to the 9/11 attacks, terror actors, the threat of terror, and military warfare through their use of language.

The second achievement in Jackson’s work lies in his mapping the relations between discourses, therefore explaining the characteristics of the “war on terrorism,” as well as its dominance over alternative foreign policy discourses. To that end, Jackson relates the dominant discourse—“the war on terrorism”—to alternative discourses, “such as pacifist, human rights based, feminist, environmentalist, or anti-globalization discourses,” of which he provides several examples (pp. 19). However, to the extent that “the public debate uses mainly the language, terms, ideas, and ‘knowledge’ of the war on terrorism, it dominates the proposed alternative solidarity discourse (pp. 19). If citizens deserve to know what their national leaders believe, then they also deserve to know how much weight those beliefs hold in the current U.S. political discourse. Clearly, because the language a discourse (re) produces leads to specific policy outcomes, identifying the elements of the discourse of the “war on terrorism” and its relation to other discourses indeed represents a useful achievement in Jackson’s work.

Jackson’s proposed alternatives read more as self-defeating writings of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy than ones that could radically alter the U.S. political landscape. This is further evidenced by the ineffectiveness of Jackson’s alternatives in protecting human rights. For example, Jackson proposes constructing the 9/11 attacks as criminal acts, not acts of war (pp. 40). However, to the extent that, for example, the War on Drugs and the systematic police brutality against black Americans rely exclusively on discursive constructions of criminality, Jackson’s alternative does not necessarily imply greater protection for human rights in their resultant policies.

Jackson’s proposed alternatives read more as self-defeating writings of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy than ones that could radically alter the U.S. political landscape. This is further evidenced by the ineffectiveness of Jackson’s alternatives in protecting human rights. For example, Jackson proposes constructing the 9/11 attacks as criminal acts, not acts of war (pp. 40). However, to the extent that, for example, the War on Drugs and the systematic police brutality against black Americans rely exclusively on discursive constructions of criminality, Jackson’s alternative does not necessarily imply greater protection for human rights in their resultant policies. Jackson’s claim that the “war on terrorism” was not inevitable, moreover, ignores the specific institutional contexts and modalities through which the discourse was constructed (pp. 107). For instance, the near religious-like zeal with which Republican policymakers vindicated the U.S. defense budget for years before the attacks likely played a role in the intentional framing
of the 9/11 attacks as an act of war, yet the alternatives Jackson suggests downplay the ways in which these institutional thought processes manifest themselves in discourse by claiming that such discourses were not inevitable (pp. 38). Essentially, in both his critique of the dominant discourse and his alternatives, Jackson contradicts its own premise that dominant discourses result in negative outcomes by marginalizing subaltern discourses.

On the one hand, Jackson’s work locates the dominant discourse’s place within U.S. political climate and its relations to other discourses. This serves an important and useful explanatory function in holding national leaders responsible and informing the public on their positions. On the other hand, however, Jackson ultimately defeats his work’s central tenet, as his alternatives seek to supplant the “war on terrorism” as the hegemonic discourse without addressing the underlying structure of discursive power relations itself.

References:


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Early in March, President Trump released his budget outline for 2018. Among other things, the proposal cut spending on the State Department and USAID by around 35% while it asked Congress for a $54 billion increase in spending for the military, which amounts to about a 10% increase. Trump's proposal is a political document, and Congress is unlikely to enact it, at least in its entirety. However, this proposal gives insight into the White House's apparent preference for using hard power when addressing issues abroad, and it is incredibly disheartening that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has thrown his support behind the proposal.

Diplomacy and warfare are not different ways of solving a problem, and are most successful when they are used in conjunction. As Former Ambassador to Iraq James Jeffrey said, “[d]iplomacy is not an alternative to military force; it is the use of all elements of U.S. force in a coordinated, cumulative way to achieve our results in other countries.” The use of soft power is critical to the continued success of U.S. hard power. By cutting an already tight State Department and USAID budget by more than a third, Trump and his team are demonstrating that they do not see diplomacy and warfare as two components of the same strategy, and by doing so are making a critical mistake.

Although the budget proposal is in no way written in stone, there is potential for real consequences because of the line of thinking that it demonstrates. In particular, USAID and the State Department can play a critical role in the rebuilding of institutions of war-torn countries post-conflict. In recent years, the US has embarked on many projects abroad that include some components of rebuilding a society post-conflict, often a conflict that the U.S. was directly involved in. When the State Department and USAID are not properly funded, the responsibility of conducting these political and diplomatic operations falls upon people who do not have the same training and experience. One example of this phenomenon was the war in Afghanistan. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan began in 2001, but in 2009 another military surge began. The military surge was supposed to be coupled with a “civilian surge” that would have included experts who could help rebuild the
country. Unfortunately, the “civilian surge” never materialized because the agencies didn’t have the necessary funding. This led to troops trying to fill the gaps, but they lacked the training in local languages and culture that a Foreign Service Officer would possess, which meant they were not able to accomplish as much as FSOS would have been able to.

The failure of this “civilian surge,” among many other things, is why the U.S. is still engaged in a war in Afghanistan, nearly 16 years after first invading. If this war could be won by training Afghan soldiers and killing Taliban leaders, hard power actions, it would have been won. But, as the continuation of the conflict demonstrates, military action is not the only thing that is necessary to achieve the U.S.’s goals abroad, there needs to be knowledgeable diplomatic effort as well.

Although the budget proposal does not give the specifics of which programs would be impacted by the budget cuts, a 2016 report by the Heritage Foundation, entitled “How to Make the State Department More Effective at Implementing U.S. Foreign Policy,” gives insight into what programs might potentially face cuts. Although the counterterrorism bureau likely will not face large cuts, divisions that deal with arms control, military affairs, and cultural programs likely will. These cuts are in addition to many other likely cuts to a variety of key functions of the U.S. State Department, but that don’t particularly fall within the scope of U.S. military actions. These divisions are critical to the U.S.’s military efforts, particularly if the U.S. wants to do any form of state or nation building.

Although Trump has been skeptical of “nation building” in the past, there are crises around the world that will need to be dealt with that will demand the use of the State Department and USAID in this fashion. One such situation is ISIL. One of the few campaign promises Trump has kept is a firm on is his commitment to defeating ISIL, and as one Foreign Policy article put it, he is succeeding. Of course, while the elimination of ISIL is a worthy goal in pursuit of a safer world, it is not a matter of simply defeating them. Instead, one must ask whether anyone will simply take ISIL’s place in the event that they are eliminated, just as ISIL’s success could partially be explained by the power vacuum caused by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. This same power vacuum will exist after the demise of ISIL, and it is highly likely that it could potentially lead to a similar group emerging unless actions are taken to help rebuild the countries who have been most impacted by ISIL allowing them to defend themselves. This is a role that is better suited to the State Department and USAID than it is to the US military, but if they do not have the requisite funding, they will not be able to do it.

This same lack of understanding will cause problems for Trump on another foreign policy issue he will need to address while President, the ongoing civil war on Syria. It is harder to discern what Trump’s goals are regarding this conflict as he will need to reconcile two positions that are the antithesis of each other, his desire to work with Russia, and his desire to contain Iran. While on the campaign trail Trump often stated that he was not interested in getting the US involved militarily in the Middle East, however, in response to Assad’s use of chemical weapons against Syrian civilians, the White House ordered the use of Tomahawk cruise missiles to bomb Syrian airbases, saying that “something should happen” in regard to Assad. It is impossible to say what the White House’s long term goal is in Syria, however, in recent days a consensus has seemed to appear within the Trump administration that a solution will not come to Syria while Assad is in power, with U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. saying, “We don’t see a peaceful Syria with Assad in there.” Whether or not the U.S. pursues a foreign policy that involves deposing Assad or not, in a crisis where 11 million people have had to flee their homes and hundreds of thousands have been killed, large amounts of state building will need to occur post-conflict. But will a State Department and USAID who have had their funding severely cut be up to the task? I think it’s highly unlikely.
To be fair, Trump is hardly the first president to make this mistake. In fact, this is an endemic problem that has existed for many years, which is why the War in Afghanistan is a good example of the perils of underfunding the international affairs apparatus. Each year, Congress passes the National Defense Authorization Act, which sets funding parameters for the Pentagon. In contrast, a State Department authorization bill has not been passed in years. A widespread mistake is being made, over and over again, which is why for years, Secretaries of Defense have called on Congress to give the State Department and USAID the necessary funding they need to do their jobs. And it is why 120 retired US generals called upon Congress to fully fund the international affairs budget. Time and again, Congress has failed to deliver.

This question of funding is not a zero-sum game. An increase in spending on the State Department does not need to come at the expense of spending on the military, or vice versa. Although they are far, far better funded, the military has still experienced problems as a result of sequestration, especially in the civilian components of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. But when the military that receives the most funding on earth is getting an increase in spending, while an already underfunded State Department and USAID is getting a massive pay decrease, something needs to change.

In 2013, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, then Marine General James Mattis said “If you don’t fund the State Department fully then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately...the more we put into the State Department’s diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget as we deal with the outcome of apparent American withdrawal from the international scene.” Mattis is now the Secretary of Defense, but it appears his advice has been ignored. Of course, the U.S. has the choice not to engage in wars that will lead to the rebuilding of countries after the conflict, but it seems highly unlikely that that is something that will be pursued. Even if Trump has said he wants to avoid getting entangled in messy conflicts abroad, which seems unlikely in light of his quick reversal on Syria, things will happen during his presidency that will force his hand. Simply put, cutting the international affairs budget will not help solve any problems, except to assuage domestic voters who believe there is too much discretionary spending in the U.S., it will make them worse. A well-funded State Department and USAID is critical to the success of the US military. To underfund them is to make the military conflicts that much longer and more challenging. Hopefully the Trump administration realizes that, or they are doomed repeat the same mistakes as previous administrations.

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Export-Processing Zones under AGOA

How do they measure up under the infant industry framework?

By Deborah Carey

In the last issue of The World Mind, I explored the fate of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) under the Trump administration, the implications of its potential termination, and recommendations to policymakers to avoid the undoing of this trade deal that is not reciprocal, but still vital to U.S. interests in Africa. I made the blanket statement that AGOA has inspired the development of “Export Processing Zones” (EPZ) that build-up infant industries. In this analysis, I will examine my own assumption—do EPZs necessarily bolster infant industries in all cases? What have industry analysts said about EPZs, and if they are not effective, why do they persist?

Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

While “Export Processing Zone” sounds technical, many Americans are familiar with the general concept. In 1934, Congress passed the “Foreign-Trade Zones Act” to manage the negative effects of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act within the U.S. In fact, the United States boasts 277 Foreign-Trade Zones (FTZ) and 500 special purpose subzones, as of 2012. The purpose of these zones is to encourage international business and economic development by having geographical locations across from U.S. ports of entry that allow products from abroad to be used in manufacturing without tariffs.

EPZs and FTZs are both types of “special economic zones,” or geographic areas where business and trade laws are different than the rest of the country. EPZs are established in the same spirit of encouraging investment, but there are important differences between EPZs and FTZs. The World Bank contends that the main difference lies in the overall development objective. For Free Trade Zones, the objective is to “support trade” in a general sense. Export Processing Zones, as the name indicates, are established to encourage exports, namely in the manufacturing sector. For this reason, EPZs are most prevalent in developing countries because they “attract export-oriented foreign direct investment” meant to build up “infant industries.” The concept of infant industries stems from Alexander Hamilton in 1791 when he argued for government protection of certain potentially competitive U.S. indus-
tries from British competition. There is a wide literature on infant industries and the assumptions of the economic system within which they operate. For my purpose of examining export processing zones, I will highlight two applicable parameters of this theory.

**Diversion from the Infant Industry Argument**

First, the infant industry argument operates under the assumption that the industry being protected will eventually be competitive in the long-run after its initial period of protection. For this to be achieved, the industry must rise to a certain scale of production to compete in the global market. In the case of AGOA, exports to the U.S. are able to enter without paying tariffs, like other foreign products. Therefore, the scale these products must achieve is less (since the marginal cost for these products can be higher) than a country without AGOA. However, since AGOA allows for tariff-free entry into the United States, in some instances already fully scaled multinational corporations (MNCs) invest in Export Processing Zones in Africa by establishing new branches so the products they export from those branches can enter the U.S. market tariff-free. While there’s nothing overtly wrong with this business strategy, it undermines the infant industry framework.

In these scenarios, wealth is being created for the local economy with new foreign direct investment, but the economic surplus that results from research and design, innovation, education, and other spillovers that should characterize booming industries under an infant industry framework, is captured outside AGOA countries. In these cases, even if the industry becomes relatively competitive in the AGOA beneficiary country, the investments being made are not for the long-term.

A 2012 study by Lorenzo Rotunno, Pierre-Louis Vezina, and Zheng Wang argues that “African success” in increasing exports from the continent is attributed to “quota-hopping Chinese firms”. They also found, as theory predicts, that African countries “imported quasi-finished products with little assembly work left to do.” This trend is especially harmful in textiles, a sector that many labor-abundant African countries could benefit from. The expiration of the Multi-Fibre Agreement in 2005, which imposed quotas on the volume of textiles permitted from developing countries to developed, further encouraged multinational firms to re-route through Africa. However redirecting trade through Africa to gain tariff-free U.S. entry can occur in any sector; regulations by African governments and international partners can incite more local investment by these companies.

The infant industry argument also suggests that governments should protect industries that inadvertently bolster other sectors beyond the one being protected. However investments are often made in industries that do not necessarily have linkages to other parts of the domestic economy. For example, by investing in the clothing sector, investments are also being made in the industries that collect raw materials, transport them to the production location, and design new technologies or strategies of increasing productivity. However, if these linkages are located outside the country, the protection the government is undertaking through the establishment of EPZs (including tax breaks for companies, low labor standards, subsidies, and other incentives) may not result in higher levels of economic development. Howard Stein writes about the regional differences between export processing zones in Asia versus Africa, arguing, “Most zones in Africa have remained rather small, with few linkages to the local economy and small foreign-exchange earnings.” Not only are African countries missing an opportunity for growth, but the incentives aforementioned are costly to local governments. This funding could be channeled elsewhere to ensure linkages, especially if the surplus from transactions in EPZs is not being captured in the local economy.
to determine how they will affect a country’s long-term economic development and growth.

**Criticisms of EPZs in AGOA Beneficiaries**

EPZs have drawn many criticisms, the most prominent of which come from labor rights and deregulation advocates. In a comparative study between EPZs in Asia and Africa, Stein found that “[m]onthly wages for an unskilled textile industry machine operator were less than one third the equivalent wage in Mauritius, half of that in China, and 60 percent of the average wage in India.” In the event of unfair wages, workers in EPZs may be less likely to organize themselves. Unemployment in many AGOA-benefitting countries is high, so workers who organize are able to easily be replaced. In some countries, such as Togo, hiring and firing laws are different in EPZs. Some multinational companies also strategically ensure that workers are from different countries and regions, so that there is no commonly spoken language between them. This method “divide and rule,” is described in the account of Ramatex, a Malaysian company operating in Namibia.

EPZs are also criticized because of the deregulation that invites foreign investment into the AGOA benefitting country. The “race to the bottom” has become a widely-used scholarly term, as it describes the competition between lesser-developed countries for foreign direct investment conducted through deregulation. As the name would predict, sometimes the country worsens certain measures of its economic development by allowing higher levels of environmental degradation, tax breaks and credits for industries, donation of government facilities for production, and other incentives.

**EPZs as a Growth Mechanism**

EPZs, especially within AGOA-benefitting countries, have the potential to bolster economic development and truly build up infant industries. While my initial assertion in the last World Mind issue that EPZs build up infant industries in AGOA beneficiary countries was not necessarily wrong, it was generalized. In economic development—especially within an African framework and the diverse political economy of the continent—we should strive towards specificity, not generality, especially when making policy recommendations.

EPZs have great potential to encourage economic growth. When companies invest in local people, EPZs can encourage growth in the education sector. Local governments can also find alternative ways to encourage long-term growth in emerging sectors, even while allowing for incentives such as lower taxes. Establishing EPZs that help develop linkages to the local economy, respect local laws, and encourage long-term investment is difficult, but the benefits of well-governed EPZs can help AGOA-benefitting countries become even more competitive in U.S. markets in the long term.

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Invitation or Invasion? America’s Opioid Epidemic, Politics, and Poverty

Opioid dependence has become a hot-button issue in American politics, but what do proposed solutions mean for individuals from a lower socioeconomic status?

By Angela Pupino

During the tumultuous 2016 election season in the United States, the opioid abuse epidemic sweeping the nation became a political talking point. Politicians, journalists, and activists alike have tried to capture the sense of helplessness and hopelessness that opioid addiction has brought to the nation’s heartland.

Then-presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton laid out plans for combating addiction to heroin and other opioids across the Midwest. Meanwhile, journalists pondered whether opioid addiction may have swung the election in President Trump’s favor. Activists expressed concern over the difficulties addicts face in accessing rehabilitation and treatment. Author J.D. Vance, best known for capturing life in America’s Rust Belt in his memoir Hillbilly Elegy, described heroin as an invader that crept into his small Ohio town “not by invasion but by invitation” of his town’s hunger for the drug’s pain numbing effects.

Opioids are a class of drug that includes heroin as well as painkillers such as fentanyl, codeine, morphine, and oxycontin. Opioid painkillers are often prescribed to patients suffering from burns and other injuries and those recovering from surgery. They are also used to ease suffering in patients with terminal diseases like cancer. These substances provide pain relief coupled with a sense of euphoria, and that’s one of the factors that make them so addictive.

The World Health Organization lists lower socioeconomic status (SES) as a risk factor for prescription opioid overdose. While low SES individuals are by no means the only users of opioids, they are more likely than higher SES individuals to face negative health outcomes because of their drug use. As Galea and Vlahow explain, poorer injecting drug users are less likely to receive medical help for their addiction, less likely to receive information on risk reduction, and more likely to engage in higher risk drug use. It is unsurprising, then, that the epicenter of opioid addiction and overdose in the United States coincides largely with areas of the nation which have been devastated by decades economic decline, decreasing job opportunities, and deindustrialization. These areas hardest hit by an influx of opioid addiction include West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, as well parts of New Hampshire.
It is important for the United States to pay attention to rising rates of opioid addiction and overdose deaths. According to the CDC, prescription opioids were involved in 22,000 deaths in 2015, working out to 62 deaths per day. Importantly, that number does not include deaths from heroin overdoses. Opioid-related deaths are straining healthcare systems and emergency services across the nation. According to an article on opioid addiction from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), it is estimated that healthcare expenses associated with opioid pain relievers taken non-medically cost the insurance industry average $72.5 billion every year. Dependence on prescription opioids has also been tied to heroin dependence. Half of injecting heroin users surveyed by NIDA had used prescription opioids first, some even switching to heroin because it was cheaper. As the opioid epidemic continues to spread, these negative impacts are growing as well.

But opioid abuse does not just ruin lives and livelihoods in downtrodden communities in the United States. Although the opioid abuse epidemic in the United States is a localized issue, the effects of the drug’s trafficking and production spills over into the international realm. Globally, opioid abuse in the United States encourages the production of illicit opioids such as heroin, degrades environmental systems in production areas by way of deforestation and soil depletion, disrupts life in poorer communities, and renders treatment inaccessible to those who most need opioid pain relievers. In order to effectively combat the opioid abuse crisis, the international community must recognize and grapple with both the local and international costs of opium addiction.

One way that opioids negatively affect the environment is through deforestation. In order to cultivate opium poppies, large swathes of suitable land must be cleared. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that 281,800 hectares of land worldwide were being used to cultivate opium in 2015. Deforestation has also been linked to areas of drug trafficking. In the case of drug trafficking, deforestation can occur during the development of infrastructure for illicit crop cultivation. This includes the creation of landing strips and roads to transport drugs such as opium more quickly.

The production of illicit opiates has impacted the global environment in other ways as well. Opium production in the rainforests of Thailand and Burma has been found to cause soil depletion. Soil depletion creates obvious problems for rainforest ecosystems, which may struggle to recover following opium cultivation. But depleted soil also affects the ability of poorer communities, such as small landowners and subsistence farmers, to live off of these lands. The relationship between soil depletion and opioid production is also the case in Afghanistan, where failing opium crops leave poor farmers with no alternative livelihoods.

Illegal opium cultivation and opioid production does not just damage ecosystems in the developing world; it can damage community structures as well. In Afghanistan, the world’s largest opium producer, the connection between opium production and the nation’s violent insurgencies has been well documented. In war-ravaged Afghanistan, the success of opium crops is tied to the need for better development policy. Opium is a cash crop, allowing struggling farmers to generate the income they need to support their families. In the absence of other means of supporting themselves in a destabilized nation, farmers will continue to grow opium. Opium cultivation has, in short, helped fund an armed insurgency that destabilizes the nation and makes it difficult for farmers to produce other crops.

It is important to note that there is a difference between the environmental and social impacts of legally and illegally produced opium crops. Legal opium crops are grown under strict government supervision in places like India, Spain, and Australia. In places where opium is being legally cultivated for production into opioid painkillers, the impacts of deforestation and soil depletion on ecosystems are regulated by the government. Legally produced opium also
does not bring violence into these international communities, as access to the crop is often tightly controlled. Legal opium crops are only sold to companies that produce legal painkillers, as opposed to armed groups that traffic in illegal opium. It is the illegal production of opium for illegal drugs including heroin and counterfeit painkillers that presents problems for ecosystems and communities.

While the United States suffers from the harmful effects of over-prescribing potentially addictive opioid painkillers, people in many other parts of the world are unable to access opioid pain medications. In a 2011 study published in the Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy, researchers found that 83% of the world’s population lives in a nation with little to no access to opioid pain medications. In fact, the researchers discovered that only 7% of the world’s population had adequate access to opioid pain medications. In places where these painkillers are not easily accessible, individuals, even those suffering from excruciating pain, must go without.

Why are so many people around the world unable to access opioid painkillers? Research suggests that American addiction may play a role in this disparity as well. Americans alone consume some 80% of the world’s opioids. Those who become addicted to painkillers and heroin are willing to spend vast sums of money on legal and illegal opioid products. The RAND Corporation estimates that American users spent 27 billion dollars on heroin alone between 2002 and 2010. Opioid addiction in the developed world can inflate the price of opioids and impact on the ability of individuals in the rest of the world to afford opioid medications. In the United States, just 50 milliliters of morphine can cost 38 dollars. Other painkillers, such as fentanyl, are even more expensive. Take into account that long-term patients suffering from diseases such as cancer can require much more than 50 milliliters of morphine and it is easy to see how that price may burden already cash-strapped healthcare systems in the developing world.

While the environmental and social problems stemming from illegal opioid production may make banning or reducing opioid production altogether seem like a promising solution to America’s opioid epidemic, this is not the case. The majority of the world’s population still lacks access to life-saving opioid painkillers, meaning that policies focusing only on the supply-side are not the solution the global poor need. Solutions to the myriad problems caused by America’s addiction to opioids must come instead from reductions in the nation’s demand for opioids.

When J.D. Vance remarked that heroin had been invited into his community, he was recognizing the role that America’s demand for opioids plays in exacerbating the crisis domestically. In order to reduce the nation’s dependence on opioids, America must come to terms with the factors that led doctors across the nation to overprescribe opioids. This includes encouraging the prescription of non-opioid painkillers, better communication between doctors, pharmacies, and law enforcement organizations, and working to make rehabilitation programs more accessible for users. Unless demand-side policies are utilized to reduce America’s addiction to opioids, the global poor will continue to suffer.

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On the Brink of Collapse: The European Union’s Transition as it Strives to Survive

*The EU may have to allow a “two-speed Europe” to stem the rise of far-right extremism*

By Claire Witherington-Perkins

Following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, power dynamics on the Eurasian continent were reshaped by expansions of Western institutions, such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These expansions have strongly contributed to the current state of tensions between the US (and the EU) and Russia. Russia, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, is attempting to restructure the balance of power on the continent. A restructuring of power dynamics on the European continent is seen as necessary by the Kremlin to maintain their territorial sovereignty. This is on display in conflicts in Ukraine such as the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and military buildups along Russia’s Western border. The current US policy towards Russian aggression includes raising the cost for Russia for its actions with the goal of regime change and supporting US allies in Eastern Europe.

**Historical Background**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was forged in 1949 to ensure a U.S. commitment to the security of the European continent post WWII and in response the rise of the Soviet Union. The Alliance was formed to ensure a sharing of burden would occur, and that the European nations would too be responsible for their defense in cooperation with the United States. The Soviet Union countered NATO with its own, similar arrangement, the Warsaw Pact between Russia and the communist states in Eastern Europe.

Andrew T. Wolff best describes the source of current Russian aggression as stemming from two historical contexts: a) Russia’s tradition of geopolitical emphasis and worldview and b) a strong disagreement over a 1990 “no expansion promise” made between Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev and US Secretary of State James Baker.

Russia has long held a long-standing tradition of approaching the world through a geopolitical standpoint. Russia places an emphasis, above all else, on its own territorial sovereignty and maintaining a relative sphere of influence. This ideology can be seen throughout
Russia’s centuries of history as an expansionist empire; some might even argue that this “empire mindset” has still not subsided under the new post-Westphalian state order. This territorial sovereignty is exerted by the ability of the Kremlin to influence politics of that area through political, economic, and social pressures.

The expansion of the EU and NATO, two organizations which deliberately elected to leave Russia out of their membership and operations for many years, pose, for Russia, a threat to its territorial sovereignty as well as its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe by promoting ideals and reform policies not in line with Putin’s administration. Due to the close ties of ethnic Russians across countries like Ukraine, economic and political success there may serve as a ‘spark’ leading to a call for reform in Russia itself—this poses a potential threat to Putin’s control over the country. While some might point to the strong favorability of the Russian leader in the polls, it is important to remember that Putin is looking towards his long-term placement. Should the Russian economy be struck again by recession or depression, that favorability will quickly turn into unfavorability as Russians who were simply content may no longer have a source of income nor food to put on their table.

On a similar note, the 1990 informal agreement between the US and Russia supposedly stated that in exchange for cooperation on a peacefully reunified Germany, NATO would not expand past East Germany. The breakdown comes in interpreting what this agreement actually meant. For the Kremlin, it meant NATO membership would not extend past East Germany, which it did. NATO’s first expansion was in 1999 with the addition of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into the alliance and has since grown to 28 members. According to a high ranking NATO official, the US and NATO understood this agreement to mean no NATO-deployed troops or bases would be stationed beyond East Germany, which there has not been until after the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Ultimately, Russia’s interest does not actually lie in the Crimea, but rather the annexation can be seen as an attempt to destabilize the Ukrainian government which was seeking closer ties with the European Union. The government was on the eve of signing a EU-Ukrainian agreement, granting Ukraine access to the EU common market and a push forward on the needle towards accession. Keeping Ukraine from fully integrating with the ‘west’ is of utmost importance for the Kremlin to ensure its sphere of influence remains somewhat intact. This type of power move can also be seen in Georgia, where Russia invaded South Ossetia in 2008 following talks of Georgia looking to join NATO. While Georgia’s NATO aspiration was not the immediate trigger, it intensified relations which ultimately broke down with military build-ups following the downing of a Georgian unmanned drone.

**Current U.S. Policy**

The current U.S. policy in countering Russian aggression, namely the 2014 annexation of the Crimea and rebel activity in Eastern Ukraine is best described by Steven Pifer, a Senior Fellow at Brookings, in a testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Pifer broke breaks down the current US response into three sections:

“I. Bolster the Ukrainian Government
Reassure NATO allies of the U.S. commitment to defend against Russian aggression
III. Penalize Russia with the objective of promoting a change in Russian policy”

These three aspects of the US’s strategy, in practice, seek to try to increase the cost of aggression for Russia both through sanctions and increased military support of our allies.

U.S. efforts to bolster the Ukrainian government have been accomplished through disbursements of foreign operations assistance with US$513,502,000 budgeted for 2016, up from US$334,198,000 in 2015. These funds overwhelmingly went to support ‘Economic Development’, with the second largest spending category being ‘Peace and Security,’ which includes providing material support and training.
to Ukrainian troops. These efforts are meant to help sustain the Ukrainian government against opposition forces and help it fund programs to continue to develop the country economically and socially.

In reassuring NATO allies of the US’s commitment against Russian aggression, the US has pledged both support and weapons. The 2015 European Reassurance Initiative saw the Baltic states each receiving over US$30 million each in equipment to bolster their defense efforts as well as dramatic increases of US Foreign Military Assistance being pledged to these nations as well. The U.S. is currently constructing a second anti-ballistic missile station in Poland in order to complete a so-called “European ballistic missile shield.”

During NATO’s 2016 Summit in Warsaw, President Obama announced the stationing of 1000 US troops throughout Eastern Europe, namely Poland and the Baltic states. While 1000 troops offer Europe minimal, if any, tactical advantage, it is moves like these that NATO sees as key to maintaining the alliance. Should an invasion occur into any of these nations, not only will the invaded nation’s troops be attacked, but so will the U.S. troops, directly forcing the US into the conflict. The theory goes that now the US will have no choice but to pursue full engagement after attacks on their own troops.

While these moves have reassured many US allies, they do pose a very real risk of being interpreted by Russia as encroachment and escalation on its border. Without proper channels of communication and a clear understanding between the two parties, these troop movements may be countered by similar build-ups by Russian troops. This can lead to a continuous cycle of build-up by both sides in response to one another.

A key part of the U.S. response to Russian aggression has been so-called “smart sanctions” which target individuals the US has identified as playing a role in guiding and execution Russian aggression in Ukraine and the Crimea. These sanctions are intended to increase the personal, economic, and diplomatic cost of Russian aggression. Sanctions range from freezing of financial assets to restrictions on travel for these individuals. Additional sanctions imposed in partnership with the EU and NATO members a) restrict access of state-owned enterprises to western markets, b) embargo oil production and exploration equipment exports to Russia, and c) embargo military good exports to Russia. The ultimate goal of the sanctions is to force a regime change through external pressure on the regime itself as well as pressure the economically-affected population.

While the Russian economy has been in an economic downturn since 2014, credit may not be fully placed on the sanctions regime, but rather on a global downturn in oil prices. The Russian economy relies extensively on oil exports with minimal diversification. The global downturn in oil prices as directly impacted the economy and the value of the Russian ruble. The sanctions regime has further hampered the recession by limiting the country’s access to credit, meaning it has limited sources of finance. With the recent OPEC agreement to cut production, it will be a true test of the strength of the sanctions regime and how much it will prohibit the economy from recovering fully.

**Concluding Remarks**

The current conflict in Ukraine is a symptom of wider Russian aggression. These moves, unilaterally executed by Putin, can be viewed as a response to long-term ‘encroachment’ of western organizations like the EU and NATO. These organizations which explicitly do not include Russia (although attempts have been made for more bilateral cooperation) pose threats to what Russia perceives to be its territorial sovereignty and its sphere of influence. Russian moves can be seen to attempt to destabilize the international systems set up by Western powers.

Many politicians and pundits like to talk of a “Russian reset” in which the US (and other Western powers) would attempt to reharmonize relations with Russia and start with a blank slate, of sorts. I can appreciate the sentiment of this approach and for sure, so does Donald Trump. However, I think it’s a folly. A fundamental basis of international relations is the idea of the “long
game,” states and actors are always aware of how their actions affect their long-term status, credibility, and survival. The same concept can be applied in a backwards looking manor; it is laughable to think a state will forget previous actions and threats. Rather, I would argue, Trump and other western leaders should look to rebuild relations with Russia fully embracing our past and current clashes. A relationship with Russia should be folded into institutions where the Kremlin can have an equal seat at the table and reassure itself that any moves executed by Western powers does not pose a threat to Russian sovereignty. This is key if any successful and productive relationship with Russia is to move forward.

On the same note, we need to reemphasize it is never okay to sit idly by or fail to respond to aggressive moves on behalf of Russia that threatens sovereignty of other nations. Maintaining sovereignty of all nations is paramount to US security. If we don’t defend others, who would defend us should the day come. That’s why Donald Trump should continue the US’s trifold policy, until otherwise warranted, of bolstering support militarily and economically of Ukraine and its Eastern European allies as well as attempting to usher a regime change through sanctions.

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The College Campus and Its Discontents: How Edmund Burke Can Explain the Political Dissonance Between College Campuses and the Trump Phenomenon

What is really behind the sentiment found on today’s college campuses? For the answer, we must turn to Burke

By Kevin Weil

It is impossible to overlook the current sentiment being expressed on the American college campus following the 2016 election cycle. Acute anger, frustration, and denial has consumed the campus and its politically cognizant college students while intensifying and even radicalizing their partisan ideologies. It is not, however, outlandish to perceive these campuses as bubbles, who trapped inside, are the newest and youngest minds of the intellectual community that have come to vocalize their dissent of the recent election. The intellectual hubs of the United States - Boston, New York City, Washington D.C., as well as some newly recognized regions - have become entrenched in the mystique of their elite collegiate statuses, and yet seem to remain the most ideologically narrow. The observable campus radicalism on these campuses have come to define the dissonance following the election of President Trump. One can begin to understand how the average college undergraduate perceives the world differently from the “forgotten men and women” of the United States who delivered the election to Donald Trump; but perhaps something is being overlooked, particularly within the mores of a typical millennial college student. In considering the mores of the millennial college student within a campus bubble, the question naturally arises: what is inciting this reaction?

My answer to this question is entirely rooted in Burkean-conservative thought. But before attempting to pinpoint the chief influence that is exciting the mores of millennial undergraduates, one should first note the characteristics of a modern college campus and what kind of environment it engenders. The twenty-first century college campus takes elements of a standard collegiate institution and adds aspects of diversity, tolerance, and secularization - each a hallmark of the millennial generation. It is crucial to understand that the average college campus in 2016 is comprised of millennial students who tend to be both left-leaning in ideology as well as the most vocal and particularly critical of the 2016 election outcome. Now, within the Trump administration’s first one hundred days, this vocal criticism has intensified with the assistance of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) as well as late-night television, most notably Saturday Night Live, which has recently come to impersonate and satirize President Trump with more frequency and play-
ful malice. These factors are substantially intertwined with the mores of the millennial generation; college undergraduates’ frequent use of the internet provides a forum of communication and information exchange (in which they interact with likeminded individuals) and also access to material that discounts oppositional opinions - ultimately reinforces their disposition.

This piece is not an analysis of the uncanny success of the Trump campaign; nor is it one on the unforeseen failure of the Clinton campaign. Rather, its aim is to examine the typical college campus and to understand what, exactly, is driving its discontent and frustration with regard to the recent election. One should not seek the obvious answer - an answer that is validated through disdainful name-calling, stark rejection of dissenting opinions, and emotionally charged positions that compose an intellectually lacking characterization of the Trump administration so far. This discourse only serves to divide the political climate further and contributes little to a constructive dialogue. In actuality, characterizing the Trump administration is such an apprehensive and dismissive fashion only serves to cloud the reasonable mind from understanding the election and the trajectory of United States politics.

Although any millennial undergraduate’s refutation of President Trump’s platform may, on its face, be in reaction to what appears to be rhetoric-driven and partisan policy initiatives, there is a universal and instinctive aura that transcends this campus spiritedness. This intangible and distinctly reactionary sentiment is difficult to understand for we tend to misperceive it as simple anger and frustration. Beyond the messiness of politics, theory provides a clear explanation to why the college campus has become so radical; after all, understanding the theoretical aspects driving the millennial voting bloc’s behavior may reveal questions previously unknown from direct behavioral observation. As I stated earlier, my ultimate contention in this piece is to assert that the campus sentiment following the election of Donald Trump (and well into his administration) is a backlash premised in conservative thought. It is common to attribute contemporary conservatism to the Republican party; this notion should be discounted, especially within the context this assertion is framed around because this millennial sentiment is, in truth, liberal. Conservatism is not an ideology, but rather a disposition that can be embodied in any movement and reveals itself only in response to a threat. To a millennial college student, the concept of a threat deviates from the typical threats that most conservative strands tend to form their principles against, such as the degradation of tradition, family/community, and faith. Millennial undergraduates, particularly those born in the latter half of the 1990s, hold principles of diversity, tolerance, and secularism as essential aspects of a fulfilling society. They perceive anything contradictory to these principles as a threat to the progressive principles they became politically cognizant under and, also, within which they formed their perception of government and its role in society.

Dealing in absolutes is rather restrictive in any phenomenal examination. Isolating the cause of millennial generation’s reaction is of no exception to this maxim; thus, the millennial backlash against the election of President Trump can be seen as a reaction to the threat to both core progressive beliefs and to establishment politics. Here, I add my conjecture that many moderate Republicans, who make up a smaller portion of millennials but may not hold their bloc’s attributed principles as dear, would also find issue with President Trump’s election. It would be prudent, though, that before assessing the threats to millennial principles, the concept of threats and appropriate reactionary measures are recognized through the founder of modern conservatism: Edmund Burke.

Burkean theory and the conservative disposition can largely be understood from Burke’s ideas within his work “Reflections on the Revolution of France.” In this, he is critical of the French Revolution, believing that the French abused the option to revolt against their monarchical government. It is here Burkean theory manifests; Burke conceives of a society that
respects and acknowledges the traditions it was founded upon, preserving these core traditions for posterity. Here, Burke argues that society is, indeed, an intergenerational “social contract” that instills in each generation the principles and traditions of past generations; this is not to say society is to mindlessly follow the traditions of its ancestors, for Burke also contends that “a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.” Burkean theory is largely premised on this concept of adaptability, but also situationalism. To Burke, there is no metaphysical ism that can be construed, abused, and philosophically understood and implemented. Rather, conservative Burkean theory holds the traditions of the past in reference to all unfolding situations, reconciling them with the trends of modernity, and transmitting them for preceding generations.

Understandably, most contemporary conservatives will rebuke the argumentative point that left-leaning millennials, who have come to be major proponents of contemporary progressivism, can be characterized as conservative. One must understand that the characterization of a conservative reaction is entirely different than labeling an entire generation as one that embodies a conservative disposition. It is particularly relevant, though, to recognize the millennial generation as a one of a new political basis - generation that has come to believe social welfare, big government, and aspects of diversity, tolerance, and secularization are all institutions of American society rather than debatable features; that these aspects must be enforced by a centralized authority in order for them to be perceived as legitimate. Therefore, when the argument is made that a nationwide millennial campus reaction is indeed conservative, it implies that these progressive institutions are their traditions and principles.

It is still necessary to understand why millennial undergraduates are having such an adverse conservative reaction to the election on Donald Trump. Of course, it is doubtful that this same reaction would be observed if a mainstream Republican candidate was elected; the issue, then, must be inherent in Trump phenomenon, specifically its refutation of progressive sentiment and its explicit intention of dismantling establishment politics.

A closer look at the progressive sentiments that millennial college students hold as a generational principle will reveal the foundation for their conservative backlash. Implementation of these progressive principles into public life characterizes the progressive movement. And although the modern left carries traces of Wilsonian progressivism, it is currently being cultivated under new trends of diversity, tolerance, and secularization by modern political figures like Barack Obama, Elizabeth Warren, and Bernie Sanders. Each of these figures had a major influence on the 2016 election, primarily for the Democratic Party and its ultimate nomination of Hillary Clinton, and can essentially be seen as epitomized progressive leaders that are praised by millennials. Yet, it is precisely these figures that Donald Trump used to emphasize his own political doctrine of refuting the nation’s public discourse of liberalism.

Millennial undergraduates, nonetheless, are steadfast in affirming their core progressive beliefs; they participate in protests and often use social media as a platform for sharing their political beliefs. It is not uncommon to meet a college undergraduate who is an avid supporter of diversity/minority organizations or, more broadly, one who just supports broad progressive reform. Social media, primarily Twitter, is an advantage to them; they use hashtags (#BlackLivesMatter, #ShePersisted, #Resist, etc.) as a protest tool to grant their shared sentiment legitimacy in the public eye. Twitter, as a whole, has become an interesting forum in the 2016 election cycle being used by both the left and the right, the most notable (and controversial) figure being President Trump.

Perhaps, in some sense, it is here that millennial undergraduates feel threatened for not only are their core beliefs threatened by President Trump’s diametrically opposed policy mandates, but their public platform, too,
is being compromised. The normalization of unwelcome ideas on a platform dominated by millennial sentiment can only cause disharmony within the campus bubble - an environment that embodies and champions progressive principles. This concept is rather Burkean in nature; the millennial generation from a young and malleable age has grown to understand social media as a key aspect of modern life. As they age and become politically cognizant they take on their political leanings (which tend to be progressive) in tandem with their use of social media. The mores of the millennial become established and cultivated under the trends of modernity. With the introduction of the Trump phenomenon, their progressive-based forum, as well as the mores, are compromised. Naturally, as Burke would understand it, the inclination to preserve one’s principles is warranted - which gives rise to the current campus atmosphere around the United States.

Establishment politics, which is mutually held as a desirable aspect of centralized government by moderate portions of the left and the right, has also been perceived as a threat by millennials. In a way, the millennial generation’s progressive ideals work in conjunction with establishment politics - in order for one generation to pass on progressive principles to the next, there needs to be an established order. This order has come to be recognized as centralized established politics, or beltway politics. The idea of order and the centralized establishment largely is Cartesian in nature and conflicts with traditional conservatism which holds the family, community, and localities as the main forum to maintain tradition and principle. Cartesian school of thought, established by thinkers like René Descartes and Jean Jacques Rousseau, can be seen as a juxtaposition to contemporary conservatism in that it sees society as a distinct entity from the individual and understands social processes (or centralized government) as a way to serve human ends. Yet, to millennial progressives (and some moderates), order and establishment through a centralized power represent a consistent method to influence society as a whole, for progressivism is inherently forward looking and continually adapting to trends of modernity.

President Trump’s commandeering of an American populist platform has come to enrage the millennial college campus. His intention to disseminate centralized power to localities and rural America are observed by millennials as a both backtracking the Obama administration’s progressive policies and as a threat to any established progressive principles. The Trump campaign branded itself as the anti-establishment movement and ran on the mandate of draining “the swamp.” In essence, the campaign sought to delegitimize establishment politics that has been institutionalized in Washington D.C. and utilized by various progressive movements - like the Woman’s Suffrage Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. Phasing out intermediaries like special interests groups that organize centralized Washington politics becomes a driving force in the Trump campaign and a core issue for his administration. One can imagine the naturally adverse reaction from the millennial generation that has grew in congruence with establishment politics and perceiving its role in society as a positive force. The Obama administration, particularly, can be well understood as the main vehicle of reinforcement, for millennial undergraduates established their partisan and ideological leanings during his campaigns and his two administrative terms. Burkean thought, specifically the intergenerational social contract, would add validity to this claim; the millennial generation has come to believe that establishment politics is principled tradition. They became politically cognizant under establishment politics, believing it is how to effectively implement policy in order to maintain their progressive principles; they are, therefore, in their right to maintain the institution in order to transfer it to the succeeding generations.

The American college campus, therefore, should be seen as having experienced an abrupt conservative backlash. The Trump phenomenon has shaken the foundation of the progressivism and the millennial generation’s principles, even though the overlaps between the Trump platform and progressivism cannot be discounted. For instance, many progressives came to support
Senator Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination; his platform was similar to Trump’s, specifically in trade policy, special interests, and military intervention overseas. This policy “crossover” between the Trump and Sanders campaign can be explained by another conservative school of thought: paleoconservatism. Paleoconservatism, finds issue with both contemporary establishment Republicans as well as the progressive left Democrats. It detests Republicans for acquiescing on modern issues like lenient immigration policies and promoting a free market. Paleoconservatism advocates for nationalism and isolationism, and restrictions on free trade. sivism, interestingly enough, supports similar positions like non-interventionism (although still maintaining a globalist position), and more restrictive trade to benefit the working class. This gives reason to the fact that many of Sanders primary supporters voiced their intent to cast a vote for Trump in the general election. Trump’s platform may be plainly detested by most progressive who believe in opposing policies, but there are observable similarities between both policy preferences of Trump and progressives.

Burke’s ideas of adaptable tradition and its reconciliation with the trend of modernity can attest to the concept of a millennial conservative reaction, though not to the progressive movement as a whole. What should be taken from this analysis of the average college campus and millennial undergraduate is the fact that modern political discourse (that is, up until 2016) has followed a liberal progressive trend. It has not faced a formidable opponent until the rise of Donald Trump who, with his exploitation of rhetoric and demagoguery, was able to overtake establishment politics. Perhaps this signals a newly emerging dynamic in modern political discourse; the ambiguity of the political climate among the divided major parties along with their traditions and principles implies a time strife, reorganization, and an emergence of new leaders. The college campus, although in conservative revolt, may actually be facilitating a reorganization of progressive principles which will come to defend the progressive trends they feel are threatened under a Trump administration. The oppositional dynamic of the intellectual elite and the “forgotten men and women” of America will be put on full display within the next few years and, with it, the contention of how to “Make America Great Again.”

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The U.S. Agency for International Development has evidently become a big target for President Trump.

Photo Courtesy of WikiMedia Commons.

Donald Trump’s Short-Sighted International Aid Cuts Line the Pockets of Beltway Bandits

Cutting USAID’s budget does more than just cripple the agency’s ability to carry out its mission, it also promises big paydays to development contractors who can get the ear of the President

By Andrew Fallone

As we see changes begin to take place in the operations of our government, it is impossible to stay silent as the nation is steered towards disaster, and such is the case in terms of international development. The United States is a global leader in foreign aid, and this is a role which cannot be taken lightly, nor should it be embroiled in short-term partisan conflicts when its ramifications extend far beyond our own borders. Donald Trump has suggested cuts of approximately 31% to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which while serving his narrative of saving tax payer dollars, is likely to only result in much greater costs for the nation in the future when we will be forced to spend extravagantly to erase the consequences of this misstep. The majority of Americans mistakenly believe that we spend immense portions of our national budget on foreign aid projects, with most believing we spend upwards of 20% of our budget on aid. Now living in Trump’s America, this widely-held fallacious belief could be some of the reason that USAID found itself on the chopping block. In reality, international aid constitutes less than 1% of national budget. Given its miniscule appropriation of funds compared to other national agencies, any cuts to USAID are more symbolic and politically motivated than actually functional in streamlining government expenditure. The proposed sweeping cuts to USAID would result in more than just a loss of staff and intellect within USAID, but also the entire elimination of the independent U.S. African Development Foundation, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and United States Institute of Peace. The work conducted by these agencies is not simply chafe that can be harmlessly eliminated, for they make a real impact on the lives of people all over the globe. Even outside of USAID, international aid in general is being called into question, with a 35% reduction in funding for the Treasury International Programs. Trump has suggested that the funds freed by spending cuts like those USAID may experience will go to help emphasize our already immense military might. This is counterintuitive if Trump wishes to achieve his stated goal of defeating ISIS, for without the civilian support that fills the gaps left by local government, a similar threat
will emerge in the future. Thus, the power wielded by our aid spending cannot be relinquished so quickly.

The soft power that the United States exercises through our aid financing allows us to prevent future conflicts and maintain a role as a global leader. 120 different military generals wrote a letter telling the current administration that they must recognize the importance of this soft power, highlighting that even those who would hypothetically benefit from receiving extra funding cut from USAID mark international aid can attest to the importance of development work abroad as a component of national security. Former Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East at USAID Mona Yacoubian helps elucidate how crucial development aid is to achieving our national security objectives, explaining that security rests on “...the three-legged stool of defense, diplomacy, and development. In this era of complicated security challenges, development, alongside diplomacy, must retain equal footing with defense.” Those in our armed forces also recognize that wars cannot be won with their bullets alone, for as General Joseph Votel, the Commander of U.S. Central Command, was quoted by Foreign Policy to testify to congress, “The military can help to create the necessary conditions; however, there must be concomitant progress in other complementary areas (e.g., reconstruction, humanitarian aid, stabilization, political reconciliation)...Support for these endeavors is vital to our success.” Indeed, once strategic military objectives have been achieved, USAID’s work is crucial to ensuring that a maintained military presence is not necessitated for years to come. In a time when many are already critical of our widespread military involvement abroad, any initiatives which can lessen the need for the deployment of U.S. troops abroad should not be considered ‘wasteful’ spending. The importance of international development aid is further supported by the widely-held belief that following U.S. military involvement in Iraq, the lack of adequate civilian support is what laid the foundation for the formation of the modern Islamic State. As explained succinctly in an article by Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson and former USAID administrator Raj Shah, “Vacuums of leadership are not generally filled by the good guys.” With significant evidence clearly to the contrary, one questions whether Donald Trump’s budget choices result from blind ignorance, or purposeful malice. When speaking about international development aid, Trump told the Washington Post that “I watched as we built schools in Iraq and they’d be blown up. And we’d build another one, and it would get blown up. . . . And yet we can’t build a school in Brooklyn.” This quote illustrates the clear lack of intelligent thought being put into our national security, for while education in Brooklyn is obviously a priority, it cannot supplant aid abroad, because we are not fighting radical extremist terrorism from Brooklyn. Aid works to fill gaps left after military goals have been achieved, building the positive relationships between the United States and civilians abroad that are so crucial to countering radical ideologies. If Donald Trump truly wanted to put ‘America first,’ then he would not cut USAID and aggrandize already egregious problems abroad that will only necessitate further spending in the future.

It is clear that Donald Trump’s proposed cuts to USAID serve a larger partisan agenda and scapegoat the already much maligned global poor for no purpose other than easily-condemnable political posturing. Trump has already set a precedent of targeting groups who have little ability to defend themselves, attacking refugees with his first failed and subsequent second revised executive orders on immigration. Trump’s expansion of the ‘Global Gag Rule’ cuts family planning programs abroad, which has real palpable impacts on the lives of people who have no avenue to voice their protest through, and will likely result in the cutting of malaria and HIV/AIDS prevention programs. Obviously, the global public good is no longer the priority. Refugees find themselves in the sights of Trump’s partisan attacks, for cutting aid to them can allow Trump to parade himself as a price-savvy budget hawk while targeting those who are not afforded the opportunity to create any recourse for such misguided actions. Ill-thought-out
actions such as this have drawn criticism from member of Trump’s own party, such as Senator Marco Rubio, who tweeted that “Foreign Aid is not charity. We must make sure it is well spent, but it is less than 1% of budget & critical to our national security.” The despicable targeting of the world’s poorest for political purposes has also drawn the criticism of more than 100 faith leaders from around the country. In a letter to Congress, they cite the fact that today we have the most displaced persons living on the planet since the Second World War to decry Trump’s proposed budget cuts for when the need is so clearly demonstrated we cannot possibly deviate from our mission to promote freedom and human rights if we want to still see ourselves as a ‘city on the hill’ for the rest of the world to follow. Trump’s attacks on USAID are reminiscent of those of Senator Jesse Helm in the 1970s, and they will have similar ramifications. Helm’s attacks increased the reliance of USAID on controversial and problematic private aid contractors, and Trump’s proposed cuts would serve to further increase reliance on the detrimental industry.

International private development contractors profit off of reapportioning segments of money intended to go to international aid and siphoning it directly into their already-overstuffed pockets. Companies whose goal is profit, opposed to a government agency whose goals are more altruistic, cannot possibly compete to achieve the same results in international development, for at the end of the day, their pockets will always come before the stomachs of the global poor. USAID already relies on these “beltway bandits” more than it should, with the top 10 for-profit aid contracting corporations receiving more than $5.8 billion in contracts from 2003-2007. USAID does not have the staff nor the funding to be able to manage all of its projects internally, forcing it to divert funds that could be better spent to aid contractors to be able to achieve some of its goals. Yet, the problem with aid contractors is that they work to achieve very narrow and specific goals, ignoring the larger dilemmas that necessitated the aid in the first place. Indeed, how can we expect companies who profit of the persistence of global problems to have any incentive to solve them? Under president Obama, USAID director Raj Shah worked to move the agency away from its reliance on private contractors, saying that “This agency is no longer satisfied with writing big checks to big contractors and calling it development.” Furthermore, these contractors often struggle to even meet the objectives they are given, building only 8 of 286 schools and 15 of 253 medical centers planned in Afghanistan. Indeed, reliance on aid contractors is significantly problematic for these contractors are monetarily incentivized to falsify their achieved results in order to continue to receive funding, with one group receiving more than $150 million tax-payer dollars for goals that they failed to achieve in reality. Often, especially when considering budget cuts, development contractors are portrayed as a viable option to cut the costs of international aid, for they can more precisely set and achieve specific development goals. Unfortunately, opposed to addressing issues that local populations elect as important to them, or any of the underlying dilemmas that caused the issues in the first place, aid contractors’ goal-setting leads to resources being siphoned to specific issues that are designated by the for-profit organizations as reachable. Indeed, industrial development corporations (IDCs), subsist diverting money intended for the world’s neediest into their own pockets, for they rely on subcontracting to accomplish their goals, and at each level more aid funding is lost to profit-motivated contractors rather than furthering any development initiatives. IDC executives take their hefty cut, and then after paying their workers the leftover development funding goes to the companies hired by the IDC, and from there the resulting pittance is paid to local workers to conduct the actual labor of development. This profit-motivated managerialism has colonial roots in the Dutch and British East India Companies, and serves no purpose but to further divide the targets of development from the funds allotted to them, based around the problematic notion that western oversight is necessary to conduct effective development. Trump’s budget cuts for
content to eat luxuriously off money intended for those living on pennies a day, and Donald Trump's proposed cuts will only further exaggerate the private-aid industrial complex. As US-AID experiences further and further cuts, their staff will wane, allowing even less oversight of the aid contracting business which has shown itself to need oversight to prevent gross monetary fraud. Increased reliance on private development contractors does not just have ramifications for civilians abroad, for as Donald Trump sacrifices our nation's soft power for political objectives, our own citizens will be forced to foot the bill of the inevitable cleanup efforts of the future.

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