FP
A DECADE OF
GLOBAL THINKERS
10

DOWNLOAD

CSS Notes, Books, MCQs, Magazines

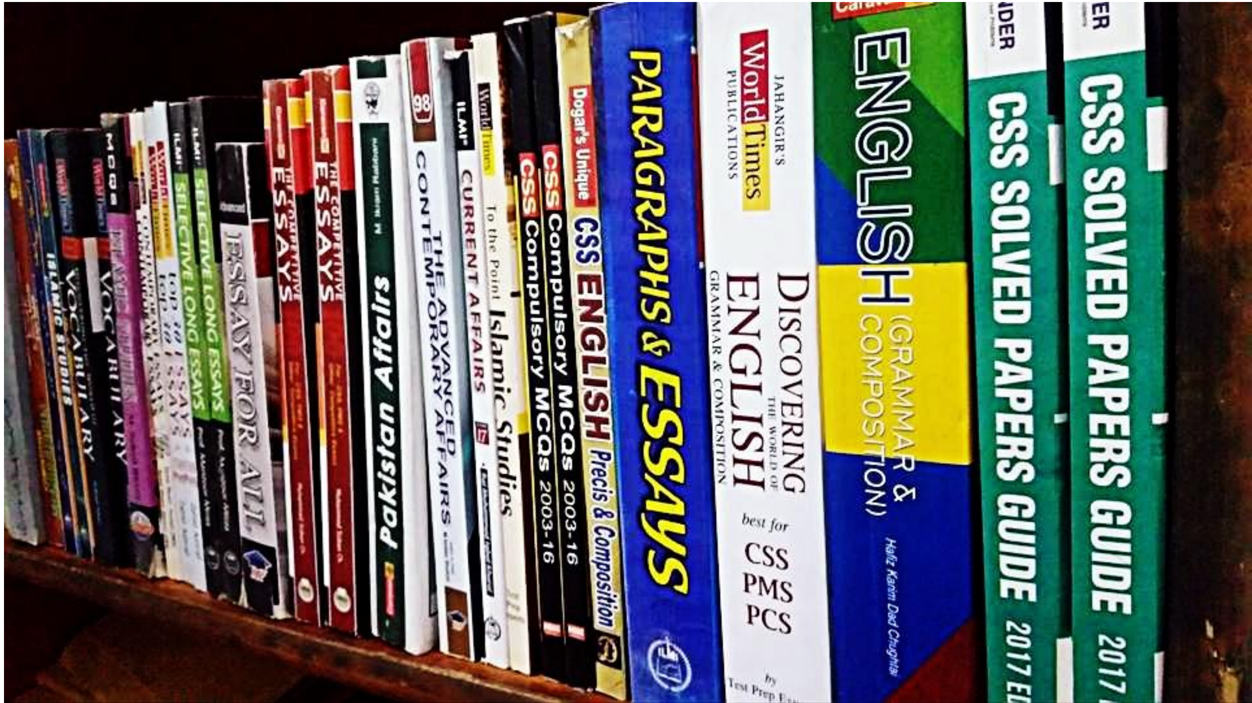
THE CSS POINT
Yes We Can Do It!

WWW.THECSSPOINT.COM

- **Download CSS Notes**
- **Download CSS Books**
- **Download CSS Magazines**
- **Download CSS MCQs**
- **Download CSS Past Papers**

The CSS Point, Pakistan's The Best Online FREE Web source for All CSS Aspirants.

Email: info@thecsspoint.com



BUY CSS / PMS / NTS & GENERAL KNOWLEDGE BOOKS ONLINE **CASH ON DELIVERY** ALL OVER PAKISTAN

Visit Now:

WWW.CSSBOOKS.NET

For Oder & Inquiry

Call/SMS/WhatsApp

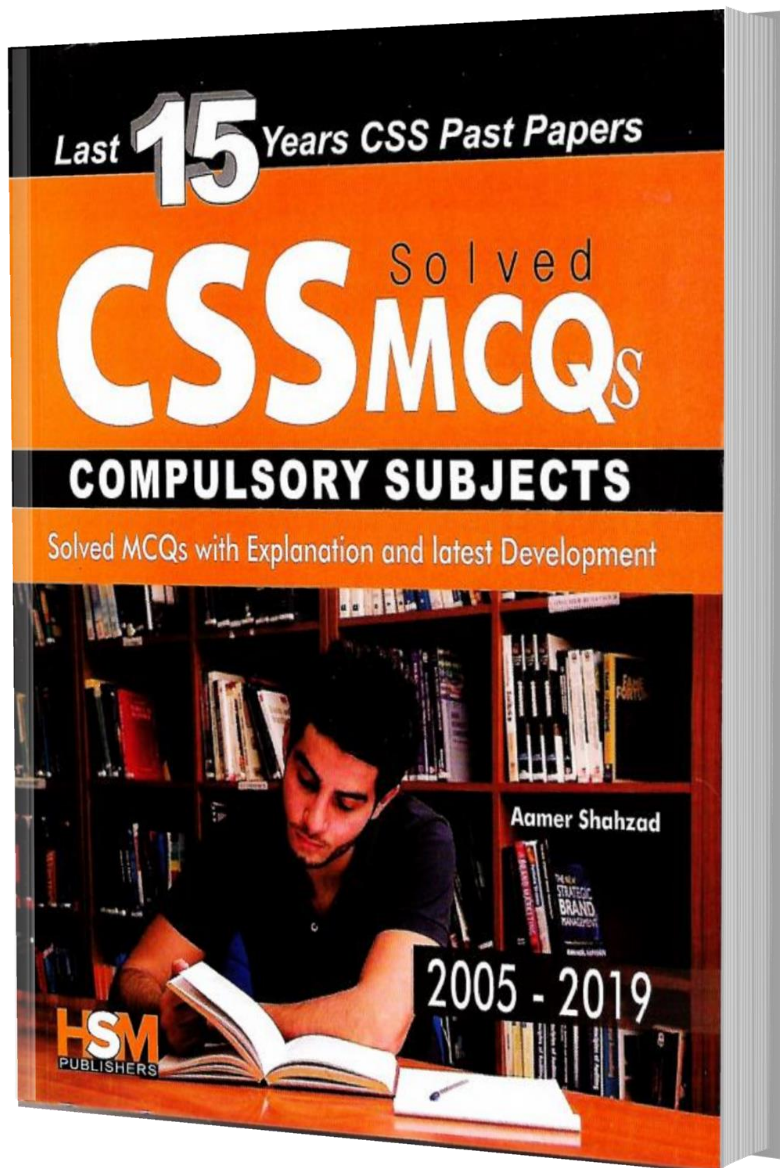
0333 6042057 – 0726 540316

CSS Solved Compulsory MCQs from 2005 to 2019

By HSM Publishers

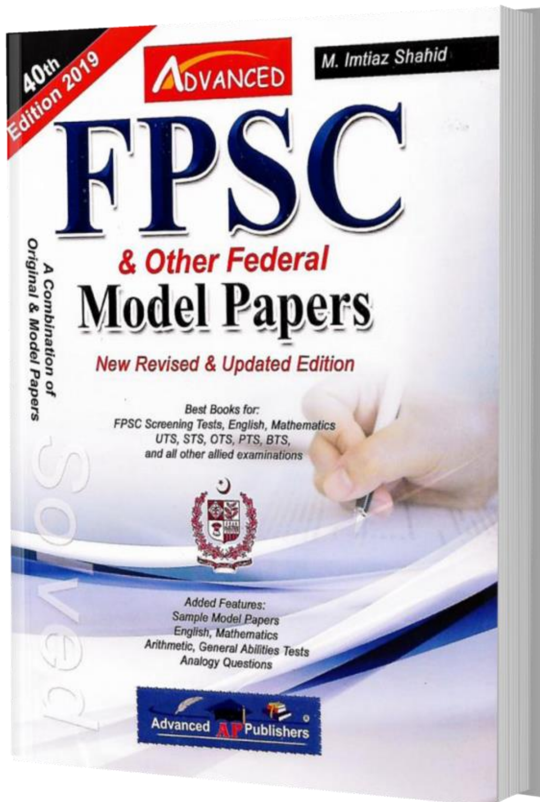
Latest and Updated Edition

Order Now

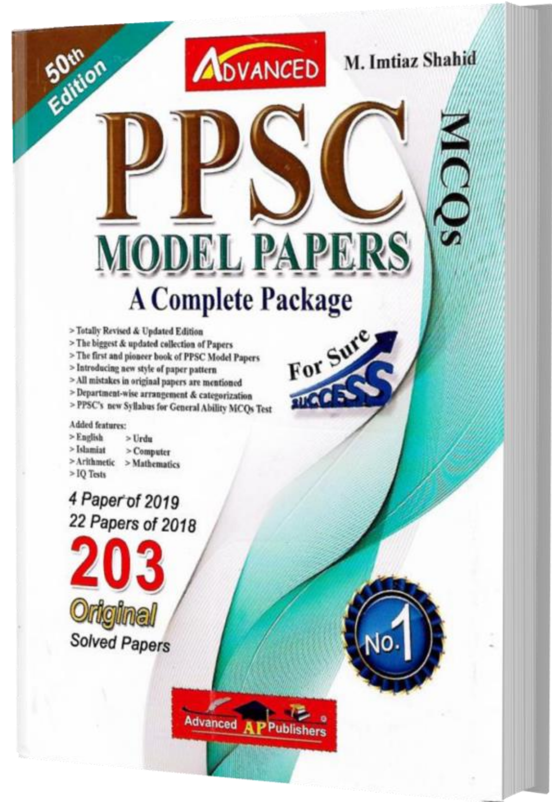


Call/SMS 03336042057

FPSC Model Papers 40th Edition



PPSC Model Papers 50th Edition



For Online Order Please Call/SMS 03336042057 – 0726540141
Visit https://cssbooks.net

CSS BOOKS.NET

For Order Call/SMS 03336042057 ~ 0726540141

ARGUMENT

Springtime for Strongmen

The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way.

BY ROBERT KAGAN

Riccardo Vecchio/Imprints illustration for Foreign Policy

The year 2018 was springtime for strongmen everywhere. It was the year Xi Jinping put an end to collective leadership in China, made himself president for life, and put a final nail in the coffin of U.S. Sinologists' credibility as predictors of Chinese behavior. (They've been prophesying liberalization for decades.)

Elsewhere in Asia, North Korea's Kim Jong Un won the admiration of U.S. President Donald Trump because of the high quality of his dictatorial control. Poland's dubiously democratic government became a favorite of Trump's, as did Hungary's proudly illiberal prime minister, Viktor Orban. Orban even got a hero's welcome in Israel, where the prime minister's son Yair Netanyahu called him the "best leader in Europe." In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega solidified his position as the new Anastasio Somoza, whom he overthrew in the name of the people four decades ago.

In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro managed to hang on, despite being the only dictator in the world the Trump administration seemed not to like. And in the Middle East, the year's best drama came when one autocrat, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, exposed another, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for apparently ordering an assassination worthy of *Goodfellas*.

[*Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are, Fareed Zakaria writes.*]

Mohammed bin Salman will probably be just fine—the easily distracted U.S. media is already forgetting about the grisly killing of Jamal Khashoggi and so will Congress, just as it overlooked for years Saudi brutality in Yemen. U.S. newspapers and television scarcely even cover the equally murderous Egyptian military dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who gets the red-carpet treatment whenever he visits the United States. The Trump administration, like the Obama administration before it, sees Middle Eastern dictators as essential bulwarks at a time when both administrations sought to reduce the United States' involvement in the Middle East as much as possible.

Autocracy flourished in 2018 because when Washington pursues a so-called realist policy of global retrenchment, it looks for dictators it thinks it can rely on. This was Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's strategy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The famous Nixon doctrine, which aimed at reducing U.S. commitments overseas, put all of Washington's chips on the Shah of Iran and the Saudi monarchy. One produced the Iranian revolution that still bedevils the region today; the other produced rampant Wahhabism and 15 of the 19 hijackers who attacked the United States on 9/11.

Autocracy flourished in 2018 because when Washington pursues a so-called realist policy of global retrenchment, it looks for dictators it thinks it can rely on.

Today, academics who urge retrenchment in U.S. foreign policy argue that Washington should accommodate "diversity" in the world—perhaps a nice mix of tyrants and would-be tyrants to go along with the dwindling number of democracies. As Harvard University's Graham Allison puts it, America needs to adapt "to the reality that other countries have contrary views about governance and seek to establish their own international orders governed by their own rules." Don't worry. It has.

Autocracy is making a comeback because too many in the West act like late 19th-century racial imperialists; they think Arabs and others lacking so-called Judeo-Christian traditions can't handle democracy. For decades, of course, Americans did not believe Catholics were fit for democracy either, because they supposedly obeyed the authoritarian dictates of Rome; then it was Asians with their Asian values; now it is Muslims, who can't be allowed to choose their own leaders because Americans don't like their choices. So Washington prefers that they be ruled by strongmen. Order first, liberty later—as Samuel P. Huntington and Jeane Kirkpatrick argued back in the 1960s and 1970s.

[*2019 could be a defining moment for U.S. trade policy, Douglas Irwin writes.*]

Authoritarianism is also on the rise because dictatorships have money to throw around. And unlike democratic leaders, they don't have to tell anyone where the money is going. So even poor African nations, such as Zimbabwe and Egypt, can spend millions of dollars to hire top Washington lobbyists to make their cases and fend off pesky congressional pressures. The oil-rich Persian Gulf potentates, meanwhile, already practically own Washington, feting the powerful in their palaces and effortlessly landing top-level meetings. Rumors abound about what benefits senior Trump officials may have received from the Saudi crown prince. After all, the cash of Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs that flowed into the accounts of the now convicted Paul Manafort and his associates, as well as to top law firms lending a hand to the cause of Ukraine's corrupt former strongman, has now been mostly revealed. Imagine what has not been disclosed.

President Xi Jinping inspects the Chinese People's Liberation Army garrison in Hong Kong on June 30, 2017. (Hong Shaokui/China News Service/VCG via Getty Images)

The Chinese dictatorship has had the best run of all. It barely had to spend a dime on lobbying; corporate America did the heavy lifting. Desperate to gain access to the Chinese market, U.S. corporations lobbied hard to grant China "most favored nation" status and entry into the World Trade Organization. They hired former cabinet officials; they endowed chairs at universities and think tanks across the United States; they convinced local chambers of commerce to approach members of Congress—all in the hope of convincing Washington and the public to view Beijing as a peaceful liberalizing partner. And they've succeeded so completely that it may soon be too late to do anything about the militarizing totalitarian power that emerged instead.

Finally, autocrats are on the march because even Americans are not so sure how they feel about democracy. U.S. politics are polarized. Congress is stalemated. Bureaucrats are incompetent. While the rest of the world has been taking the United States to the cleaners, Americans are starting to notice: Look how efficient the Chinese are! Look what a strong leader Vladimir Putin is! Maybe what the world needs, maybe what America needs, is a strongman who can cut through all the nonsense and just get things done. This widespread sentiment was among the factors that led to the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany, made Benito Mussolini popular in Italy and abroad, and is now being revived around the world as faith in democracy recedes.

Autocrats are on the march because even Americans are not so sure how they feel about democracy.

Finally, autocracy has been succeeding because it is just as natural to humans as democracy. People may seek recognition, as Francis Fukuyama argues, but that is not the only thing they seek. They also yearn for the security that comes from family, tribe, and nation. At times, they don't want the freedom to make choices but prefer giving authority to a strong leader who promises to look out for them. That's why it's always potentially springtime for dictators.

Indeed, whether autocracy continues to be a growth industry in 2019—and there are worrying signs even in once lionized democracies such as India and Brazil—depends on whether those who believe in liberalism and democracy decide to make a stand.

After the end of the Cold War, Americans and Europeans thought they could sit back and enjoy an open road toward a post-historical world. It turns out that we have to keep fighting constantly if democracy is to survive. The jungle grows back. ■

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Robert Kagan is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a contributing columnist for the *Washington Post*. He is the author, most recently, of *The Jungle Grows Back: America and Our Imperiled World*.

PROFILE

Iran's Deadly Puppet Master Gen. Stanley McChrystal explains exactly why Qassem Suleimani is so dangerous.

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ARGUMENT

Is the World Prepared for the Next Financial Crisis?

New regulations and reforms have helped, but major threats still loom.

BY CHRISTINE LAGARDE

Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange after the closing bell on Sept. 29, 2008. At the time, the Dow recorded its biggest closing drop in history, falling 777 points. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

The world in 2019 is still reckoning with the legacy of the global financial crisis, which is hardly surprising given its scale and lasting impact. Ten years on from the Lehman Brothers collapse, one question about the financial system keeps coming up: Are we safer than we were in 2008? The short answer is yes—but not safe enough. While there has been marked progress, more needs to be done, including keeping pace with potential new risks from a rapidly evolving financial landscape.

First, the progress. Banks have bigger and better capital buffers and more liquidity. Countries have taken steps to address systemic risks posed by institutions seen as too big to fail. Regulation and supervision have been strengthened; many countries have stepped up their focus on monitoring financial stability, and many now also conduct regular stress tests to check banks' health. A substantial portion of trading in over-the-counter derivatives has shifted to safer central clearing systems.

For its part, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has improved its ability to analyze and monitor sources of systemic risk. It has partnered with national authorities to help them identify potential trouble spots, such as excessive consumer or corporate debt; develop tools to curb risks; and strengthen analysis of their financial systems.

> **The IMF has improved its ability to analyze and monitor sources of systemic risk.**

What about areas where progress has been inadequate or where new risks have emerged?

Let's start with debt. Globally, nonfinancial debt ballooned to a record $182 trillion in 2017—224 percent of global GDP, an increase of almost 60 percent over 2007. In the United States, investor demand for debt issued by highly leveraged companies has led to worryingly loose underwriting standards, increasing the risk of default by weaker borrowers. In emerging markets, public debt is at levels last seen during the 1980s debt crisis. And if recent trends continue, many low-income countries will face unsustainable debt burdens.

[*2019 could be a defining moment for U.S. trade policy, Douglas Irwin writes.*]

Nonbank finance, also known as shadow banking because it takes place beyond the perimeter of traditional bank regulation, is another source of risk. Regulators must develop and deploy new tools to address it, particularly in those emerging markets where it has expanded rapidly.

At the same time, new challenges have emerged, including the danger of cyberattacks on banks and stock exchanges. Financial innovation and technology hold out the promise of better, cheaper, and more accessible services but also pose risks for consumers, investors, and the economy's overall financial stability—risks that are not always easy to understand or anticipate.

And for all the progress to strengthen the financial sector, the revamped architecture remains untested. If financial conditions were to tighten sharply—for example, via unexpectedly higher interest rates or a sharp drop in asset prices—this could expose areas of vulnerability that have built up during a decade of record-low interest rates. In the last year, we have already seen some investors pull money out of emerging markets in response to a stronger dollar, rising U.S. interest rates, and trade tensions. IMF calculations show that with an abrupt tightening, there is a chance—albeit a small one—that capital outflows from these economies (excluding China) could reach $100 billion. That would broadly match outflows during the financial crisis.

Looking at the economic context, there are several sources of risk that could shake investor sentiment. Global growth, while still strong, is leveling off. Support is waning for the open, rules-based international system that has fueled global prosperity, and trade tensions could escalate. Uncertainty about fiscal policy in Europe is reviving worries about the self-reinforcing nexus of government and bank debt that shook the eurozone in the first years of this decade. Finally, central banks must navigate the end of an unprecedented monetary experiment. In the United States, the Federal Reserve may need to raise interest rates higher than currently anticipated if tax cuts combined with fiscal stimulus fuel faster-than-expected inflation.

> **Support is waning for the open, rules-based international system that has fueled global prosperity.**

So how should policymakers respond? First, they must complete financial regulatory reforms and, just as important, resist pressure to roll them back. Bank capital should be raised even further in places where buffers remain low. "Too big to fail" remains a problem as banks grow larger and more complex. More progress is needed on procedures for resolving, or winding down, failing banks, especially those that are active across borders. Regulators should encourage banks with weak business models and high levels of nonperforming loans to clean up their balance sheets.

[*The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.*]

Second, policymakers should rebuild their fiscal and monetary arsenals, which were weakened as they contended with the 2008 crisis and its aftermath. Doing so will require reducing budget deficits and gradually bringing interest rates back to normal levels as economic conditions permit. Governments should also work together to reduce excessive global imbalances in a way that supports sustainable growth. Flexible exchange rates can help absorb shocks. Steps to boost lagging productivity would counter demographic headwinds and raise growth, which in turn would support efforts to bolster fiscal and monetary room for maneuver.

Finally, as we consider the lessons of the crisis and the path forward, we must also recognize and confront more profound, longer-term risks to financial—and social—stability. Climate change is one that threatens all of us, low-income countries in particular. Advanced economies must ensure that prosperity is more widely shared, by dealing with rising inequality and stagnant wage growth. All countries need to educate and train workers for automation and the fast-changing workplace of the future.

Many of the measures that might make the world safer than it was before the last crisis depend on international cooperation—on matters of trade and finance but also on a number of global public-good problems, including the environment and refugees. The stakes are just as high as they were in 2008.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Christine Lagarde is the managing director and chairwoman of the International Monetary Fund. Twitter: @Lagarde

ARGUMENT

The End of Economics? Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are. *By Fareed Zakaria*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ARGUMENT

The End of Economics?

Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are.

BY FAREED ZAKARIA

The Fearless Girl statue looks up at Wall Street's Charging Bull sculpture in New York on March 29, 2018. (Volkan Furuncu/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)

In 1998, as the Asian financial crisis was ravaging what had been some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, the *New Yorker* ran an article describing the international rescue efforts. It profiled the super-diplomat of the day, a big-idea man the *Economist* had recently likened to Henry Kissinger. The *New Yorker* went further, noting that when he arrived in Japan in June, this American official was treated "as if he were General [Douglas] MacArthur." In retrospect, such reverence seems surprising, given that the man in question, Larry Summers, was a disheveled, somewhat awkward nerd then serving as the U.S. deputy treasury secretary. His extraordinary status owed, in part, to the fact that the United States was then (and still is) the world's sole superpower and the fact that Summers was (and still is) extremely intelligent. But the biggest reason for Summers's welcome was the widespread perception that he possessed a special knowledge that would save Asia from collapse. Summers was an economist.

During the Cold War, the tensions that defined the world were ideological and geopolitical. As a result, the superstar experts of that era were those with special expertise in those areas. And policymakers who could combine an understanding of both, such as Kissinger, George Kennan, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, ascended to the top of the heap, winning the admiration of both politicians and the public. Once the Cold War ended, however, geopolitical and ideological issues faded in significance, overshadowed by the rapidly expanding global market as formerly socialist countries joined the Western free trade system. All of a sudden, the most valuable intellectual training and practical experience became economics, which was seen as the secret sauce that could make and unmake nations. In 1999, after the Asian crisis abated, *Time* magazine ran a cover story with a photograph of Summers, U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, and U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and the headline "The Committee to Save the World."

In the three decades since the end of the Cold War, economics has enjoyed a kind of intellectual hegemony. It has become first among equals in the social sciences and has dominated most policy agendas as well. Economists have been much sought after by businesses, governments, and society at large, their insights seen as useful in every sphere of life. Popularized economics and economic-type thinking have produced an entire genre of best-selling books. At the root of all this influence is the notion that economics provides the most powerful lens through which to understand the modern world.

In the three decades since the end of the Cold War, economics has enjoyed a kind of intellectual hegemony.

That hegemony is now over. Things started to change during the 2008 global financial crisis, which had a far greater impact on the discipline of economics than is commonly understood. As Paul Krugman noted in a September 2009 essay in the *New York Times Magazine*, "Few economists saw our current crisis coming, but this predictive failure was the least of the field's problems. More important was the profession's blindness to the very possibility of catastrophic failures in a market economy." The left-wing Krugman was not the only one to make this observation. In October 2008, Greenspan, a lifelong libertarian, admitted that "the whole intellectual edifice … collapsed in the summer of last year."

[*2019 could be a defining moment for U.S. trade policy, Douglas Irwin writes.*]

For Krugman, the reason was clear: Economists had mistaken "beauty, clad in impressive-looking mathematics, for truth." In other words, they'd fallen in love with the supposed rigor that derives from the assumption that markets function perfectly. But the world had turned out to be more complex and unpredictable than the equations.

The crisis of 2008 may have been the wake-up call, but it was only the latest warning sign. Modern-day economics had been built on certain assumptions: that countries, companies, and people seek to maximize their income above all else, that human beings are rational actors, and that the system works efficiently. But over the last few decades, compelling new work by scholars such as Daniel Kahneman, Richard Thaler, and Robert Shiller has begun to show that human beings are not predictably rational; in fact, they're predictably irrational. This "behavioral revolution" landed a debilitating blow to mainstream economics by arguing that what was perhaps the centerpiece assumption of modern economic theory was not only wrong but, even worse, unhelpful.

In the social sciences, it is generally understood that theoretical assumptions never mirror reality—they're abstractions designed to simplify—but do provide a powerful way to understand and predict. What the behavioral economists showed is that the assumption of rationality actually produces misunderstandings and bad predictions. It is worth noting that one of the very few economists who predicted both the dot-com bubble that caused the crash of 2000 and the housing bubble that caused the crash of 2008 was Shiller, who won the Nobel Prize in 2013 for his work in behavioral economics.

Recent events have hammered still more nails into the coffin of traditional economics. If the great divide of 20th-century politics was over free markets, the key splits that have emerged in the past few years involve immigration, race, religion, gender, and a whole set of related cultural and identity issues. Where in the past one could predict a voter's choice based on his or her economic standing, today voters are driven more by concerns about social status or cultural coherence than by economic self-interest.

[*The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.*]

If economics has failed to accurately capture the motives of the modern individual, what about modern countries? These days, the quest to maximize profit does not seem like a helpful way to understand why states act the way they do. Many European countries, for example, have higher labor productivity than the United States. Yet citizens there choose to work fewer hours and take longer vacations, decreasing their output—because, they might argue, they prioritize contentment or happiness over economic output. Bhutan has explicitly decided to pursue "gross national happiness" rather than gross domestic product. Many countries have replaced purely GDP-oriented goals with strategies that also stress environmental sustainability. China still puts economic growth at the center of its planning, but even it has other, equal priorities, such as preserving the Communist Party's monopoly on power—and it uses non-free market mechanisms to do so. Meanwhile, populists everywhere now place greater value on preserving jobs than on increasing efficiency.

Let me be clear: Economics remains a vital discipline, one of the most powerful ways we have to understand the world. But in the heady days of post-Cold War globalization, when the world seemed to be dominated by markets and trade and wealth creation, it became the dominant discipline, the key to understanding modern life. That economics has since slipped from that pedestal is simply a testament to the fact that the world is messy. The social sciences differ from the hard sciences because "the subjects of our study think," said Herbert Simon, one of the few scholars who excelled in both. As we try to understand the world of the next three decades, we will desperately need economics but also political science, sociology, psychology, and perhaps even literature and philosophy. Students of each should retain some element of humility. As Immanuel Kant said, "Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made."

Economics remains a vital discipline, one of the most powerful ways we have to understand the world.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Fareed Zakaria is an author and host of *Fareed Zakaria GPS*. Twitter: @FareedZakaria

ARGUMENT

Is the World Prepared for the Next Financial Crisis? New regulations and reforms have helped, but major threats still loom. *By Christine Lagarde*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ARGUMENT

The Coming Climate Crisis

The Little Ice Age could offer a glimpse of our tumultuous future.

BY AMITAV GHOSH

Firefighters try to control a blaze as it spreads toward the towns of Douglas City and Lewiston in California on July 31, 2018. (Mark Ralston/AFP/Getty Images)

Over the last couple of decades, as the impact of global warming has intensified, the discussion of climate change has spilled out of the scientific and technocratic circles within which it was long confined. Today, the subject has also become an important concern in the humanities and arts.

Discussions of climate tend to focus on the future. Yet even scientific projections depend crucially on the study of the past: Proxy data, such as tree rings, pollen deposits, and ice cores, have proved indispensable for the modeling of the future impact of climate change. Based on evidence of this kind, scientists can tell us a great deal about how trees, glaciers, and sea levels will respond to rising temperatures.

But what about the political and social impact of global warming? What effects might a major shift in climate have on governments, public institutions, warfare, and belief systems? For answers to these questions, we have to turn to history (keeping in mind that historical inferences are necessarily impressionistic).

Of course, there has never been anything directly comparable to the current cycle of human-induced global warming. But there have been several periods, now intensely studied by historians, during which climate has drastically shifted, either locally or globally.

Perhaps the most intensively researched of these periods is the Little Ice Age, which reached its peak between the late 15th and early 18th centuries. This early modern era is of particular interest because some of the most important geopolitical processes of our own time trace back to it. This was the period, for example, when the first stages of globalization were inaugurated. It was also in this period that great-power conflicts began to be conducted on a global scale. The struggles for supremacy among the Spanish, Dutch, and British that unfolded during the Little Ice Age were thus the precursors of the strategic rivalries of the 20th and 21st centuries.

[*Stephen Hawking's insights about the universe were profound—but his insights into humanity were even more important, Carlo Rovelli writes.*]

During part of the Little Ice Age, decreased solar irradiance and increased seismic activity resulted in temperatures that, as Geoffrey Parker writes in *Global Crisis*, a groundbreaking global history of the period, were "more than 1 [degree Celsius] cooler than those of the later twentieth century."

The current cycle of human-induced global warming is likely to lead to a much greater climatic shift than that of the Little Ice Age. What is striking then is the sheer magnitude of the ecological, social, and political upheavals of the era.

The current cycle of human-induced global warming is likely to lead to a much greater climatic shift than that of the Little Ice Age.

Droughts struck many parts of the world—including Mexico, Chile, the Mediterranean Sea basin, west and central Africa, India, China, and Indonesia—frequently bringing famine in their wake. These disasters were often accompanied by mass uprisings, rebellions, and war. England endured the greatest internal upheaval in its history, Europe was convulsed by the Thirty Years' War, and China was torn by decades of strife following the overthrow of the Ming dynasty. Ottoman Turkey, Mughal India, and the Russian and Spanish empires were all shaken by rebellions. And from England to China, millenarian sects sprang up, seized by visions of apocalypse.

Parker estimates that in the 17th century "more wars took place around the world than in any other era." So terrible was the devastation that contemporary observers around the world produced similar records of famine, plague, and death. One French abbess, for example, believed that the global population declined by a third.

But some states still thrived, most notably the Dutch Republic, which became the world's preeminent naval and financial power. According to Dagomar Degroot, the author of *The Frigid Golden Age*, the Dutch owed their success in no small part to their flexibility in adapting to the changed environmental conditions of the period. Moreover, the Dutch status as an emergent power gave them an advantage in relation to the Spanish empire, which was weighed down by its size and historical legacy.

What lessons can be drawn from this history for our own time?

The first is that the sensitivity of human societies to climatic factors may exceed all expectations. Climate-related conflicts and displacements are already changing the political complexion of many of the world's most important countries, most notably in Europe. Ten years ago, few would have predicted the extent to which immigration would become the spark for political upheavals across Europe and the Americas.

The sensitivity of human societies to climatic factors may exceed all expectations.

Second, the history of the Little Ice Age suggests that, apart from catalyzing all manner of political and economic crises, a major climatic shift would also affect the global order, favoring those who are best able to adapt to changing conditions. Whether these conditions favor emergent powers will depend on the degree to which the status quo powers of our time are impeded by their historical legacy, as the Spanish empire was.

In this way, the legacies of the carbon economy may themselves prove to be major impediments. Fossil fuels are much more than mere sources of energy; they have also engendered a wide array of cultural and social practices. Fossil fuel use has shaped the physical, cultural, and imaginative landscapes of the United States, Canada, and Australia to such a degree that significant sections of their populations remain psychologically and politically resistant to recognizing changing environmental realities.

Similarly, fossil fuels—oil and natural gas in particular—have shaped the United States' strategic commitments in ways that may also hinder its ability to adapt. One example of this is the long-standing U.S. alliance with Saudi Arabia, which has proved as much a constraint as an asset, especially regarding a transition to renewable energy.

[*The laggards in the race for AI face grave dangers, Yuval Noah Harari writes.*]

To the same degree that these legacy commitments serve to impede the adaptive abilities of the United States (and the West in general), they also serve as incentives for emergent powers to adapt as quickly as possible. For Beijing, a transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is desirable not only for ecological and economic reasons but also because it could effectively set China free from an energy regime in which the rules were largely set by Western powers and their allies.

There are, of course, very significant limits to what can be extrapolated from history, not least because the great powers of the past did not possess weapons that could destroy the (human) world many times over. The crucial question for the future is whether the established and emergent powers of our time will be able to manage their rivalries even as their own populations become increasingly subject to the disruptive and destabilizing effects of climate change. If not, then human beings could bring about a catastrophe that would far exceed anything wrought by the warming of the planet.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Amitav Ghosh is the author of *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Twitter: @GhoshAmitav

ESSAY

The Word From a Climate Change Believer Whatever the main issues of 2019 end up being, climate change will make them worse. *By Katharine Hayhoe*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

Klawe Rzeczy illustration for Foreign Policy; Photos by Bruce Bennett/David Becker/Fred Dufour/Getty Images

ARGUMENT

Who Will Win the Race for AI?

China and the United States are leading the pack—and the laggards face grave dangers.

BY YUVAL NOAH HARARI

The race to develop artificial intelligence (AI) is gathering momentum, and as the United States and China pull ahead, other countries, especially in the developing world, are lagging far behind. If they don't catch up, their economic and political prospects will be grim.

For those countries at the back of the pack, the economic challenges will be hard enough: In an automated world, there will be far less demand for the unskilled labor they've typically provided. But the political dangers will be equally daunting. AI already makes it possible to hack human beings—to collect data about individuals and then use it to decipher, predict, and manipulate their desires. For example, reporting by a number of newspapers revealed that Cambridge Analytica had done just that with American voters' Facebook data.

All countries, regardless of whether they are tech superpowers or not, will feel the effects of the AI revolution. But there's an added challenge for those left behind in the race. To hack humans, governments and corporations need access to enormous amounts of information about real-life human behavior, which makes data perhaps the most important resource in the world. But most of the world's data is mined by the United States, China, and companies based there.

All countries, regardless of whether they are tech superpowers or not, will feel the effects of the AI revolution.

If this trend continues, the world could soon witness a new kind of colonialism—data colonialism—in which raw information is mined in numerous countries, processed mainly in the imperial hub, and then used to exercise control throughout the world. For example, data giants in San Francisco or Shanghai could compile the entire medical and personal history of politicians and officials in distant countries and use it to influence them or manipulate public opinion about them.

[*Mukesh Ambani is betting on a smartphone revolution in India—and spending big money to make it happen, FP's Ravi Agrawal writes.*]

Beyond that, those who control the data could eventually reshape not only the world's economic and political future but also the future of life itself. The combination of AI and biotechnology will be critical for any future attempts to redesign bodies, brains, and minds. Elites in the United States and China who have access to those technologies could determine the course of evolution for everyone, according to their particular values and interests. Abilities they deem useful, such as discipline and rote intelligence, might be enhanced at the cost of attributes believed to be superfluous, such as spirituality.

Those left behind in the race to hack humans have two options: join or regulate.

It is unlikely that smaller countries will be able to single-handedly produce their own Google or Baidu. A joint effort by the 28 members of the European Union or by Latin America's Southern Cone countries, however, might succeed. To increase their chances of doing so, they could focus on areas that the front-runners have so far neglected. Until now, the development of AI has focused on systems that enable corporations and governments to monitor individuals. Yet the world needs the opposite, too: ways for individuals to monitor corporations and governments. By building improved tools to fight corruption or address police brutality, for example, latecomers to the race could carve out a niche for themselves and also become a check on the data superpowers.

Alternatively, countries that can't compete with the AI front-runners can at least try to regulate the race. They can lead initiatives to build tough legal regimes around the most dangerous emerging technologies, such as autonomous weapon systems or enhanced superhumans. And much as countries create laws to protect their own natural resources, they can start to do the same for their data. International mining companies have to pay something to the countries where they dig up iron ore, and the same should go for tech companies collecting data.

[*From the United States to Africa, Mary-Claire King has revolutionized the fight against breast cancer, Laurie Garrett writes.*]

This is particularly true when mining that data might cause harm to the local population. For example, a crucial stage in the process of developing autonomous vehicles involves allowing them to drive under real-life conditions, collecting data on the mishaps, and then using this data to perfect the technology. Developed countries have already placed strict limitations on autonomous vehicles—which will likely last until those vehicles' safety is guaranteed—and so corporations might be tempted to begin testing the technology in developing countries where regulations are laxer and where fatal accidents would raise fewer eyebrows. Something similar might happen with medical data, which could be mined on the cheap in developing countries with weak privacy laws but then collected and processed in the AI hub, which would reap most of the benefits of the research.

It is not too soon for the countries that provide crucial data to start demanding better returns. They could create an organization of data-exporting countries, for example, that would vastly expand their leverage over the world's Amazons and Alibabas. And if they start sharing in the profits of data collection, they would have some means for coping with the economic shocks that will come as robots replace textile workers and truck drivers.

It is far from certain that the world's weaker states can avoid being data-colonized. But they have to try. If they bury their heads in the ground, focus on their immediate problems, and ignore the AI race, their fate will be decided in their absence.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Yuval Noah Harari is a historian and author of *Sapiens, Homo Deus and 21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. Twitter: @harari_yuval

PROFILE

To Infinity and Beyond Stephen Hawking's insights about the universe were profound—but his insights into humanity were even more important. *By Carlo Rovelli*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ARGUMENT

Understanding Trump's Trade War

This year will show what the president really wants. Here's what to watch for.

BY DOUGLAS IRWIN

Klawe Rzeczy illustration for Foreign Policy; Photos by Bruce Bennett/Getty Images/David Becker/Getty Images/Fred Dufour/Getty Images

2019 could be a defining moment for U.S. trade policy. Two years into Donald Trump's presidency, it should finally become clear whether the U.S. president's brazen rhetoric on the subject is simply a negotiating ploy in the pursuit of new deals or whether a trade war—and with it the destruction of the post-World War II international order—is his real end goal.

Until now, it has been rather hard to tell. Trump withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership without ever proposing a replacement, and he appeared ready to do the same with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). He imposed stiff levies on imported steel and aluminum, leading Canada, China, Mexico, and the European Union to slap the United States with retaliatory tariffs. At the same time, however, his administration ultimately agreed to a renegotiated NAFTA without major changes to the original agreement. It did the same for the U.S. free trade agreement with South Korea. So what signs could reveal his true intentions in 2019?

The first area to watch will be cars. The Trump administration's legal justification for its 2018 steel and aluminum tariffs was a little-used U.S. statute that allows the president to raise such barriers in cases where U.S. national security is threatened. In mid-2018, the Commerce Department also started looking into whether imported automobiles might pose a similar threat—a sign that the administration was seriously considering imposing duties as high as 25 percent on foreign cars and auto parts, which would affect more than $200 billion worth of trade.

[*Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are, Fareed Zakaria writes.*]

Trump may lack the audacity to go that far, since he would face stiff opposition. U.S. automobile producers oppose such protectionism because they often import cars and parts from their overseas factories. Higher taxes on autos would also hit U.S. households in a more direct way than levies on steel and aluminum. And European trade partners would likely retaliate with more tariffs on U.S. farmers, manufacturers, and other exporters.

If Trump makes good on his threat anyway, the administration might argue that the goal is to get a better deal from trading partners—a reduction in European Union automobile tariffs, say. But the more likely goal of such a move would be to dismantle global automobile supply chains and fully reshore production in the name of helping blue-collar workers.

The second thing to watch will be Washington's stance toward Beijing. So far, the Trump administration's actions could be read as either an attempt to force China to change its economic practices or an effort to simply punish it by dismantling the trade partnership. Trump has imposed about $250 billion worth of duties on Chinese goods, on the grounds that China's own protectionism and its theft of U.S. technology pose strategic threats to the United States, but has hinted that they may be reversible if China changes its ways. At the same time, his administration has shown little interest in negotiations, which would have to be a precursor to any potential deal.

So far, the Trump administration's actions could be read as either an attempt to force China to change its economic practices or an effort to simply punish it by dismantling the trade partnership.

The key to figuring out Trump's true intentions will be whether his administration follows through with its plans to raise some of the new tariffs from 10 percent to 25 percent and to expand them to cover an additional $267 billion worth of Chinese exports, including Apple products such the iPhone, which have so far remained exempt. If the administration walks down that path, then trade punishment would be the likely end game, particularly since China will never change its economic model in response to what it sees as U.S. bullying.

Third, Trump will have to take a stand on the World Trade Organization (WTO), a body that regulates trade among its 164 members. Trump has called the organization the worst trade deal ever reached—even worse than NAFTA—and on several occasions has expressed his desire to leave it.

As with many of his other moves, however, his goals are far from clear. On the one hand, his administration has continued to use the WTO by bringing new cases against other countries—including China, for example, which the United States claims has violated the letter or the spirit of various WTO agreements. At the same time, however, Washington has also denounced WTO decisions that have gone against the United States as examples of judicial overreach and has blocked the appointment of new jurists to the WTO's appellate body.

In the coming year, as the WTO cases move forward, the administration will have to show its cards. If its current attempts to disrupt the organization are for the purpose of bringing about procedural changes, it will have to make clear what changes it actually desires. If it doesn't, we can assume that Trump plans to abandon the institution by ignoring it.

[*The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.*]

The final area to pay attention to will be how Trump deals with the trade deficit. The president's main obsession is with increasing U.S. exports and diminishing imports. In his mind, the trade deficit measures the extent to which other countries have been taking advantage of the United States. Economists have grown weary of pointing out his error, but I'll do it again. Trade deficits are driven by macroeconomic factors. In particular, if a country has a high savings rate relative to investment, that country will send some of its excess savings to others by exporting more goods than it imports. China, Japan, and Germany—all with high savings rates—have trade surpluses. The United States—with low savings and high consumption—has a deficit.

The deficit, in other words, is mostly homegrown, and Trump's economic policies are likely to increase it. A large tax cut and increases in government spending have temporarily boosted consumption and economic growth. To help meet the new demand, the United States has started importing more, further increasing the trade imbalance. As this trend continues in 2019, Trump will have to decide how to react—whether by lashing out at the U.S. Federal Reserve (Trump's go-to scapegoat for all manner of economic issues), at other countries for their perfidious trade policies, or both.

The president is no different from his recent predecessors in saying he wants favorable trade deals. But if he's actually embracing protectionism for its own sake, that would make him unique. Whereas previous presidents have raised trade barriers in difficult economic times, Trump has initiated them during a period when U.S. economic performance is strong and domestic industries are not asking for such help.

In his first year in office, Trump laid the groundwork for the tariffs that came in year two. Now the second act in this drama is about to begin. The president is unlikely to let his apparent penchant for protectionism go, particularly if the U.S. economy slows and the trade deficit remains stubbornly high. The global economy, and the postwar system of world trade in particular, should be prepared for more blows to come.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Douglas Irwin is an economist and professor at Dartmouth College. Twitter: @D_A_Irwin

ARGUMENT

Is the World Prepared for the Next Financial Crisis? New regulations and reforms have helped, but major threats still loom. *By Christine Lagarde*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

PROFILE

India's Digital Dreamer

Mukesh Ambani is betting on a smartphone revolution—and spending big money to make it happen.

BY RAVI AGRAWAL

Riccardo Vecchio Imprints illustration for Foreign Policy

Mukesh Ambani has poured $35 billion into what may come across as the world's single greatest act of philanthropy. After spending years erecting more than 200,000 cell-phone towers across India, as well as laying 150,000 miles of fiber-optic cables, Ambani launched a new cellular service called Jio—a Hindi word that translates to "live life." To boost users, Jio offered 4G data completely free of charge for an introductory three months.

Millions of people rushed to sign up. For many Indians, it was their first taste of high-speed internet. "Life is going digital," Ambani told investors at the time. In other words, the internet revolution was for everyone—not just for the country's urban, English-speaking elites. Ambani would later extend the free offer for three additional months. By the time Jio began charging small amounts for access, 100 million Indians had already subscribed. As of this writing, a quarter of a billion Indians have Jio connections. In many cases, they get basic Jio phones to access the internet and social media for as little as a $23 security deposit.

Despite the freebies, Jio is no philanthropic endeavor. Ambani has long been aware that to hold on to his position as Asia's richest man, he would have to diversify his company's interests beyond its traditional petrochemical, refinery, and retail businesses. He also seems intent on dragging India into the digital era and then being the first to control and monetize an entire ecosystem of internet products.

[*Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are, Fareed Zakaria writes.*]

Ambani seems intent on dragging India into the digital era and then being the first to control and monetize an entire ecosystem of internet products.

The first phase of his plan is working. Jio has already rocked the Indian cellular and smartphone market by aggressively cutting prices and expanding the pool of potential users. Two large wireless operators have either shut down or filed for bankruptcy, while other competitors have been forced into uneasy mergers. Rivals have accused Jio of predatory pricing, but they have failed to convince India's regulators. Given Jio's immense investment in cellular infrastructure—and Ambani's ability to stomach short-term losses—its market share is expected to keep growing.

The second stage of Ambani's plan is more ambitious. Jio's real competitors aren't local cellular providers, such as Airtel or Vodafone India; instead, insiders say Ambani has long had his eyes set on competing with Google, Netflix, Spotify, and Facebook. Jio services now include attractive lifestyle products: a streaming TV service with hundreds of channels, a digital payments system, a music library, a health care app, a connected home system, a messaging platform. Each of these could reach Jio's growing customer base in a multitude of Indian languages.

Ambani's big bet is not about life going digital. That's inevitable. His real bet is that average income in India—currently less than $2,000 a year—will rise enough for large numbers of Indians to start paying for the content they consume online. When that happens, Jio will be ready to cash in. If Ambani succeeds, he may become the richest man in the world—and he will have accelerated a smartphone internet revolution in the world's largest democracy.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Ravi Agrawal is the managing editor of Foreign Policy. Twitter: @RaviReports Instagram: @ravireports

ARGUMENT

Who Will Win the Race for AI? China and the United States are leading the pack—and the laggards face grave dangers. *By Yuval Noah Harari*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

PROFILE

Love After an Apocalypse

Holocaust survivor Marceline Loridan-Ivens never stopped grappling with loss—or fighting to live.

BY JEAN-MARC DREYFUS

Riccardo Vecchio Imprints illustration for Foreign Policy

Marceline Loridan-Ivens, née Rozenberg, died on Sept. 18, 2018, in Paris. She was 90 years old.

In 1944, at age 15, Loridan-Ivens was deported from the Vaucluse region of southern France eventually to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp with her father. He did not survive; she went on to become a writer, filmmaker, actress, public speaker, and, above all, a singular witness to history. Small in size, outspoken, and with a wild mane of signature red hair, Loridan-Ivens became a beloved public figure, known for her Parisian cheek, her energy, and her humor.

Loridan-Ivens frequently lectured on her experiences. As she once told an interviewer, "I know I have the duty to express myself and add my voice to those of people who have had the courage to speak before the death of the last survivor sends the camps into the realm of history once and for all." And so she did.

Late in her long life, Loridan-Ivens published a series of memoirs that tackled the experience and subsequent impact of the war. The first—*Ma vie balagan* ("My Messy Life," balagan meaning "chaotic" in Hebrew), published in 2008—is a sweeping look at her life from deportation through to the 2000s. Her second—*Et tu n'es pas revenu* ("But You Did Not Come Back")—came out in 2015 and became a best-seller in France. It is an open letter to her father.

[*Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are, Fareed Zakaria writes.*]

Her third and last memoir—*L'amour après* ("Love, After")—was published only last year. It is nominally a story of her deportation, but it also confronts how she reconnected with the ideas of love and sexuality after returning from a death camp. In remarkably frank prose, Loridan-Ivens recalls how it took her years to reconcile with her own body, which, she explains, was simultaneously sexually violated—the Nazi doctor Josef Mengele was the first man to see her naked—and dismissed and degraded as a Jewish body. Just as Holocaust historians had turned their attention to documenting questions about gender, intimacy, and sexuality among Holocaust victims, Loridan-Ivens unabashedly narrated her unapologetic quest for pleasure and love after the war.

Loridan-Ivens was among the first French Holocaust survivors to be interviewed for a cinematic work. She appeared in the documentary *Chronique d'un été* ("Chronicle of a Summer"), which won the Critics' Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1961. Directed by the filmmaker and visual anthropologist Jean Rouch and the sociologist Edgar Morin, it was a pioneering work of cinéma vérité. In a series of vignettes, Loridan-Ivens recounts the story of her deportation.

In one, she walks through Paris's Place de la Concorde and speaks of her murdered father. In a second, she discusses her deportation. In the scene that has had the longest cultural foothold, Loridan-Ivens meets several young African students, recently arrived in France, during a rushed attempt by the government to train leaders for the newly independent states of West Africa. Loridan-Ivens explains to them the meaning of the number tattooed on her arm. The young men are taken aback and surprised. The scene showed, as the scholar Michael Rothberg would later write, how the movement to mark Holocaust memory emerged at the same time as the movements for civil rights and decolonization. Crafting a term that rapidly became standard among scholars, he described it as representative of "multidirectional memory."

[*Stephen Hawking's insights about the universe were profound—but his insights into humanity were even more important, Carlo Rovelli writes.*]

In the 1950s, she joined a group of intellectuals in the leftist underground Jeanson network, named for the philosopher Francis Jeanson, who supported the Algerian National Liberation Front. She even, at great personal risk, hid money for the front. With her second husband, the Dutch-born Joris Ivens, she directed numerous movies in and on China. Like many leftist French intellectuals at the time, she was deeply sympathetic to Maoism. (She later renounced the far-left.) From the late 1950s until the last days of her life, Loridan-Ivens was a fixture on Paris's Saint-Germain-des-Prés scene, spending time with intellectuals including Roland Barthes and Georges Pérec. (She briefly dated the latter.) Until recently, she could often be spotted at the legendary Café de Flore.

In her last few years, she had begun to worry about modern anti-Semitism and what would happen when she was no longer present to speak. Indeed, few such voices remain. With the death of each Holocaust survivor, the eulogies and obituaries have become a meditation on the future of Holocaust history and memory in the absence of direct witnesses. The number of survivors in France capable of still publicly offering testimony to the horrors of the war has now dwindled to a small handful.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Jean-Marc Dreyfus is a historian and reader in Holocaust studies at the University of Manchester and at Sciences Po in Paris.

ARGUMENT

India and the Global Fight for LGBT Rights In striking down a ban on gay sex, the Supreme Court inspired activists across the world. *By Frank Mugisha*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

PROFILE

To Infinity and Beyond

Stephen Hawking's insights about the universe were profound—but his insights into humanity were even more important.

BY CARLO ROVELLI

Klawe Rzeczy illustration for Foreign Policy; Jemal Countess/Getty Images

The last time I saw Stephen Hawking was in Stockholm in 2015. After our small science workshop, he delivered a lecture in the city's largest venue. As usual, the event was sold out and packed with young people.

Hawking arrived on stage with his gentle smile and legendary wheelchair and started playing the lecture he had recorded in advance. In it, he recounted his latest attempts to understand the future of black holes, offered some quips on the meaning of life, and poked fun at various targets with a grin that betrayed his innate rebelliousness. The audience was transfixed.

In the 10 months since Hawking died, I have been considering his legacy, and I keep returning to his final words from that event in Stockholm. They were a declaration of love for life under the most difficult conditions. "If you feel you are in a black hole, don't give up," he said. "There's a way out."

Hawking was a very good physicist, among the best of his generation—although not the new Albert Einstein or Isaac Newton that journalists made him out to be. (Hawking liked to playfully encourage this exaggeration.) His major discovery was the fact that black holes radiate heat like a stove. Today, that heat is called Hawking radiation, and although it has yet to be observed—and is unlikely to be anytime soon because it is so weak—its existence has been widely accepted.

[*The Little Ice Age could offer a glimpse of our tumultuous future, Amitav Ghosh writes.*]

Hawking radiation is important because it involves both gravity and quantum theory—that is, it gestures toward reconciling the two major, but seemingly contradictory, advances in physics of the 20th century, the discoveries of space-time and the laws of the submicroscopic world. With his finding, Hawking offered a clue toward solving the great puzzle of contemporary physics: understanding quantum gravity, the theory that describes all subatomic aspects of space and time. Much current research, including my own, refers to Hawking's breakthrough or tries to deepen it.

Hawking summed up his discovery in a beautiful formula, which gives the temperature T of the radiation emitted by a nonrotating black hole with mass M. It is extremely simple:

$T = \hbar c^3/8\pi GMk$. No other formula so elegantly pulls together all the basic chapters of physics: the Planck constant ħ of quantum theory, the speed of light c of relativity, the Newtonian constant G of gravitation, and the Boltzmann constant k of thermodynamics. Hawking was so proud of his formula (rightly so) that before his death he asked that it be inscribed on his gravestone.

Hawking summed up his discovery in a beautiful formula, which gives the temperature T of the radiation emitted by a nonrotating black hole with mass M.

Hawking's greatest achievement, however, lies in his humanity. A wheelchair user due to early-onset ALS, he gradually lost control of most of the muscles in his body. At the end of his life, he was only able to communicate with the public via the thin thread of a software that read the movements of his eyes and cheek muscles and translated them into letters and then words, which were ultimately pronounced by his vocal synthesizer. Even watching this painfully slow process was exhausting.

Yet the voice of that synthesizer reached the whole world. Hawking, a Brit, managed to make that famous American-accented metallic voice his own and a natural channel for his brilliant intelligence and irony. Although his body kept deteriorating, his spirit did not; he continued to produce quality physics until the very end and also wrote books that reached an immense audience. In the 30 years since its publication, *A Brief History of Time* has sold more than 10 million copies, and it still inspires young people everywhere to study and love the universe.

[*From the United States to Africa, Mary-Claire King has revolutionized the fight against breast cance, Laurie Garrett writes.*]

In a world increasingly beset by localism, greed, religious obscurantism, shortsightedness, and conflict, Hawking's ideas stood out as a reminder of the best of the Enlightenment. That was certainly true in the positions he took on public policies related to his own personal circumstance, including his calls to protect the rights of the disabled and to legalize assisted suicide for the terminally ill. But it was also true of his vision of the universe, the vastness of which was a constant reminder of the fragility and communal nature of human destiny.

Hawking didn't find his strength in any sort of transcendent consolations; although he liked to evoke God for rhetorical effect, he was resolutely atheist. Instead, Hawking continuously reminded us that humanity could survive only by collaborating, by leaving aside puerile beliefs in the greatness of single nations or individuals. In 2006, he posted, unprompted, an open query on the internet: "In a world that is in chaos politically, socially and environmentally, how can the human race sustain another 100 years?" It wasn't a rhetorical question but a sincere—and successful—prompt to solicit answers from as many others as possible.

The thin thread that connected Hawking to us is now broken. But before dissolving into the immensity of that vast cosmos that he loved so dearly, he left us with his most precious gift: the luminous example that was his force of life, curiosity, intelligence, and vision. It's the reason Hawking will continue to live for many more years—in our science, in our memory, and in our common understanding of what we are in the universe. For that, we should all be grateful.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Correction, Jan. 22, 2019: In an earlier version of this article, the equation $T = \hbar c^3/8\pi GMk$ appeared to read T = ħc3/8πGMk due to a formatting error.

Carlo Rovelli is an Italian theoretical physicist and writer.

ARGUMENT

Who Will Win the Race for AI? China and the United States are leading the pack—and the laggards face grave dangers. *By Yuval Noah Harari*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ESSAY

The Kindness Quotient

Jacinda Ardern is the world's anti-Trump.

BY HELEN CLARK

Jacinda Ardern on Aug. 23, 2017. (David White/Fairfax Media)

Jacinda Ardern's sudden, spectacular rise to the position of New Zealand's prime minister in 2017 propelled her into headlines around the world. Deservedly so.

In an era defined by the emergence of populist leaders who are often authoritarian, reactionary, and male, Ardern stands out as progressive, collaborative, and female.

Her speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018 fueled her growing reputation as the "anti-Trump." She called for, among other things, kindness and collectivism as an alternative to isolationism, protectionism, and racism.

In New Zealand, Ardern's commitment to fighting child poverty and homelessness has come as a relief after years of relentless increases in both. Whereas the world's right-wing populists stigmatize and stereotype marginalized people, Ardern has established kindness as a key principle for government policy and has worked to promote inclusion and social cohesion. A family tax package that took effect last July is forecast to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 41 percent by 2021, and a new Child Poverty Reduction Bill, which further targets and measures child poverty reduction, is currently before the New Zealand Parliament. She has extended her values-based approach to foreign policy as well—most dramatically by offering New Zealand as a home for 150 of the refugees currently stranded in camps run by Australia in Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Whereas the world's right-wing populists stigmatize and stereotype marginalized people, Ardern has established kindness as a key principle for government policy.

[*The Little Ice Age could offer a glimpse of our tumultuous future, Amitav Gosh writes.*]

Ardern has also identified climate change as the defining issue for her generation. On April 12, a little more than five months into her term, her government declared an end to new permits for oil and gas exploration in New Zealand's waters, making it clear that the country was prepared to lead the way in this critical struggle.

Ardern is the third female prime minister of New Zealand. It was the first country where women won the right to vote in national elections—in 1893, nearly 27 years before the United States would offer the same. Women have long held top roles across New Zealand society. But Ardern has broken new ground: She is young, and she has chosen to become a mother while in office. That choice sent powerful signals to young women in New Zealand and beyond that combining career and family is a legitimate aspiration and that they do not have to choose between those paths.

I expect Ardern will continue to innovate on policy and to clearly communicate what she stands for and what her government is doing and why. She will continue to stand out globally both because she is young, progressive, and female and because she won't back down from tough issues. New Zealanders can take pride in her global profile and in her ability to draw positive attention to their country. Her boundless energy and optimism will serve her well as she leads New Zealand in today's volatile world.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Helen Clark served as prime minister of New Zealand from 1999 to 2008. Twitter: @HelenClarkNZ

ARGUMENT

Springtime for Strongmen The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way. *By Robert Kagan*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

PROFILE

Iran's Deadly Puppet Master

Gen. Stanley McChrystal explains exactly why Qassem Suleimani is so dangerous.

BY STANLEY MCCHRYSTAL

Riccardo Vecchio Imprints illustration for Foreign Policy

The decision not to act is often the hardest one to make—and it isn't always right. In 2007, I watched a string of vehicles pass from Iran into northern Iraq. I had been serving as the head of the U.S. military's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) for four years, working to stem the terrorism that had devastated the region, and I had become accustomed to making tough choices. But on that January night, the choice was particularly tricky: whether or not to attack a convoy that included Qassem Suleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force—an organization roughly analogous to a combination of the CIA and JSOC in the United States.

There was good reason to eliminate Suleimani. At the time, Iranian-made roadside bombs built and deployed at his command were claiming the lives of U.S. troops across Iraq. But to avoid a firefight, and the contentious politics that would follow, I decided that we should monitor the caravan, not strike immediately. By the time the convoy had reached Erbil, Suleimani had slipped away into the darkness.

These days, he still operates outside the spotlight. Suleimani has grown from a military commander into a ghostly puppet master, relying on quiet cleverness and grit to bolster Iran's international influence. His brilliance, effectiveness, and commitment to his country have been revered by his allies and denounced by his critics in equal measure. What all seem to agree on, however, is that the humble leader's steady hand has helped guide Iranian foreign policy for decades—and there is no denying his successes on the battlefield. Suleimani is arguably the most powerful and unconstrained actor in the Middle East today. U.S. defense officials have reported that Suleimani is running the Syrian civil war (via Iran's local proxies) all on his own.

Suleimani has grown from a military commander into a ghostly puppet master.

The prominence the soft-spoken Suleimani has achieved is especially striking given his origins. Born into poverty in the mountains of eastern Iran, he displayed remarkable tenacity at an early age. When his father was unable to pay a debt, the 13-year-old Suleimani worked to pay it off himself. He spent his free time lifting weights and attending sermons given by a protégé of Iran's current supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He was enamored with the Iranian revolution as a young man. In 1979, at only 22, Suleimani began his ascent through the Iranian military, reportedly receiving just six weeks of tactical training before seeing combat for the first time in Iran's West Azerbaijan province. But he is truly a child of the Iran-Iraq War, which began the next year. He emerged from the bloody conflict a hero for the missions he led across Iraq's border—but more important, he emerged as a confident, proven leader.

[*Is the world prepared for the next financial crisis?*]

Suleimani is no longer simply a soldier; he is a calculating and practical strategist. Most ruthlessly and at the cost of all else, he has forged lasting relationships to bolster Iran's position in the region. No other individual has had comparable success in aligning and empowering Shiite allies in the Levant. His staunch defense of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has effectively halted any progress by the Islamic State and other rebel groups, all but ensuring that Assad remains in power and stays solidly allied to Iran. Perhaps most notably, under Suleimani's leadership, the Quds Force has vastly expanded its capabilities. His shrewd pragmatism has transformed the unit into a major influencer in intelligence, financial, and political spheres beyond Iran's borders.

It would be unwise, however, to study Suleimani's success without situating him in a broader geopolitical context. He is a uniquely Iranian leader, a clear product of the country's outlook following the 1979 revolution. His expansive assessment of Iranian interests and rights matches those common among Iranian elites. Iran's resistance toward the United States' involvement in the Middle East is a direct result of U.S. involvement in the Iran-Iraq War, during which Suleimani's worldview developed. Above all else, Suleimani is driven by the fervent nationalism that is the lifeblood of Iran's citizens and leadership.

Suleimani's accomplishments are, in large part, due to his country's long-term approach toward foreign policy. While the United States tends to be spasmodic in its responses to international affairs, Iran is stunningly consistent in its objectives and actions. The Quds Force commander's extended tenure in his role—he assumed control of the unit in 1998—is another important factor. A byproduct of Iran's complicated political environment, Suleimani enjoys freedom of action over an extended time horizon that is the envy of many U.S. military and intelligence professionals. Because a leader's power ultimately lies in the eyes of others and is increased by the perceived likelihood of future power, Suleimani has been able to act with greater credibility than if he were viewed as a temporary player.

While the United States tends to be spasmodic in its responses to international affairs, Iran is stunningly consistent in its objectives and actions.

[*The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.*]

In that sense, then, Suleimani's success is driven by both his talent and the continuity of his time in positions of power. Such a leader simply could not exist in the United States today. Americans do not allow commanders, military or otherwise, to remain in the highest-level positions for decades. There are reasons for this—both political and experiential. Not since J. Edgar Hoover has the federal government allowed a longtime public servant to amass such levels of shadowy influence.

Despite my initial jealousy of Suleimani's freedom to get things done quickly, I believe such restraint is a strength of the U.S. political system. A zealous and action-oriented mindset, if unchecked, can be used as a force for good—but if harnessed to the wrong interests or values, the consequences can be dire. Suleimani is singularly dangerous. He is also singularly positioned to shape the future of the Middle East. ■

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Retired Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal led the Joint Special Operations Command from 2003 to 2008 and served as commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010. Twitter: @StanMcChrystal

INTERVIEW

Taking on the Kremlin From His Couch Eliot Higgins and Bellingcat are fighting Vladimir Putin and his ilk, using little more than computers and smartphones. *By Sasha Polakow-Suransky*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

Q&A

Taking on the Kremlin From His Couch

Eliot Higgins and Bellingcat are fighting Vladimir Putin and his ilk, using little more than computers and smartphones.

BY SASHA POLAKOW-SURANSKY

Claudia Leisinger for Foreign Policy

Eliot Higgins launched the website Bellingcat through a Kickstarter campaign in 2014 and quickly proved that citizen journalists with access to social media, YouTube, and Google Maps could glean as much or more information about wars as intelligence agencies could. After breakthrough revelations from battlefields in Ukraine, Libya, and Syria, Higgins used open-source intelligence in 2018 to discover key details about the Russian intelligence operatives who allegedly poisoned the former spy Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom.

Foreign Policy: You started doing this work from your couch. When did you realize that you were actually making an impact?

Eliot Higgins: I started realizing this was a serious thing when I was invited by Tactical Tech, a Berlin-based organization that trains human rights advocates. There were lots of people there from real, serious conflicts. They were coming to me and saying how inspirational my work was to them. I thought, "Wow, if that's the kind of people I'm inspirational to, I should probably take this a bit more seriously."

FP: What does the Bellingcat research process look like?

EH: One of the things this technology is about is how much we can automate. We could scan social networks for anyone in a uniform. It's easy to find camouflage or a shade of green. Then you can start training artificial intelligence to do finer and finer tasks.

[*The world's authoritarians are on the march—and the West helped pave the way, Robert Kagan writes.*]

FP: Are militaries and intelligence establishments sometimes shocked at what you're able to find?

EH: Anecdotally, there have been a few interviews or articles about our work, or they've spoken to intelligence people, and they've said they're impressed.

FP: Beyond being flattered, that doesn't scare you a little bit?

EH: You kind of assume they're doing all the James Bond stuff—they've got rows of computer screens, and everyone's social media profile is being looked at, that all that stuff's going on—but, no, it's not. I've been doing a lot of training with the police recently. Even the ones who specialize in open-source investigations tend not to be at the same level that we are.

FP: Is there a specific personality at Bellingcat? People who grew up reading *Jane's Intelligence Review* and playing with war toys?

EH: Getting a balance between being obsessive enough and not also crazy is rather difficult.

FP: Can you tell the story of one of the investigations?

EH: We investigated a social media campaign by the Islamic State where their followers in Europe would take photographs holding a piece of paper with the city they're in and a hashtag. The idea was the Islamic State was everywhere. I saw those photographs popping up on Twitter and thought, "Some of those look like they could be geolocated, but I don't have time." So I turned that into a crowdsourced project and had most of the locations in 10 minutes.

FP: When the poisoning of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter happened, did you jump on it when the two suspects appeared on Russian TV?

EH: The Russians may not have realized just how much information was actually out there. In the 2016 Russian-backed coup attempt in Montenegro, an officer from the GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency, was arrested, and he had two IDs: his real one and his fake one. There were items, such as his first name, date of birth, and place of residence, that were the same on both documents.

The theory we were working on was that a Skripal suspect might have done the same. We then used his leaked residency documents, and we had a list of potential names it could be. It wasn't a massive amount.

The suspects had nearly sequential passport numbers. Also, we found that they had registered their cars at the office of the GRU because it meant when they got pulled over for drunk driving or speeding, the police would look at where they were from and they'd let them go. So now that the Skripal suspects were all potential GRU officers, we had their real names and addresses and identities.

[*Gen. Stanley McChrystal explains exactly why Qassem Suleimani is so dangerous.*]

FP: Deliberate blurring of the truth seems to be a core part of the Russian information war. If the strategy is to blur truth, then does it matter to have a slam-dunk case in today's media environment?

EH: There's also the value of inoculating people against false information. The Russian Defense Ministry was using video of a screenshot from a computer game as evidence that the United States was helping the Islamic State. A few weeks earlier, someone had used the same video to claim it was a U.S. aircraft bombing a convoy. And I'd noticed that, and I said, "No, it's from a computer game."

The people who follow me on Twitter are the same people who follow the Russian Defense Ministry. So literally all the replies were people posting that video and saying, "That's from a computer game." That's the only time I've seen the Russian Defense Ministry retract a statement because, in a way, people are inoculated against that particular piece of false information.

FP: Is there a way for groups such as yours to expose and push back against deep fakes [computer-generated video or audio that seems real]?

EH: You can't go to a judge and say, "That video's fake news." If you make a fake, maybe you can tweet it, and you'll get 10,000 retweets. But if you have a video of Barack Obama saying that he regrets not bombing Syria, you want to look at: Where did he say it? Can we find the original video? Why is it not there?

It's the difference between the impact it has when it's shared and the impact it has after it's been verified and used as evidence. There could be a point where they make a deep fake that changes a Russian jet to a U.S. jet. But people are developing tools to look for fake information, so it's going to start coming down to trusting the sources you use and the people who are sharing information. ■

This conversation has been condensed and edited for publication. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Sasha Polakow-Suransky is a deputy editor at Foreign Policy and the author of *Go Back to Where You Came From: The Backlash Against Immigration and the Fate of Western Democracy.* Twitter: @sasha_p_s

INTERVIEW

The Bane of the Brexiteers How Gina Miller threw a wrench into Britain's plans to leave the EU. *By Sasha Polakow-Suransky*

SEE THE FULL LIST

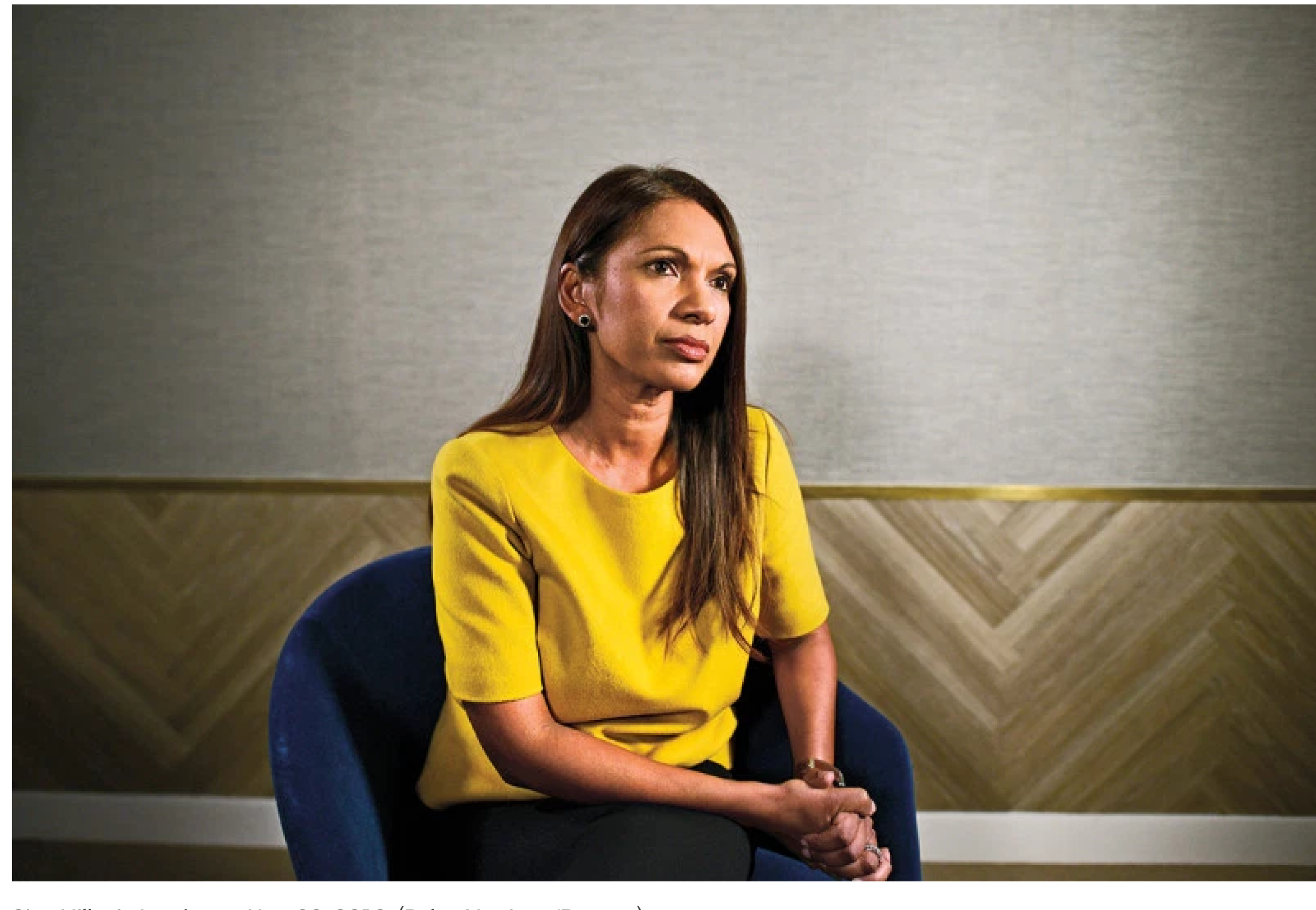
© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

INTERVIEW

The Bane of the Brexiteers

How Gina Miller threw a wrench into Britain's plans to leave the EU.

BY SASHA POLAKOW-SURANSKY



Gina Miller in London on Nov. 29, 2016. (Dylan Martinez/Reuters)

Gina Miller, a British businesswoman who co-founded the wealth management firm SCM Direct, is a former Labour Party member and campaigner for transparency and scrutiny in relation to Brexit. In 2016, she successfully challenged the British government's authority to invoke Article 50, which would trigger the process of leaving the European Union, without an act of Parliament. After the U.K. Supreme Court ruled in her favor in January 2017, she became the target of violent and vitriolic abuse; she channeled that experience into the 2018 memoir *Rise: Life Lessons in Speaking Out, Standing Tall & Leading the Way*. Her organization, End the Chaos, has continued to campaign for a public vote on any deal negotiated by the British government and the European Union, including an option to remain in the EU, if there is a parliamentary impasse. Miller has also raised funds to back electoral candidates opposed to a hard Brexit.

Foreign Policy: What did you intend to accomplish with your lawsuit?

Gina Miller: The case was about preserving hundreds of years of constitutional precedent in the United Kingdom. Prime Minister Theresa May was proposing to use an ancient tool called the royal prerogative and behave like a president. Well, that's not the way our constitution works, unwritten as it is. The prime minister can't put him or herself above the law, and, when it comes to our individual rights as citizens, Parliament has to be front and center and provide scrutiny.

FP: Do you think that if there were a second referendum, it could unleash an even worse backlash?

GM: Absolutely not. That idea is made up by politicians who profit from scaremongering. Brexiteers are saying that because they are fearful of losing. If you're so confident that not only would you win but it would be a bigger victory, just consult the will of the people.

FP: So why haven't you gone into politics?

If you're so confident that not only would you win but it would be a bigger victory, just consult the will of the people.

GM: The way our politics works makes it very difficult to have a truly independent voice. You stand on a collective manifesto, meaning it is difficult to vote with your conscience. That's not to say that I wouldn't in the future.

One of the reasons the country is at this point is because of the whole idea that capitalism was good and that trickle-down economics would work. It has lifted millions of people out of poverty, but it's created huge divides. My big battle is around the idea of responsible capitalism: Do we evolve toward a triple bottom line, which is not just about a drive for profit but for people, profit, and the planet, so that we create a more equal society?

[*The Parkland students want gun control on the ballot.*]

FP: Couldn't that be a campaign slogan for the Liberal Democrats?

GM: No. Because being a member of a club ties your hands and your voice, and I'm not willing to do that.

FP: Let's imagine that there is a people's vote and it goes the way that you want. What is your sense of how the Conservative Party would react?

GM: I don't think this is really about Brexit. This is about the sort of country we want to be. A minority of individuals on the right of the Tory Party think, when it comes to money-laundering checks, if people can bring money into our country and want to do business and boost our economy, why should we say no to them?

FP: So, a pro-business crowd is saying this will be a disaster for the economy, and then there's a second, more cutthroat, Darwinian business position?

GM: Think about it like a gym. Rather than build our gym in our home, we chose to go to another one. We don't have the infrastructure. Our business model and the way we have operated has changed over the last 40-45 years. You then try to reverse all of that without giving any time to build it up. We have small businesses that predominantly trade with the EU. That's their main market. How are they going to cope? That's the bottom line for them. It's not about profit—it's how we actually even stay in business.

FP: And are you able to bring over some of those people to the arguments that you're making?

GM: The main message my End the Chaos campaign is trying to get out is, "Just be honest and tell people." We haven't allowed people to have a reasoned debate based on the facts. Why are we not listening to the port authorities? Why are we not listening to the doctors?

FP: Because we don't need experts?

GM: None of this is new. If you look through history, how do you destabilize countries? It's easy. You knock experts. You knock the rule of law, and you use the media as propaganda.

FP: Why hasn't the message got through to Leave voters who, presumably, would be devastated by those policies?

GM: You've already poisoned the well. I was speaking to an IT specialist at Cambridge Analytica [which assisted the Leave campaign in 2016]. I asked, "What were the most successful ads you were running?" One ad said sharia was coming to the U.K. and immigrants can marry children. Which is not true at all. And the second one was that immigrants eat dogs. And that's where they were so clever—because it's about tuning in to people's emotions. It's hearts, not minds.

[In striking down a ban on gay sex, India's Supreme Court inspired activists across the world, Frank Mugisha writes.]

FP: If there were another vote, do you think that you could reverse some of that messaging?

GM: The Leave campaign exploited differences. They were actively going out to Asian communities and saying, "The reason your kids are not doing well at university is because all these white immigrants are coming in and they assimilate, whereas your kids are not going to be able to. And, by the way, they can bring in all their family, and you can't."

FP: Was one of the errors of the Remain campaign writing off these Leave voters as, "Oh, they're dumb. They don't understand"?

GM: Everywhere I went had Leave posters, and the Remain campaign did not believe me. They said I worried too much, that British people don't take risks. They were so arrogant. I think there is a bigger danger here, which is that we've elevated expectations in a group of people who have nothing to lose because they have so little anyway. I think there's more of a chance of having civil unrest because the people who voted Leave are not going to get what they were promised.

FP: Are you facing any threats or sort of personal harassment?

GM: It's never stopped. When you get somebody who would have been, traditionally, in the U.K., at the end of a bar in a pub spouting whatever, you now have that same person on Facebook with 500 likes. Those people who have had those views and whispered them are now shouting them. And that's what I get. They're shouting at me. ■

This conversation has been condensed and edited for publication. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Sasha Polakow-Suransky is a deputy editor at Foreign Policy and the author of *Go Back to Where You Came From: The Backlash Against Immigration and the Fate of Western Democracy*. Twitter: @sasha_p_s

INTERVIEW

Taking on the Kremlin From His Couch Eliot Higgins and Bellingcat are fighting Vladimir Putin and his ilk, using little more than computers and smartphones. *By Sasha Polakow-Suransky*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

PROFILE

Prevention Is the Best Medicine

From the United States to Africa, Mary-Claire King has revolutionized the fight against breast cancer—again and again.

BY LAURIE GARRETT

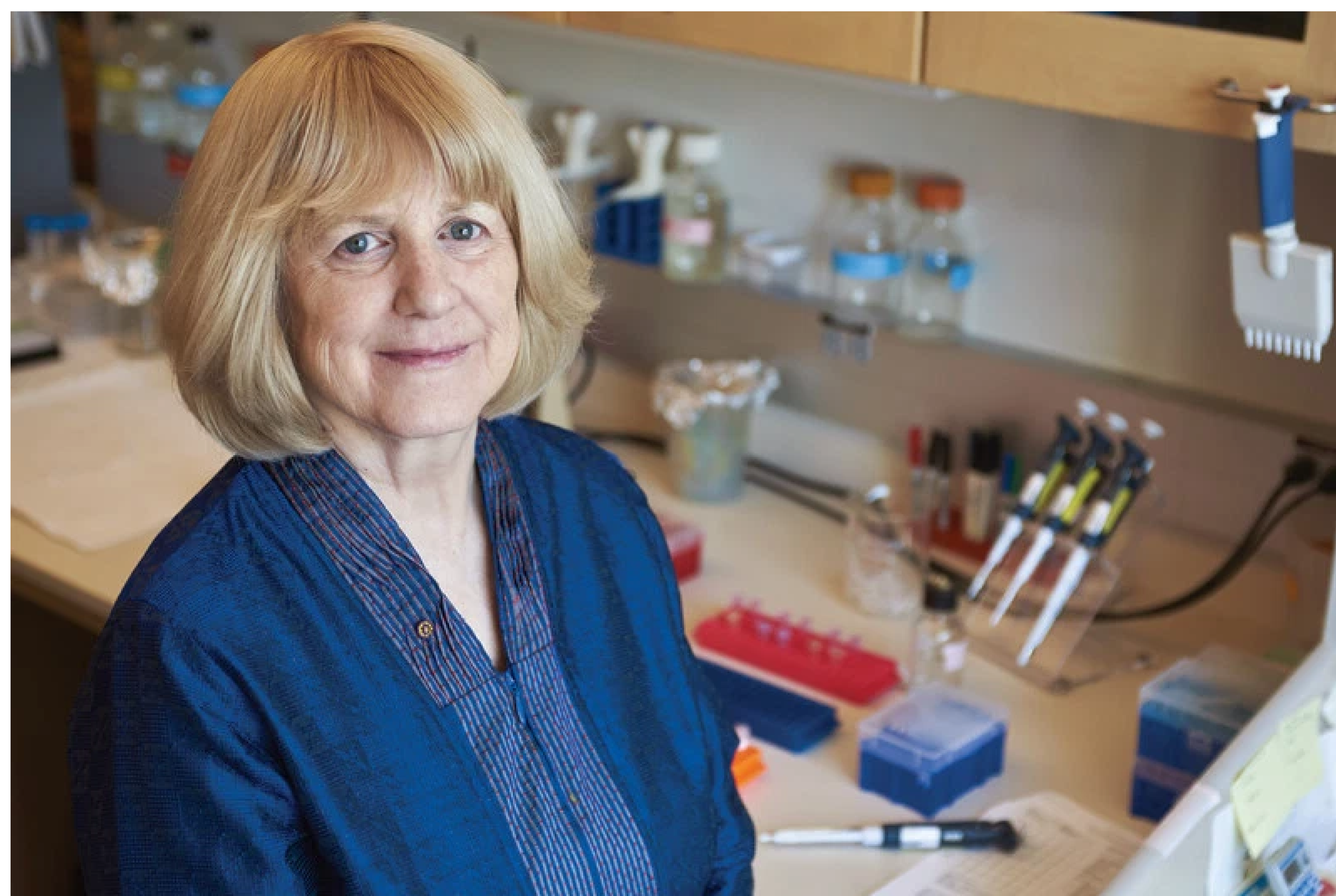


Photo courtesy of Mary-Claire King

"I have a couple of hundred friends in this room," Mary-Claire King warned me as we entered a Manhattan gathering of the Breast Cancer Research Foundation in October 2018. "I might lose you." Seconds later, physicians, researchers, and philanthropists surrounded the petite scientist and swept her away in a whirlwind of admiration.

It was further evidence, as if any were needed, of the 72-year-old King's legendary status as a geneticist. There are few aspects of breast cancer research over the last three decades that King or her University of Washington laboratory hasn't had a hand in. King helped redefine the very concept of cancer, saving the lives of countless women along the way—and today, nearly 30 years after her first breakthrough in the field, she remains at the front lines of the battle.

King's early work on breast cancer was motivated by a deadly puzzle that her research eventually helped solve: a particularly aggressive and incurable form of breast cancer that typically killed women in their 30s and 40s, leaving their children without mothers and families devastated.

By scouring the DNA of hundreds of women, King linked hereditary breast cancer to a gene she discovered in 1990 and would go on to name BRCA1. Its sister gene, BRCA2, was discovered in 1995. These genes encode proteins that act as janitors in certain tissues of the body, cleaning up sloppy mutations caused by ultraviolet rays, tobacco smoke, or just cellular wear and tear. But they also have a propensity to develop harmful mutations, after which they don't make repairs, and cells—especially when they encounter estrogen—grow out of control.

By scouring the DNA of hundreds of women, King linked hereditary breast cancer to a gene she discovered in 1990 and would go on to name BRCA1.

King's revolutionary finding made preventative measures possible for the up to 415,000 women in the United States at risk of this deadly form of cancer and possibly for millions more worldwide. Carriers of the defective genes could now potentially avoid the affliction by having their ovaries and fallopian tubes surgically removed so as to reduce estrogen levels.

[*In striking down a ban on gay sex, India's Supreme Court inspired activists across the world, Frank Mugisha writes.*]

Many septuagenarians would be content to cut back their workloads after such success, but King continues to push forward. Together with the University of Chicago cancer specialist Olufunmilayo "Funmi" Olopade and colleagues at Nigeria's University College Hospital, Ibadan, King is now trying to find a way to stop breast cancer deaths in Africa's most populous country—which could in the process revolutionize preventative measures worldwide.

Their current project began after the Nigerian-born Olopade—who was working as a well-respected geneticist in the United States—noticed that breast cancer was rising in her homeland, especially among younger women who might have been carriers of the BRCA genes. In 2004, she organized a meeting in Lagos of women's health advocates and learned that beneath Nigeria's officially reported cancer statistics lay a mountain of deaths from undiagnosed breast cancer. She then reached out to her longtime friend, King, to begin brainstorming on research that could figure out why the cancer rates were so high and what to do about it.

Together with Nigerian collaborators, they discovered not only that many Nigerian women carried the BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations but also that mortality rates among these women were far higher than those in Europe and the United States. Worse, they were getting sick at younger ages, leaving young children behind in a country where raising them was still considered to be almost entirely a female responsibility.

Even if a clear medical breakthrough makes it possible to cure such cancer (rather than simply prevent its occurrence), the treatment would likely be too costly to reach most women in the developing world; Nigeria, for example, lacks the financing and infrastructure necessary to support basic measures such as routine access to mammograms, CT scans, radiation treatment, and chemotherapy. That's unlikely to change soon.

[*The Parkland students want gun control on the ballot.*]

So King and Olopade have taken a different approach, focusing on offering genetic testing to all young Nigerian women.

Olopade took the lead in setting up a training program for Nigerian genetic counselors through the University College Hospital, Ibadan, with the hope of conducting routine genetic testing of young Nigerian women. The idea is to advise carriers of the BRCA genes that if they want babies, they should consider doing so early and then have their ovaries and fallopian tubes removed. Genetic sequencing is relatively inexpensive, King says, and should be routine everywhere—it needs to be done only once in a lifetime. Mass genetic testing has the added benefit of allowing women to raise their children and watch them grow to adulthood.

The program is still evolving, but King and Olopade are confident that they've hit on a genuinely viable alternative to the costly approaches taken to breast cancer detection and treatment in North America.

Meanwhile, King is pushing for all women to have access to this method of cancer prevention. Routine genetic screening of all young women, in the United States and around the world, would allow them a chance to find the threat of cancer before it develops. No woman with a mutation in BRCA1 or BRCA2 should die of breast cancer, King says. "It is completely preventable and absolutely unnecessary."

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Laurie Garrett is a former senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations and a Pulitzer Prize winning science writer.

INTERVIEW

Inside the Mind of Planned Parenthood's New Leader Getting to know Dr. Leana Wen. *By Sarah Wildman*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

March for Our Lives activists pose for a photo in Washington, D.C., in July 2018. Top, from left: Daniel Williams and Bria Smith. Seated, middle row, from left: Jammal Lemy. Matt Deitsch, Matt Post, Naomi Wadler, Alex King, Ramon Contreras, Jaclyn Corin, and Kyrah Simon. Seated on the floor, from left: Lauren Hogg, David Hogg, Emma González, and Brandon Farbstein. (Jesse Dittmar)

INTERVIEW

The Fight for Their Lives

The Parkland students' big battle to get gun control on the ballot.

BY SARAH WILDMAN

On Feb. 14, 2018, a 19-year-old gunman killed 17 students and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in the deadliest high school shooting in U.S. history. Some of the survivors channeled their anger into a new drive for gun control. A month later, they convened a march in Washington, D.C., which some 800,000 people attended, and others across the country. The movement, called March for Our Lives, has since grown into a massive gun control organization and voter registration drive, with more than 200 chapters across the United States.

Matt Deitsch, a co-founder and chief strategist of the group, spent weeks on end in 2018 campaigning for gun control in 41 states. During the tour, he and other organizers sold and gave away more than 50,000 T-shirts emblazoned with a QR code that, when scanned with a smartphone, led directly to a voter registration site. Together with Apple, the students also created a popular get-out-the-vote video.

Deitsch, now 21, was not on campus on Feb. 14. But his sister and brother were. Both survived: Samantha turned 15 the day of the massacre. Ryan, who was 17, hid in a closet during the shooting and filmed the aftermath. Deitsch spoke to Foreign Policy in November.

Foreign Policy: Parkland activists had incredible momentum and visibility in 2018. How do you continue that fight going forward?

Matt Deitsch: By helping young people and others affected by this issue to be educated and engaged. Bullets don't discriminate. It's not just about keeping the memory of Parkland—which obviously our group is never, ever going to fully move on from because it's so ingrained in who we are. More people are affected by this issue every day.

[*Human beings are rarely rational—so it's time we all stopped pretending they are, Fareed Zakaria writes.*]

FP: How do you not feel despair?

MD: Because we have the guidebook to actually stop it. We've seen other countries rise up and stop it. What we're up against isn't the Constitution or the Founding Fathers. What we're up against is corruption and greed. We have a new Congress, and we're going to hold its members accountable to do what they claimed they're going to do. We have several Gun Sense activists [gun control advocates] now in Congress, and we're going to continue to organize against the political players who choose to be complacent with this, because people are dying.

We are not safe in this country with the current gun laws. This is a uniquely American problem. We have to know that life is worth fighting for and that if we continue to rise up like we have in the last eight months, we will solve this problem before my generation has kids.

FP: What is the fight for 2019?

MD: We need to create a standard for responsible gun ownership and accountability for people who own firearms.

We have 10 policy points, including funding research on gun violence and treating it as a public health issue, universal background checks, disarming domestic abusers, comprehensive red flag laws, digitizing ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives] records, and addressing gun trafficking.

If an underage person in most states steals their parents' alcohol and hurts someone, their parents get felony charges. If you do the same with a gun, there are next to no consequences in most states. So it's about creating a standard of what responsibility looks like.

This conversation has been condensed and edited for publication. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Sarah Wildman is *Foreign Policy*'s deputy editor for print and host the "First Person" podcast. She is the author of *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*. Twitter: @SarahAWildman

REPORT

#MeToo Goes Global Here's where the movement took off in 2018—and where to look for activism in 2019. *By Sarah Wildman*

SEE THE FULL LIST

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

THE FIX

A Jury of Peers

How Ireland used a Citizens' Assembly to solve some of its toughest problems.

BY SUSAN MCKAY | JANUARY 5, 2019, 6:00 AM

latest

The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble
APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM

Our Best Weekend Reads
APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM

India Has a Mindset Problem
APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM

How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM

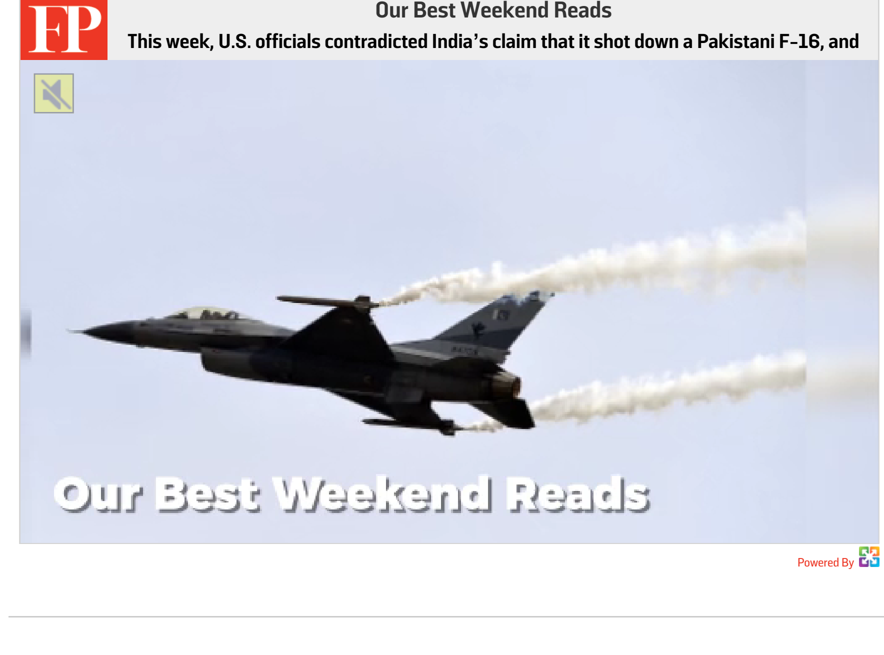
SEE ALL STORIES

People celebrate the results of the Irish referendum to overturn the country's abortion ban in Dublin on May 26, 2018. (Clodagh Kilcoyne/Reuters)

In May 2018, the Irish people voted overwhelmingly to amend the country's constitution to allow the government to legalize abortion. A bill that made it legal up to the 12th week of pregnancy has passed both houses of the Irish parliament and, at press time, had been sent to the president to be signed into law. It will bring an extraordinary end to a bitter, decades-long national fight over one of Ireland's most divisive issues.

This seismic change was made possible in large part because of a unique experiment in Irish democracy: the Citizens' Assembly, a 99-person panel of randomly selected citizens (plus a chairperson) who were assigned to thrash out contentious policy issues and offer recommendations for action to the government. The assembly's work offered the legislature a means of tackling thorny issues that politicians might have otherwise shied away from and gauging actual public opinion rather than allowing clashing activists to drown out mainstream views. It's a model that other democracies facing controversial social debates can, and should, adopt.

Trending Articles



Democracies are increasingly resorting to referendums to increase public engagement, awareness, and accountability. Yet a referendum alone can produce greater disorder—Brexit is a case in point—rather than resolution. As Ireland's constitution can be changed only by referendum, the country has discovered that targeted and preemptive deliberative processes among selected groups of citizens, who stand in for the public, can enable better societal reflection before referendums—and thus produce a more orderly and widely accepted outcome.

The Irish Citizens' Assembly organized a conversation among citizens about public issues, rather than just a hasty, ill-considered vote about them. As in a court of law, the members of the assembly were provided with information from a range of reputable sources, addressed by experts from across the spectrum of opinion, and given the opportunity to question them. They then took part in small group discussions moderated by a facilitator, and a senior judge presided over the proceedings. Lawmakers could then decide to create legislation based on the assembly's recommendation, offer a constitutional referendum up to the rest of the populace, or ignore the findings.

The Citizens' Assembly took inspiration from two previous public forums for direct democracy, one in the Canadian province of British Columbia in 2004 and the other in the Netherlands in 2006, both of which tackled the issue of electoral reform. The Irish political scientist David Farrell had observed the Canadian example up close and was impressed by its structured debate, use of evidence, and capacity to engage citizens in technical policy discussions. He, the political scientist Jane Suiter, and several other colleagues decided to export the model to Ireland. In 2011, with a grant of more than $900,000 from Atlantic Philanthropies, they launched We the Citizens, a nongovernmental public assembly focused on policy issues including electoral reform. Participants were selected randomly. Its success prompted the government to set up a second, larger consultative assembly in 2012 called the Irish Convention on the Constitution. Its primary purpose was to tackle the issue of same-sex marriage. One-third of the convention's members were politicians selected by the political parties in proportion to their standing in parliament; the rest were citizens recruited randomly by a market research company. The aim was to broadly represent Irish demographics in terms of age, gender, social class, and geography. As with the convention's predecessor, the resulting recommendations had no formal legal standing until legislators acted on them.

The convention invited the public to submit opinions on selected themes—including same-sex marriage, lowering the voting age from 18 to 17, and removing the offense of blasphemy from the constitution. Meetings were held near Dublin; some were publicly broadcast. Its first recommendation was that the government should hold a referendum to introduce same-sex marriage. The legislature agreed. Despite strong opposition from the Catholic Church and conservative groups, the referendum found that 62 percent of Irish voters favored allowing same-sex couples to marry. The government duly enacted legislation, enabling Ireland to become the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote. And the issue was laid to rest.

Despite strong opposition from the Catholic Church and conservative groups, the referendum found that 62 percent of Irish voters favored allowing same-sex couples to marry.

In 2016, the new government decided to replace the convention with the Citizens' Assembly model, dispense with politicians on the panel, and create a body made up entirely of ordinary citizens. The assembly was established by law that same year, given a budget of approximately $2.3 million from the legislature, and tasked with sitting down within six months to assess issues including climate change, referendum procedures, and the thorny issue of the country's abortion ban. The assembly met 12 times from October 2016 to April 2018; five meetings focused exclusively on abortion.

TRENDING

1 The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3 India Has a Mindset Problem 89 SHARES
4 Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5 The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

Handwritten messages of support for an end to the abortion ban paper a Dublin memorial to Savita Halappanavar, who died in Galway in 2012 after being denied an emergency abortion, on May 27, 2018. (Clodagh Kilcoyne/Reuters)

Throughout the 20th century, abortion was banned by law in Ireland, which is an overwhelmingly Catholic country. But in the early 1980s, conservative lawmakers pushed for a referendum to have the ban affirmed by a constitutional amendment; it passed in 1983 by a two-thirds majority.

Since 1980, some 170,000 women had voted with their feet by leaving the country (mostly for England) to obtain abortions abroad. This trend—plus a series of tragic cases involving pregnant women, and sometimes children, who were denied abortions—made the ban ever more unpopular. In 2018, polls showed that 65 percent of Irish people favored repealing the amendment.

Since 1980, some 170,000 women had voted with their feet by leaving the country (mostly for England) to obtain abortions abroad.

The debate took a dramatic turn in 2012, when Savita Halappanavar, a 31-year-old dentist, entered a hospital with a dying fetus. She was denied an abortion; the slow-moving miscarriage killed her. Her death galvanized the women's movement, which held mass demonstrations. In 2016, the government turned the issue over to the Citizens' Assembly.

After the deliberations on abortion were complete, the chairperson, former Supreme Court Justice Mary Laffoy, held four ballots among the assembly's participants. Sixty-four percent of the members recommended legalizing the termination of pregnancy before 12 weeks. They called for the government to put the matter to a referendum.

The legislature accepted the assembly's recommendation and convened a special parliamentary committee to iron out detailed legislative provisions; the results mirrored the assembly's sentiment. Sixty-six percent of Irish voters agreed that the ban on abortion should be overturned.

With the resulting bill signed into law, debate on one of Ireland's most contentious social issues will finally be closed. The backlash from anti-abortion groups has been limited, and Irish society has broadly accepted the outcome.

The backlash from anti-abortion groups has been limited, and Irish society has broadly accepted the outcome.

Critics point out that Ireland's Citizens' Assembly was purely advisory. But the Irish experience shows that if a government is receptive, an assembly can not only deliver quite dramatic policy recommendations on issues that once seemed intractable but also allow citizens to air differences in a noncombative setting, fostering learning and gradual social acceptance. The model could be widely adapted, including for a potential second Brexit referendum. Ireland is already considering convening another assembly to address antiquated gender roles ensconced in the Irish Constitution. Citizens' assemblies don't seek to replace traditional government institutions. They can, when judiciously used, make them work better.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

READ MORE

Refuge, Reformed
Kenya has found a way to make refugee camps benefit host communities. Other countries should follow its lead.
THE FIX | ALEXANDER BETTS

South Koreans Learn to Love the Other
How to manufacture multiculturalism.
THE FIX | JAMES PALMER, GA-YOUNG PARK

How to Defeat Drought
Cape Town is running out of water. Israel offers some lessons on how to avoid that fate.
THE FIX | SETH M. SIEGEL

Susan McKay is an award-winning Irish journalist and author from Derry in Northern Ireland. Her books include Bear in Mind These Dead and Northern Protestants: An Unsettled People. She writes for publications including the Irish Times, the Guardian, the London Review of Books, and the New York Times. Twitter: @SusanMcKay15

TAGS: HUMAN RIGHTS, IRELAND, VOTING BEHAVIOR, WOMEN'S RIGHTS

VIEW COMMENTS

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS
THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA

Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted — Desert Order
High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm — Wi-Fi Booster
Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices — TripsInsider
How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity - Guaranteed! — Snow Teeth Whitening

BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY

The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco
A Map of China, By Stereotype
Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason
This Map Shows China's Hilarious Stereotypes of Europe

BY TABOOLA

voices

What Democrats Can Learn From the Left
JAMES TRAUB

5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows
STEPHEN M. WALT

Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible.
STEVEN A. COOK

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

DECODER

Street Smart

Why South Africa's formerly segregated townships are still central to its imagination.

BY EVE FAIRBANKS | JANUARY 2, 2019, 10:23 AM

(Musunda Kabwe for Foreign Policy)

"You need to see my friend's gun," Mophethe Thebe said in a gas station parking lot in Soweto, the famous swath of townships southwest of Johannesburg. He promised this was a good way to understand the meaning of a South African word coined more than a half-century ago: *ekasi*. Today, the word—sometimes rendered as *kasi*—is the name for bars and restaurants, finds its way into hip-hop lyrics, and makes up the moniker for one of Johannesburg's top radio stations. But ekasi's ubiquity isn't simply cultural; its fluid definition mirrors political debates about South Africa's future.

Technically, ekasi is just the Zulu term for "township," a segregated neighborhood where black people were forced to live under apartheid. But it also functions the way the word "soul" or "home-cooked" does in front of "food" in American vernacular. The word suggests authentic, real, and the heart of black South Africa.

Trending Articles
How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism
On the podcast: A former State Department official who led the outreach to the Muslim world
First Person
How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism

At its heart are paradoxes. It's a term of affection, even as it connotes the negative, even shameful, sides of contemporary black South African life; in this way, it works a little like the English word "ghetto." Ekasi suggests the swagger and boastful flamboyance that often accompany the crime that plagues contemporary South African townships—whether the sleekness of Thebe's friend's gun or the weekly party where his other friends do wheelies in the Audis they've stolen from richer, white neighborhoods.

Another paradox emerges from ekasi's origin. It originated from a word in Afrikaans, the language of the largely Dutch-descended white minority that ran apartheid South Africa until the arrival of majority rule in 1994. From the start of the 20th century, when the first segregated townships were formed, speakers of Afrikaans tended to refer to any given one of them simply as a "location," or *lokasie*. A form of this word was eventually adopted into Zulu.

Older black South Africans, those who were adults during the last stages of apartheid, didn't hear ekasi uttered as much by their own peers. In that period, ekasi was associated with those who were considered "relaxed"—a pejorative for black people who didn't seem to care enough about the liberation struggle. Using the term was associated with seeking favor with the Afrikaner oppressors.

In that period, ekasi was associated with those who were considered "relaxed"—a pejorative for black people who didn't seem to care enough about the liberation struggle.

The hatred bottled up in such language choices was unleashed in the 1976 Soweto uprising, a huge protest against the forcible use of Afrikaans in schools that helped hasten apartheid's unraveling. When apartheid did end in the early 1990s, one of the main promises made by the country's new leaders was that black South Africans would finally be able to get out of the townships—or that they would be transformed into more livable places.

Yet South Africa's first black democratic leaders, wary of repeating the failures of previous post-colonial African presidents, focused less on transforming the lives of the country's poorest citizens than on keeping life relatively easy for the wealthy whites who lived in leafy suburbs far from the townships. The measure of black success became making it in the white world: acquiring a corporate or cushy government job, speaking in a so-called "posh" or English accent, even eating organic salads instead of kota—a quarter loaf of white bread stuffed with processed meat and cheese, French fries, and sometimes a hot dog—in other words, what black South Africans ate when they didn't have the money or time for anything else.

But few black South Africans were fully able to make this transition. Around half of the country's black adults still live in townships today, and a quarter of South Africans, virtually all of them black, live in conditions that meet the United Nations' threshold for extreme poverty. It was partly in response to this failed transition that the word previously associated with oppression began to make its way into young people's vocabulary as a celebratory, even defiant, slang term. "Living ekasi meant everything" to him growing up, Thebe said. "The way we love. The way we talk. The way we dress. You have lived under harsh circumstances. You have survived."

"Living ekasi meant everything" to him growing up, Thebe said.

The power of this cultural ideal, at once transgressive and backward looking, becomes especially clear at a secondary school in a township near Johannesburg called Tsakane. Marooned 30 miles southeast of the city's business center, the school is encircled by mine dumps and fields of cattle; many of the school's 10th-grade students live in corrugated aluminum shacks. This is an NGO-run school for aspirational kids, all of whom aim to get away from ekasi life—to a reputable university in Cape Town or Johannesburg or an Ivy League school in the United States.

Yet when asked to talk about the clothing style implied by the word ekasi, a few students screamed with excitement, pumped their fists, and stood up to describe it: Converse shoes, Dickies pants, a leather jacket, gold chain, tattoo, and a *chiskop*—a shaved shiny bald head. Their parents, they said, frowned on such "criminal" outfits, but the students exhibited the joy of explaining something that was already theirs, not simply a dream.

Meanwhile, even wealthier black South Africans have discovered that moving into the formerly white space of elite society comes with unexpected losses. Some have found that white neighbors or bosses still view them with distrust no matter how culturally acceptable they have become; at least in the ekasi, they had felt as if they belonged.

READ MORE

China's Pop Idols Are Too Soft for the Party
Stars like Kris Wu are huge with fans, but sit uncomfortably with macho ambitions.
DECODER | LAUREN TEIXEIRA

Swedes Can't Go Home Again
In the run-up to Sweden's election, one word explains why the country used to feel like a family—and why it now feels adrift.
DECODER | ANDREW BROWN

Pride and Prejudice in Tehran
To understand Iran's foreign policy, you need to learn a little Farsi.
DECODER | HOOMAN MAJD

And so, for black South Africans across the social spectrum, township experiences once considered purely tragic began to feel noble, even cool: the vibrant street life created by the lack of transport, the kindness often generated by mutual want, the hustling and crime necessitated by the lack of opportunities and the enduring racism, and, increasingly, the contempt directed at them by many of the wealthiest black elites.

A quarter-century after apartheid's end, South African politics and society are still driven by a sense of being stuck within a binary: follow a Western, consumerist, so-called white development and cultural path or turn away from that toward something more just, inclusive, and authentic. But there are fears around the latter route, a suspicion that black South Africans' truest identity is a reaction to their centuries of oppression and that the black experience might still be dangerous to embrace—a resistance that has anger at its heart.

A quarter-century after apartheid's end, South African politics and society are still driven by a sense of being stuck within a binary.

This tension warps South African political debates. Focused steps in the direction of land redistribution, affirmative action, and changes to the Western-focused education system are clearly necessary to make the post-apartheid society more sustainable and fair. There remains an anxiety, however, that such policies would be motivated less by a desire to improve the lives of all citizens than to destroy the privileges of the advantaged and would thus represent giving in to the dark side of ekasi—a hunger for money, a tolerance for disorder, a taste for destruction—that lurks behind its nostalgic, affectionate connotations. One boy at the school in Tsakane, the far-flung township, said he wondered whether the way he and his friends used ekasi kept black South African culture alive but then added, "It's also pushing us back."

"If I pulled a gun on you now, it's ekasi," he said, smiling. "But it's also the dumbest thing."

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

TAGS: AFRICA, POLITICS, POPULAR CULTURE, SOUTH AFRICA
VIEW COMMENTS

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS
THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA
Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted — Desert Order
High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm — Wi-Fi Booster
Amazingly Cheap Flights in Pakistan — TripsInsider
How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity - Guaranteed! — Snow Teeth Whitening
BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY
The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco
Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason
Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire
A Map of China, By Stereotype
BY TABOOLA

Looking for Hosting?
namecheap
Best Bundle You've Ever Had: Free Website Builder + Free Domain + Free SSLs from $2.88/mo

latest
The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble — APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM
Our Best Weekend Reads — APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM
India Has a Mindset Problem — APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM
Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM
How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM
SEE ALL STORIES

TRENDING
1 The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3 India Has a Mindset Problem 90 SHARES
4 Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5 The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

voices
What Democrats Can Learn From the Left — JAMES TRAUB
5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows — STEPHEN M. WALT
Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible. — STEVEN A. COOK

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

DEBUNKER

The Small War That Wasn't

Why the Kosovo conflict still matters today.

BY CAMERON ABADI | JANUARY 2, 2019, 10:23 AM

(Illustration by Joan Wong for Foreign Policy; photos by U.S. Navy/ Roger Lemoyne/Getty Images/Charlie Archambault/Getty Images/Couple/Globalphoto.com/Liaison/Getty Images)

The years between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 9/11 attacks are largely thought of as a footnote to history—one eventually interrupted by Islamist terrorism, economic crisis, and genuine geopolitical competition from China and Russia. The meager legacy of Washington's military intervention in Kosovo is a case in point: It is seen as a brief, successful, and low-stakes war, remembered as insignificant when it's remembered at all—which it rarely is by Americans, even as the war's 20th anniversary approaches in March.

The consensus, however, is wrong. The Kosovo war was short (just three months), but it wasn't small. In fundamental ways, it was a turning point for international politics.

Trending Articles
The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has...
The Brazilian president's visit to Israel, which was meant to rally his
The media playback was aborted due to a corruption problem or because the media used features your browser did not support.
Powered by

The crisis pitted military forces led by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, already infamous for his murderous actions in the Bosnian conflict, against ethnic Albanian Kosovar insurgents, who resented growing repression in the province. In March 1999, fighting intensified, Kosovo's neighbors were flooded with refugees, and the West got involved. When Milosevic ignored demands for a negotiated solution, NATO used force. After 78 days of bombing, Serbian troops withdrew, and NATO ground troops moved in.

The war started a conversation about humanitarian intervention that continues to this day. The agonized policy debates in recent years about entering Syria and Libya to oppose brutal dictators are reprisals of concerns first raised in the Balkans.

At the time, British Prime Minister Tony Blair openly described the intervention in Kosovo as "a battle between good and evil; between civilisation and barbarity; between democracy and dictatorship." But the story was hardly so pure. The case for humanitarian intervention under international law was based on preventing more Serb atrocities, but in practice that meant supporting the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)—a group that U.S. officials had previously described as terrorist. It was fighting for full independence rather than Washington's more limited goal of political autonomy. U.S. officials were aware that moralistic rhetoric cloaked political risks: Intelligence agencies privately warned that the KLA was trying to provoke Serbian massacres in hopes of persuading NATO to support its bid for independence.

Kosovo also raised serious new concerns about NATO's military utility that echo loudly today.

NATO's European members hindered the war effort even from its earliest stages. When Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO's top commander at the time, briefed allies in July 1998 on the plan drawn up by the U.S. military, which included going after the "head of the snake" by bombing Belgrade, skittish European officials believed it was "too large, too threatening" and demanded more limited options. NATO settled on only a small number of military targets in Kosovo itself—and Europeans at the highest levels of national governments insisted that they be allowed to sign off on the targets.

Milosevic then seized the advantage to ramp up the ethnic cleansing of Albanians. Only when the United States, two months into the war, insisted on a change in strategy—bombing targets deep in Serbian territory—did the momentum shift. Americans also picked up an increasing share of the operational slack, not least because of the wide gap in capabilities between U.S. and other NATO air forces. By the war's end, the United States had conducted about two-thirds of all sorties while undertaking the majority of reconnaissance, suppression of air defenses, and precision-guided strikes.

For the United States, NATO's contribution to the war was mostly political—it helped create and maintain public support among Americans for the campaign. In military terms, however, the allies were mostly dispensable. This experience laid the groundwork for later instances of unilateralism, including the George W. Bush administration's decision to forgo seeking NATO's backing before its invasion of Iraq and President Donald Trump's outright threats against Europe for its overreliance on the U.S. military for its own defense.

The Kosovo war also foreshadowed the return of great-power politics, spurring the rise of revanchist nationalism in both Russia and China that the West contends with today.

Although Russia has traditionally been a Serbian ally, the Kremlin initially positioned itself as the West's partner in finding a solution to the crisis. The bargain was both instrumental (Russia's economic troubles made it dependent on foreign assistance) and strategic: President Boris Yeltsin believed Russia could cooperate with Western institutions in maintaining global order. Russian diplomats even communicated to their Western counterparts that, although they would veto any U.N. Security Council resolution approving a war, they had nothing against airstrikes. As Richard Holbrooke, a U.S. diplomat, once said, "For them, it was all about respect."

READ MORE

The Tourism Curse
Like a wealth of oil, lots of visitors can become a development trap. Here's how to avoid it.
DEBUNKER | GEERT VANSINTJAN

Why Growth Can't Be Green
New data proves you can support capitalism or the environment—but it's hard to do both.
DEBUNKER | JASON HICKEL

Thank You, Jimmy Carter
Restoring the reputation of America's most underrated foreign-policy president.
DEBUNKER | JUSTIN VAÏSSE

By that measure, the war was a disaster. Russian public opinion turned against the airstrikes as they targeted the capital of Russia's Serbian ally and Russian attempts to negotiate peace were unceremoniously rejected by U.S. officials. As Yeltsin faced increasingly irate opposition in parliament, Russian officials' rhetoric became more bitter and their behavior more obstinate. After Milosevic's capitulation, Russian military forces violated the peace agreement by rushing into Kosovo and capturing Pristina's airport on June 12—a move that nearly led to a direct confrontation with U.S. forces. It wasn't clear whether Yeltsin ordered that operation—but six months later, he would resign, making way for Vladimir Putin.

The Kosovo war was also a teachable moment for Beijing about the power of domestic nationalism. On May 7, U.S. B-2 stealth bombers largely destroyed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing three Chinese nationals and injuring 20 others. NATO insisted the incident was an accident (the result of the CIA providing the wrong coordinates for a nearby Serbian military target). The Chinese government declared it a "barbaric attack" and seemed to encourage, and even help organize, the protests that erupted across China. Thousands of Chinese threw rocks at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, trapping officials inside for days, while protesters tried to set fire to the U.S. consulates in Chengdu and Guangzhou.

When President Bill Clinton and U.S. State Department officials formally apologized for the attack, Chinese state-run media did not broadcast the news for several days as demonstrations continued. It was a strategy of stoking domestic victimization that the Chinese would return to for years afterward, most notably in the 2012 territorial disputes with Japan over islands in the East China Sea.

The Kosovo war officially ended in June 1999, but violence continued unabated in the immediate aftermath, as Kosovar refugees returning home took vengeance against Serbs. The United Nations and NATO spent years trying to figure out how to pass on the responsibility for governing the territory. Now, as the United States struggles to extract its troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, decades after first sending them there, the relevance of that earlier experience speaks for itself.

It's tempting to dismiss the events in Kosovo as the epitome of America's short-lived unipolar moment—a war of choice marginal to the interests of major powers, including the United States. The premise is mostly correct but the conclusion false. Washington's intervention was a war of choice, but that made it a mirror of its foreign-policy psyche—one that magnified America's ambitions and its blind spots and affected the world accordingly. The world indeed became stormy after 9/11—but storms always gather force in the calm that precedes them.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Cameron Abadi is a deputy editor at Foreign Policy. Twitter: @CameronAbadi

TAGS: ALBANIA, CHINA, KOSOVO, MILITARY, NATO, RUSSIA, SERBIA

VIEW COMMENTS

latest

The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble
APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM

Our Best Weekend Reads
APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM

India Has a Mindset Problem
APRIL 6, 2019, 6:52 AM

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM

How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM

SEE ALL STORIES

TRENDING

1 The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3 India Has a Mindset Problem 90 SHARES
4 Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5 The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

voices

What Democrats Can Learn From the Left
JAMES TRAUB

5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows
STEPHEN M. WALT

Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible.
STEVEN A. COOK

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS
THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA

Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted
Desert Order

High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm
Wi-Fi Booster

Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices
Save70.com

Amazingly Cheap Flights in Pakistan
TripsInsider

BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY

The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco

Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason

The ouster of Mattis: Some follow-up details and a White House response

Pakistan Can't Afford China's 'Friendship'

BY TABOOLA

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

ARGUMENT

The New Face of Terrorism in 2019

Forget the Middle East—it's time to prepare for attacks from the former Soviet Union.

BY VERA MIRONOVA | JANUARY 1, 2019, 7:00 AM

A member of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces takes down a tattered Islamic State flag in Tabqa, Syria, in April 2017. (Delil Souleiman/AFP/Getty Images)

latest

The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble
APRIL 8, 2019, 1:11 PM

Our Best Weekend Reads
APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM

India Has a Mindset Problem
APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:53 PM

How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM

SEE ALL STORIES

The way Westerners think about Islamist terrorism has grown dangerously outdated. For decades, officials have focused on attacks launched by Middle Easterners. Today, however, the real threat increasingly comes from further east. In the former Soviet states and beyond, militants who once harbored mostly local grievances are turning their attention to the West. They will be the menace to watch in 2019.

The threat posed by Middle Eastern terrorists has been shrinking for some time. Even during the war against the Islamic State, Russian speakers from former Soviet countries were already committing many of the major attacks in the West. Those included relatively simple lone-wolf events, such as the 2017 truck strikes on pedestrians in New York and Stockholm—both conducted by Uzbeks—but also more complicated operations, such as the 2016 suicide bombing of Istanbul's airport—which was allegedly organized by a Russian national—and the 2017 attack on a nightclub in the same city, led by an Uzbek.

Trending Articles
The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has…
The Brazilian president's visit to Israel, which was meant to rally his evangelical base, has
The media playback was aborted due to a corruption problem or because the media used features your browser did not support.
Powered by

There are several reasons for the relative increase in anti-Western terrorism coming out of the post-Soviet world. For starters, in recent years Middle Eastern jihadis have been too preoccupied with local conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to head elsewhere. The pull of the Islamic State, meanwhile, has faded after its almost total defeat in Iraq and Syria.

TRENDING

1 The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3 India Has a Mindset Problem 90 SHARES
4 Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5 The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

At the same time, the wars in the Middle East have transformed militants from Russian-speaking areas, who previously focused on fighting repressive governments at home, into global terrorists. By 2017, at least 8,500 fighters from former Soviet republics had flocked to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State. That experience gave many of these jihadis their first taste battling U.S. and NATO troops, and it left them looking for vengeance, convinced that future operations should be aimed at the West.

Ahmed Chataev, for example, who allegedly organized the attack on Istanbul's airport, apparently first cooked up plans to strike Western targets while fighting in Iraq and Syria. A phone conversation leaked last year between Chataev and another Russian-speaking terrorist, Islam Atabiev, revealed that the two were planning to collect intelligence on several U.S. consulates and restaurants popular with Americans in Turkey and Georgia.

The same dynamic has played out further east, where battle-tested jihadis from the post-Soviet world can travel far more easily than Arabs who hold Iraqi, Syrian, or Yemeni passports. As the persecution of Muslims in Asia grows, so do opportunities for grievances to turn international. When I was in Bangladesh in July 2018, I came across at least two separate groups from the Caucasus providing religious aid in Muslim Rohingya refugee camps. A leader of a Russian-speaking group affiliated with militants in Syria said he had likewise planned to send some of his people to Bangladesh. Such contact could boost the capabilities of local jihadis already conducting anti-Western operations in the area, including those who in 2016 stormed a bakery in Dhaka that was popular with expats. And it may win more Rohingya over to the idea that they're involved in a global struggle for Islam, not just a local fight for their own survival.

The same dynamic has played out further east, where battle-tested jihadis from the post-Soviet world can travel far more easily than Arabs who hold Iraqi, Syrian, or Yemeni passports.

In the coming years, the terrorist threat from Russia and beyond will only increase. With the fall of the Islamic State, Russian-speaking terrorists were mostly able to flee Iraq and Syria with more ease than Middle Eastern foreign fighters and are now back in hiding in the former Soviet sphere or in Europe. Having escaped the reach of the U.S. military, they may find it easier to bring their plots to fruition. Local sympathies will help. Government neglect and outright repression have made religious Muslims in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan attractive targets for radicals looking for new recruits. Several popular sheikhs from the Middle East, including the Saudi cleric Abdulaziz al-Tarefe, now have significant Russian- and Arabic-language followings on social media.

As the locus of terrorism changes, the United States and its allies will have to update their strategies for fighting it. Over the last two decades, Washington built up a huge bureaucracy around Middle Eastern terrorism. Untold millions of dollars were poured into finding and training Arabic-speaking agents and analysts. According to data from a critical language scholarship program run by the U.S. government, out of 550 university students who will be admitted in 2019, 105 will be studying Arabic and only 60 Russian. And according to professors with whom I've spoken—from top policy schools such as the Harvard Kennedy School, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service—the overwhelming majority of college students who plan to work in counterterrorism still minor in Middle Eastern studies or Arabic. There's also a dearth of experts who've specialized in Central Asia and can teach a new generation of analysts.

Reorienting the West's focus will also involve political challenges, since the United States will have to find a way to cooperate with Russia and its neighbors. Over the last several years, for example, U.S. companies have gotten good at deleting jihadi propaganda from U.S.-based social media platforms, but the same propaganda is still widely available on Russian-language apps such as VK and OK, which are popular across post-Soviet states. Telegram, which was founded by a Russian national, has likewise become a major communications tool for terrorists of all backgrounds, and cell phones captured from the Islamic State revealed that they were operating on Ukrainian SIM cards.

Monitoring these systems and others will require deep cooperation and intelligence sharing with Russia. But such cooperation does not seem likely in the immediate future. There may simply be too much animosity between Washington and Moscow to allow for effective collaboration. There's also the problem of the quality of intelligence. Many of those who end up on domestic terrorist watchlists and even Interpol lists throughout the region are actually members of the domestic opposition. Meanwhile, lots of known terrorists are never singled out: Russia is well-known for providing passports to radicals from the Caucasus on the grounds that letting would-be jihadis leave the country is easier than dealing with them at home. Intelligence from the region has become so politicized—and is used so much more often to violate the human rights of religious citizens than to stop real terrorist attacks—that it is hard to know what the United States would do with it.

Russia is well-known for providing passports to radicals from the Caucasus on the grounds that letting would-be jihadis leave the country is easier than dealing with them at home.

The West should have recognized this shift long ago. It didn't, but that doesn't mean that it should sit on its hands now. The United States and its allies need to recognize that future attacks are more likely to come from the East than the Middle East and that there is no other option than to cooperate with Russia and its neighbors to stop them. If the United States fails to do so, it could soon see the effects in either a surge of attacks on the United States or the rise of a new post-Soviet-dominated terrorist group in one of the world's many war zones

voices

What Democrats Can Learn From the Left
JAMES TRAUB

5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows
STEPHEN M. WALT

Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible.
STEVEN A. COOK

READ MORE

Start Small to Stop the Next ISIS
One year on from the defeat of the Islamic State, the new U.S. Congress should draw on lessons learned from efforts to counter violent extremism.
ARGUMENT | DAFNA H. RAND, REBECCA WOLFE

Want to Deradicalize Terrorists? Treat Them Like Everyone Else.
Many counter-extremism efforts falter because ideological reform programs run by governments lack credibility. Appealing to the basic psychological needs of ex-radicals is more promising.
ARGUMENT | ELENA SOURIS, SPANDANA SINGH

When Fighting Domestic Terrorism, You Get What You Pay For
The Trump administration has gutted the budget for fighting far-right extremists, making it harder to stop attacks like the Pittsburgh massacre.
SHADOW GOVERNMENT | ERIC ROSAND

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Vera Mironova is a visiting scholar in the Harvard University economics department.

TAGS: ARGUMENT, IRAQ, ISIS, RUSSIA, SOVIET UNION, SYRIA, TERRORISM, TERRORIST ATTACKS

VIEW COMMENTS

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS
THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA

Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted
Desert Order

High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm
Wi-Fi Booster

Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices
TripsInsider

How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity - Guaranteed!
Snow Teeth Whitening

BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY

The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco

Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire

Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason

The ouster of Mattis: Some follow-up details and a White House response

BY TABOOLA

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

FP news | analysis | podcasts | the magazine | channels MY ACCOUNT

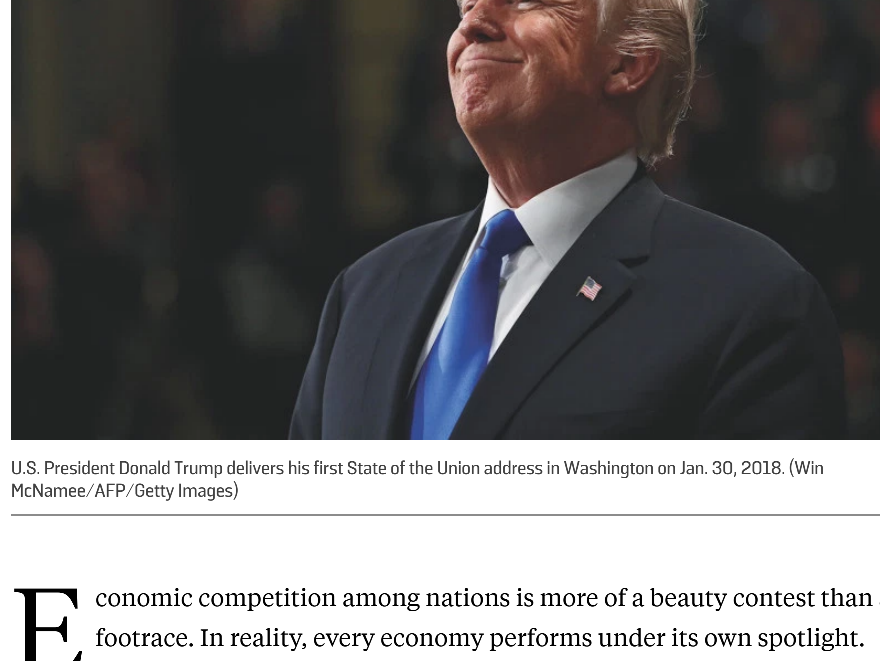
rakez START YOUR INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES CONTACT US

ARGUMENT

Welcome to the World's Least Ugly Economy

Despite inequality, debt, and a tariff war, the U.S. economy is still the strongest.

BY MICHAEL HIRSH | JANUARY 1, 2019, 7:00 AM



U.S. President Donald Trump delivers his first State of the Union address in Washington on Jan. 30, 2018. (Win McNamee/AFP/Getty Images)

Economic competition among nations is more of a beauty contest than a footrace. In reality, every economy performs under its own spotlight. By that reckoning, as the new year dawns, it's already obvious which economy is likely to be crowned Miss World 2019.

Yes, it's last year's pageant winner, the still-booming U.S. economy. Despite the recent turmoil on Wall Street and problems with income inequality, debt, and policy paralysis—and the tariff war launched by President Donald Trump—most economists say the United States is far outpacing all rivals in growth and stability.

Trending Articles

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster

Trump is mulling new auto tariffs that could send the global economy into a tailspin.

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster

At the very least, "the U.S. keeps coming out tops in the least ugly contest," said Adam Posen, the president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). "It gets uglier all the time, but it's still winning.

"The world will be a worse place under many of the things the Trump administration is doing, and the environment for private sector investment will get worse for everybody, including in the United States. But the United States will maintain a relative lead for some time to come."

A quick survey of other major economies around the world explains this simple reality: Everyone else's situation is much uglier. Britain is beset by Brexit, and Europe is grappling with an exploding budget crisis in Italy (its fourth-largest economy), along with governance issues so deep that they verge on existential. China, burdened with a dangerous amount of corporate debt, is slowing to such a degree that most experts see it as a likely flash point in the year ahead. Japan's super-slow growth rate—an annual expectation now because of its shrinking population—isn't causing it too much trouble (1 percent growth can be adequate if fewer people are producing), but Tokyo is still saddled with high public debt.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is still holding to its assessment from last fall that the United States is set to grow faster than the other G-7 countries in 2018 and 2019, and the differences among them are only widening. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is forecasting close to 3 percent growth, though that could go as low as 2.5 percent because of the escalating tariff war and the waning effect of Trump's 2017 corporate tax cut stimulus.

"If you just look at growth rates, the length of the expansion, the level of unemployment, and very subdued inflationary pressures, all those things look good," said Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti, the deputy director of the IMF's research department. Europe, by contrast, "looks like it is slowing more rapidly than we had envisaged. "Now, of course, you also have a very substantial fiscal stimulus in the system, an unprecedented one for an economy at full employment."

Some economists are more pessimistic. Late last year, the bond yield curve became inverted: Some longer-term bonds began paying less than shorter-term bonds, suggesting widening market fears that a U.S. recession could loom sometime in the next two years. Goldman Sachs's chief economist, Jan Hatzius, predicts that after enjoying 2.5 percent and 2.2 percent growth in the first two quarters of 2019, the fading tax cut stimulus and tightening by the Federal Reserve will drive U.S. growth down below 2 percent in the last two quarters. But even a deceleration of that magnitude would still leave the U.S. economy looking a little less ugly than Europe's or Japan's.

Trump is all too familiar with beauty contests, of course. (He once co-owned Miss Universe.) And the president is now taking all the credit for guiding the United States to the world crown, saying his tax cut "unleashed an economic miracle." In fact, apart from the sugar high that his tax cut and deregulatory moves gave to an already surging economy, little that Trump has done has made much of a difference. (Indeed, his trade war is creating new headwinds.) Corporate profits are up, and even long-stagnant wages are starting to rise.

All this offers yet another lesson in how a society and its politics can sometimes seem diseased—in America's case, viciously divided by hatred and violence, political paralysis, and a widely unpopular president—without affecting the rude health of the underlying economy. As Adam Smith once noted, "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation." In other words, it takes a lot of screwing up by political leaders to disrupt an economy.

The reality is that Trump is perhaps one of the luckiest presidents in decades because he is reaping the unique benefits of a host of recovery policies put in place during the preceding eight years. Together, these policies have generated one of the longest periods of continuous economic growth in U.S. history, in which January would mark the 100th straight month of job creation. That is the longest stretch since records have been kept.

The reality is that Trump is perhaps one of the luckiest presidents in decades because he is reaping the unique benefits of a host of recovery policies put in place during the preceding eight years.

Harvard University's Kenneth Rogoff, who co-wrote what is widely considered the definitive book on financial crisis recovery, *This Time Is Different*, said the very factors that made the 2008 crash so devastating and enduring in impact are now helping to extend the recovery. "You're going to see that the next 10 years will be better than the last 10 years."

READ MORE

Investors are Jittery and the Reason is Trump

From the U.S. president's embrace of tariffs to his war with the Fed, some are calling this the "Trump Slump."

ANALYSIS | MICHAEL HIRSH

'Tariff Man' vs. the World

Five Reads: The best Foreign Policy stories of 2018 on global trade.

2018: THE YEAR IN REVIEW | KEITH JOHNSON

Rising Tides Will Sink Global Order

Global warming will produce national extinctions and international insurgencies—and change everything you think you know about foreign policy.

ARGUMENT | ADAM TOOZE

Part of the reason the boom has been so sustained is bound up with the 2008 crisis itself. Serious financial crises lead to a particular kind of recession (usually more severe, according to Rogoff and his co-author, Carmen Reinhart) and a particular kind of long-term recovery. In a normal recovery, when demand bounces back, people start to buy a lot of goods. But after a financial crash, people take a long time to deleverage and improve their personal, business, or local government balance sheets. Thus, recoveries come slower and less robust at first, but there is a longer-term payoff in stable growth.

"Once people finally have their balance sheets in a good place and their confidence up, they start to spend and invest and hire more. I think that is what we have seen here," said Gene Sperling, who led the National Economic Council under former President Barack Obama. "Every single positive thing Trump wants to brag about was just a continuation of a trend that had been in place for years under Obama."

Many economists, such as Posen and Rogoff, foresee problems for the U.S. economy due to social and political upheaval tied to income inequality, which is barely being addressed. "We've made a lot of longer-run compromises," Rogoff said. Apart from corporations, the tax cut benefited mainly the rich, for example, while tariffs and cutting back on immigration will hurt the economy in the long run. What the U.S. economy is doing under Trump is "closer to taking steroids than sugar," Rogoff said. "You feel good for many years until eventually things catch up with you."

Apart from corporations, the tax cut benefited mainly the rich, for example, while tariffs and cutting back on immigration will hurt the economy in the long run.

Even so, there is a broad consensus that the real economic crises in the foreseeable future lie abroad. According to Adam Tooze, a professor at Columbia University, China and other emerging markets are the "central driver of global growth right now," but there are serious questions about whether Beijing's autocratic and increasingly inward-looking leader, Xi Jinping, and his bureaucracy can handle the growth slowdown or unwind the "extraordinary buildup of debt" in Chinese companies. Faced with a barrage of Trump tariffs, China's estimated growth for 2019 has been reduced to 6.2 percent, according to the IMF. That's good for most economies, but the authoritarian Chinese government has generally required faster growth to satisfy a restive population.

While India and countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations appear stable, Latin America is "struggling," said Milesi-Ferretti, the IMF economist. Argentina is slowing, growth in Brazil and Mexico is subdued, and Venezuela is a catastrophe. Meanwhile, the refusal of the Italian government to bow to budget-cutting demands from the European Commission has led to the latest existential crisis in the EU, where demands for austerity by Germany, the largest economy, have put it in a seemingly permanent state of conflict with other economies.

"In the current context," added Posen, PIIE's president, "where there is so much anti-Europe sentiment and economic nationalism—look at Hungary, Poland, and [Marine] Le Pen continuing to snipe at [President Emmanuel] Macron's heels in France—you have to conclude: Yeah, maybe, once again, we're still the least ugly."

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

Michael Hirsh is a senior correspondent at Foreign Policy. Twitter: @michaelphirsh

TAGS: CHINA, ECONOMICS, EUROPE, FINANCE, GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY, TRADE, UNITED STATES

VIEW COMMENTS

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS

THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA

Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted — Desert Order

High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm — Wi-Fi Booster

Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices — Save70.com

How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity – Guaranteed! — Snow Teeth Whitening

Glass Oven Dish (Small)

Utopia.pk

Rs 275 with Free Delivery

latest

The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble — APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM

Our Best Weekend Reads — APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM

India Has a Mindset Problem — APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM

How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM

SEE ALL STORIES

TRENDING

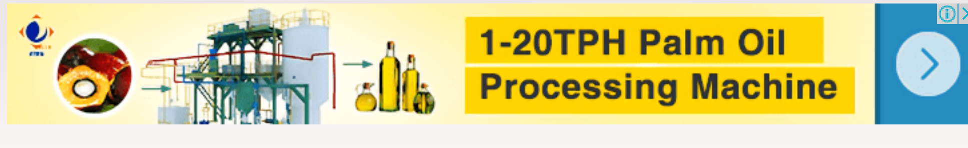
1. The Improbable Rise of Huawei — 2191 SHARES
2. 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows — 510 SHARES
3. India Has a Mindset Problem — 90 SHARES
4. Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. — 35768 SHARES
5. The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble — 192 SHARES

voices

What Democrats Can Learn From the Left — JAMES TRAUB

5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows — STEPHEN M. WALT

Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible. — STEVEN A. COOK



REVIEW

Broke in Beirut

In Capernaum, Nadine Labaki finds a new way for film to deal with poverty.

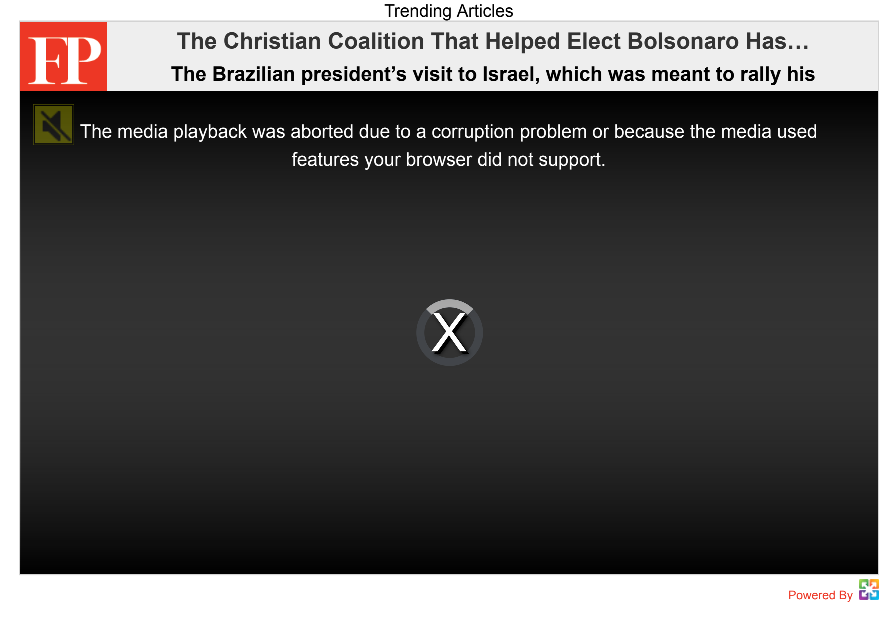
BY BILAL QURESHI | JANUARY 4, 2019, 6:00 AM

Zain (Zain Al Rafeea), right, cares for Rahil's son, Yonas (Boluwatife Treasure Bankole), after Rahil is detained in Nadine Labaki's Capernaum. (Fares Sokhon/Sony Pictures Classics)

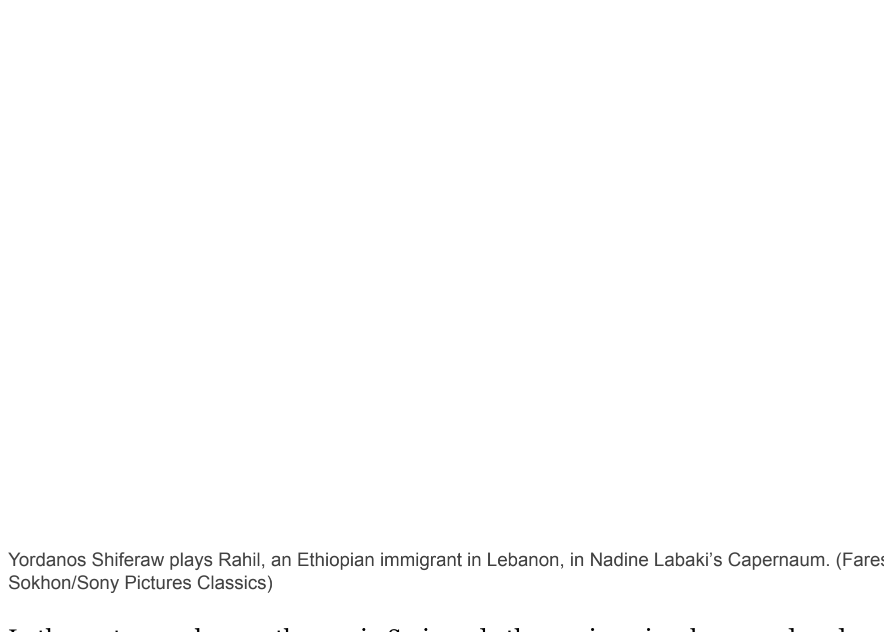
Lebanon's official entry for best foreign language film in this year's Academy Awards is *Capernaum* ("Chaos"), a masterpiece set in Beirut's slums. The film is an exquisitely directed story of a destitute boy and the Ethiopian baby he is left to raise. *Capernaum* takes two very grim subjects—the plight of refugees and grinding poverty—and manages to turn them into an immersive and unforgettable piece of cinema.

The story begins with the protagonist, Zain (played by Zain Al Rafeea), who estimates he is 12 years old, standing in a courtroom, explaining to a judge that he is suing his parents for the crime of bringing him into the world. The film then dives backward into the hell that was the boy's childhood, showing viewers why Zain has chosen to take such a drastic step.

Trending Articles



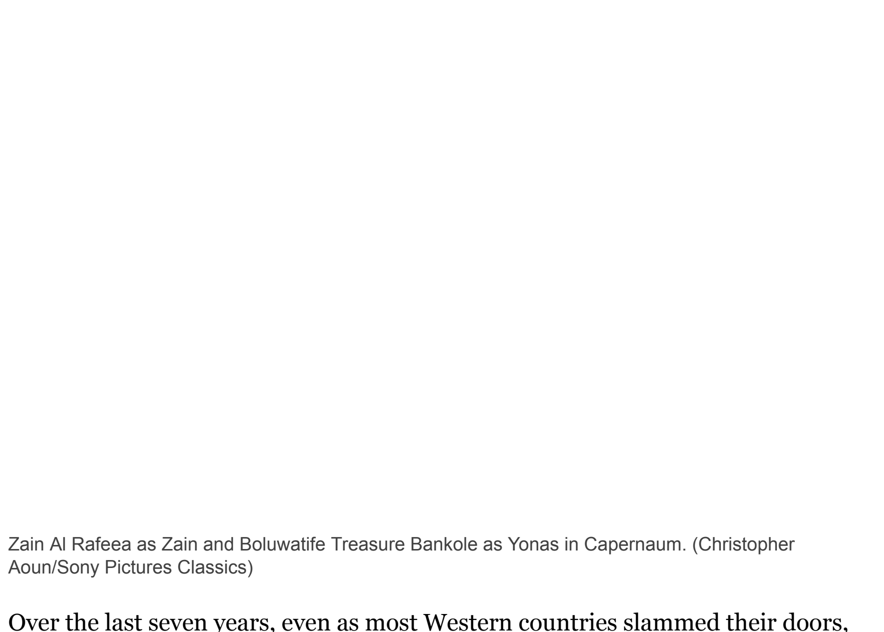
The film opens with aerial images of Beirut's overcrowded, sprawling slums with no sign of the touristic vistas that line the glittering Mediterranean Sea. Born into abject poverty to parents who are petty criminals, Zain and his siblings are denied the chance to go to school and are forced to peddle on the streets and help prepare opioids for their mother to sell. At night, more than a half-dozen children coil together in a pile of bodies to sleep on barely covered mattresses. When his beloved 11-year-old sister, Sahar, is sold into marriage—in exchange for rent relief and a few chickens—Zain lashes out at his parents and runs away from home. As he scavenges for food, he meets Rahil, an Ethiopian woman living in Lebanon illegally. Rahil takes Zain to the tin shed where she lives with her baby son, Yonas. Their financial situation is as precarious as Zain's, but Rahil is a loving mother and the three become a family, the boys brothers. Things fall apart, however, when Rahil is arrested in what appears to be an immigration raid. Zain is left to fend for himself and the toddler, who's barely old enough to walk, in the streets of Beirut. He sells drugs, begs for food, and tries to parent Yonas as best he can. At one point, Zain even pretends to be a Syrian refugee so that he can convince an aid agency to give him formula and diapers—a moment that unsubtly underscores the hierarchy of victimhood in a city of need.



Yordanos Shiferaw plays Rahil, an Ethiopian immigrant in Lebanon, in Nadine Labaki's Capernaum. (Fares Sokhon/Sony Pictures Classics)

In the past several years, the war in Syria and other major crises have produced a slew of images, many documenting child victims, that have gone viral. First, there was Alan Kurdi, the Syrian toddler whose lifeless body washed up on Turkey's Mediterranean shore in September 2015 after he drowned while trying to reach Europe. Then came Omran Daqneesh, a 5-year-old Syrian who was photographed coated in ash and blood in the back of an ambulance following a bomb attack targeting rebel-held East Aleppo in 2016. And last October, Amal Hussain, an emaciated 7-year-old Yemeni, appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* shortly before she died of starvation. Most viewers glanced at the images and moved on.

It is this apathy that *Capernaum*'s director, the Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki, so ably challenges in this tour de force. Labaki first became a star in 2007 after the release of her debut film, *Caramel*—a sensual movie shot in a Beirut salon, where five women share stories of heartbreak and sisterhood. After *Caramel*'s success, Labaki was celebrated across the world as a new voice for Arab women. Now, with *Capernaum*, she has reintroduced herself as a forceful political artist who has evolved along with her country.



Zain Al Rafeea as Zain and Boluwatife Treasure Bankole as Yonas in Capernaum. (Christopher Aoun/Sony Pictures Classics)

Over the last seven years, even as most Western countries slammed their doors, Lebanon admitted some 1.5 million refugees fleeing the Syrian war. This influx has transformed Lebanon, pushing an already fractured and fragile society to new limits, testing the patience and resources of a small country that is already home to generations of Palestinian refugees. These shifts form the backdrop for Labaki's profoundly unromantic new movie.

Capernaum is both harrowing and deeply moving. The actors are not professionals; instead men, women, and children who live in the neighborhoods shown on screen were asked to re-enact scenes from their own experiences, often in some of Beirut's grittiest slums. In a conversation at the Toronto International Film Festival this past September, Labaki said she wanted to make the film as real as possible. So she gave her actors minimal direction and used hand-held cameras to capture daily life in Lebanon's back alleys and trash heaps. The filmmaker amassed months of raw footage, which she later edited down to just over two hours. The result is the potent illusion of unscripted reality.

Last May, *Capernaum* won the Jury Prize at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival and has since been nominated for a Golden Globe. In the weeks before its December U.S. release, the film was shown in both New York City and Washington, D.C. At the screening in Washington, the guests gave the film a standing ovation. An audience member asked Labaki whether she thought her film could "do something." But Labaki's film has no actionable policy prescriptions; as the filmmaker explained, her hope was that *Capernaum* would simply shake audiences out of their chronic lethargy.

In fact, *Capernaum*'s success with international critics and audiences underscores an unsettling truth about how wealthy nations face the world's refugee crises: Instead of addressing their political responsibility, countries celebrate extraordinary works of art drawn from these stories.

READ MORE

'Roma' Is a Gorgeous Homage to Domestic Oppression
Alfonso Cuarón's masterpiece may be Oscar worthy, but it fails to address the problems of Latin American households.
REVIEW | DIEGO SALAZAR

Can Israel's Iron Wall Contain Hamas?
Benjamin Netanyahu's government has tried to keep the Islamist group in check, but the situation in Gaza is as unstable as ever.
REVIEW | KHALED HROUB

Poetry for the Masses
1,200 newly translated poems from Bertolt Brecht offer an unexpected survival guide for difficult times.
REVIEW | TARA BRAY SMITH

To be sure, Labaki has made a manipulative polemic that inevitably puts its sentiments front and center. But in crafting scenes of extraordinary cinematic power, she has borne witness to two of the contemporary world's most pressing crises: poverty and displacement. The film already does "do something." Yet *Capernaum*, for all its affectations of truth, remains a produced, directed, and highly composed work of artifice. It is a movie about fictional characters, after all. Its success, therefore, is not in doing something but in its ability to remind us to still feel something.

Migrants, impoverished children, and mileslong caravans are now fixtures of the news cycle and therefore also fodder for the imaginations of artists and storytellers. States and politicians have failed to interrupt the cycles of poverty and violence that created the refugee crises in the first place. In indicting his parents, Zain accuses all of us who have the ability to help but have refused to do so. For two hours, Labaki immerses us in his story and forces us to face the chaos that is all too easy to overlook

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Bilal Qureshi is a culture writer and radio journalist. Twitter: @bqilal

TAGS: ETHIOPIA, FILM, LEBANON, MIDDLE EAST, REFUGEES, SYRIA, YEMEN

VIEW COMMENTS

30x zoom EO, 3.3x zoom LWIR, LRF and Illuminator. Find out more!

Epsilon 140Z Payload

OCTOPUS ISR SYSTEMS

latest

The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble
APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM

Our Best Weekend Reads
APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM

India Has a Mindset Problem
APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM

Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM

How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism
APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM

SEE ALL STORIES

TRENDING

1. The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2. 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3. India Has a Mindset Problem 90 SHARES
4. Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5. The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

voices

What Democrats Can Learn From the Left
JAMES TRAUB

5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows
STEPHEN M. WALT

Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible.
STEVEN A. COOK

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA

Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted — Desert Order
High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm — Wi-Fi Booster
Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices — TripsInsider
How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity - Guaranteed! — Snow Teeth Whitening

BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY

The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco
Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason
Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire
The ouster of Mattis: Some follow-up details and a White House response

BY TABOOLA

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP

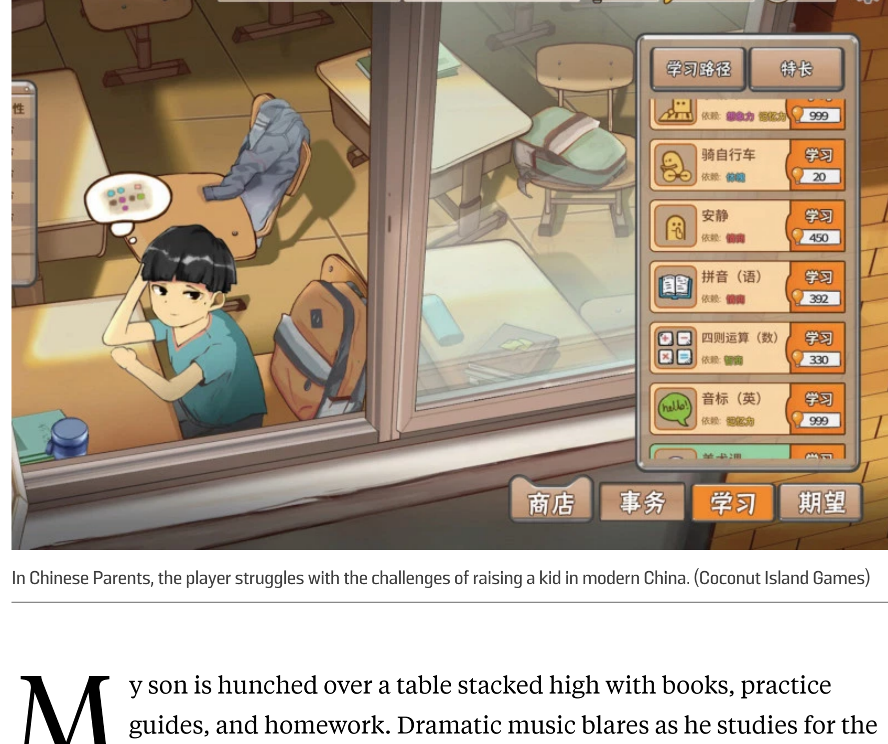
Turn-Key Greenhouse Solutions
World wide distribution

REVIEW

Press 'A' to Study Harder

A new video game captures the anxiety of Chinese parenting.

BY RUI ZHONG | JANUARY 3, 2019, 10:43 AM

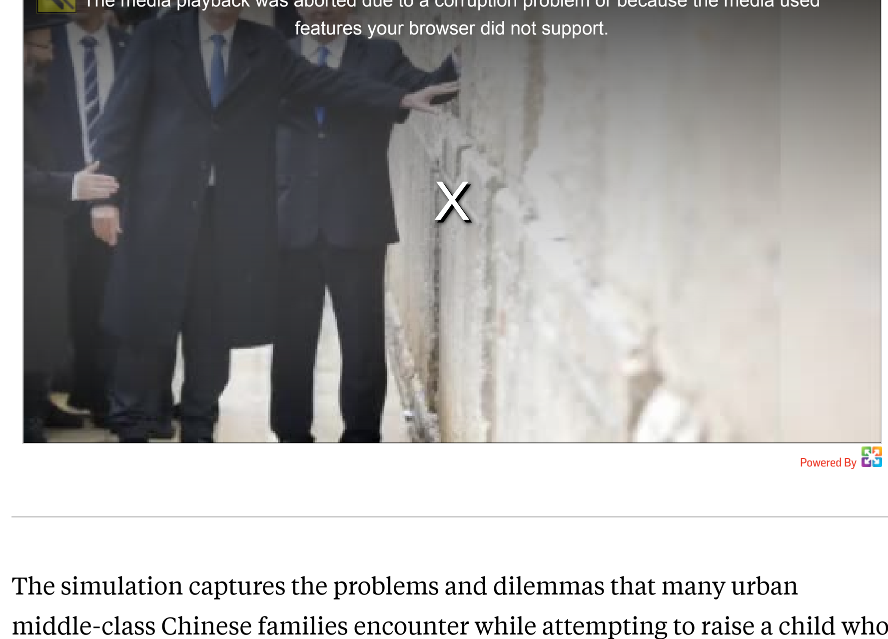


In Chinese Parents, the player struggles with the challenges of raising a kid in modern China. (Coconut Island Games)

My son is hunched over a table stacked high with books, practice guides, and homework. Dramatic music blares as he studies for the intensely competitive *gaokao*; if he aces it, he'll earn a place in one of China's most prestigious colleges. If he doesn't, he'll be doomed to mediocrity. Fortunately, I've boosted his intelligence score while managing his stress levels and my parental satisfaction—and all of that is tracked by two bars at the top of the screen.

That's because this stressful multitasking is taking place in a video game. Of course, for millions of Chinese parents, it remains a grueling reality—one rarely depicted in a national media that often portrays child-rearing as a noble national duty. That gap is one reason why *Chinese Parents*, a PC and mobile game developed by the small Chinese studio Moyuwan and published by Coconut Island Games, has been such a hit. Using keen observational humor, the game frames Chinese child-rearing as an overwhelming marathon. Published in simplified Chinese on Sept. 29, 2018, the game rose quickly to become the second-highest selling title on Steam, the most popular PC gaming marketplace worldwide.

Trending Articles
The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has…
The Brazilian president's visit to Israel, which was meant to rally his evangelical base, has



Powered By

The simulation captures the problems and dilemmas that many urban middle-class Chinese families encounter while attempting to raise a child who is safe, happy, and productive—but who will also make enough money to support his (so far, the game lets you raise only a boy) parents in return. In social media posts about the game, the recurring term used to describe it is *guoyu zhenshi*, or excessively realistic.

Players are often prompted to reply to the question "Has this ever happened to you?" during the game's myriad randomized events—which can include your child feeling ignored by a teacher and asking a parent why they aren't as wealthy as a schoolmate's family. Many of these experiences touch on questions of class, peer pressure, anxiety, and classic adolescent reluctance to share secrets with parents.

In China, education is a status symbol, economic aspiration, and social safety net rolled into one. The game aptly portrays the question "Where does your son go to school?" using literal one-on-one battles, a visual illustration of the real-life cultural significance of education. This isn't just about the micromanagement of tiger parenting; the game is also a snapshot of Chinese society at a time of extreme consumption matched with equal anxiety about the future. Even as the country heads into a consumer spending crunch, education, an area where urban parents routinely spend 10 times the country's per capita disposable income to take a child from elementary school to college, is unlikely to see corners cut.

(Coconut Island Games)

For Chinese parents, spending on kids' education is one way of showing love—but children also act as a key component of retirement plans. With pensions shaky and care costs growing, an educated child who scores a prime job in officialdom or business is the best bet for a healthy future. Though the one-child policy is now defunct, its guidelines set the norm for the last three decades. That means, pragmatically, most families get only one shot.

Chinese Parents captures perfectly the clash between larger society's economic limitations and deeply personal financial anxieties. Within the game, attempts to communicate with your digital kid—who is able to dream, doubt, and feel the stress of his increasing course load—help make players more empathetic. The game may also allow young parents to work through and relieve their own anxieties. As one reviewer described the game's impact on the Q&A website Zhihu: "I'm not sure just how long this game is going to stay popular, but in terms of getting players to consider the real attitudes they face life with … it's already succeeded."

The game spans infancy to college. On entering elementary school, two meters—parental satisfaction and personal stress—appear at the top of the screen. From that point, the challenges of balancing the growth of your child's statistics, such as charm and intelligence, and decisions over what to put in the child's six activity slots mount rapidly. Lessons, extracurriculars, and tempting out-of-school activities appear as options to slot into your son's schedule. Visiting relatives and passersby will inquire about just how well a parent is raising her child, prompting one-on-one duels that test the mother's *mianzi* (literally "face"), or reputation. Harsh penalties for high stress levels, including your child running away from home, punish tiger parents too eager to cram schedules full with studying and activities.

After receiving his gaokao results, the in-game child is either condemned to the fate of attending a middling college or takes the crucial social-climbing step of enrolling in a first-rate university. The child then eventually finds a partner, marries, has a child of his own, and passes some of his stats over to the next generation. Free online guides and videos walk players who want a cheat sheet through the necessary steps to eventually place their teen into Tsinghua University, China's top science school, or Peking University, its humanities-oriented counterpart.

(Coconut Island Games)

The game has been a surprise megahit. Speaking to the state-run *People's Daily*, Yu Ming, one of the game's developers, commented: "It never came to mind that as of today [Oct. 30, 2018], sales would surpass 500,000." The studio aims for future updates and plans to add minigames, events, and additional customization options.

Critics have pointed out that there are no other options than a heterosexual male child. Developers have responded that they are planning patches that will allow players to choose the gender of their child for a different gameplay experience. Even so, there are limits to what a parenting game such as *Chinese Parents* can simulate. Recent discussions have focused on how a game might present the challenges and the even more difficult battle that a migrant worker family would face to get their child into a top school.

Unfortunately, such content probably wouldn't make it past the censors. At a time when Chinese cultural regulators are cracking down on content with increased levels of scrutiny, integrating police presence into gaming spaces, and freezing the greenlighting process for new software, *Chinese Parents*' breakout success has been remarkable. Especially given that Moyuwan provides earnest and relatively accurate social commentary.

Young children attending Mandarin-language lessons have long learned a fable about Mencius, China's second-most famous philosopher. When he was a child, his mother moved home three times in order to make sure he was surrounded by learning, ensuring that he got what he needed to thrive. Given such tenacity, Mencius's mother wouldn't have broken a sweat at *Chinese Parents*' toughest levels. Perhaps she wrote the original walk-through.

This article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of Foreign Policy *magazine.*

READ MORE

Poetry for the Masses
1,200 newly translated poems from Bertolt Brecht offer an unexpected survival guide for difficult times.
REVIEW | TARA BRAY SMITH

Night at the Museum
Brussels's new European history museum could put anyone to sleep.
REVIEW | KATHERINE MARSH

The Arab World's Star Student
What Tunisia can teach its neighbors about the value of education.
REVIEW | KIM GHATTAS

Rui Zhong is the Program Assistant for the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Wilson Center.

TAGS: CHINA, EDUCATION, POPULAR CULTURE

VIEW COMMENTS

10 A DECADE OF GLOBAL THINKERS
THE PAST YEAR'S 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS AND DOERS | READ NOW

TRENDING NOW SPONSORED LINKS BY TABOOLA
Play this Game for 1 Minute and see why everyone is addicted — Desert Order
High Speed WiFi Booster Takes Pakistan By Storm — Wi-Fi Booster
Flights In Pakistan At Ridiculously Low Prices — Save70.com
How to Get a Million Dollar Smile in Less Than 9 Minutes Without Sensitivity - Guaranteed! — Snow Teeth Whitening
BY TABOOLA

MORE FROM FOREIGN POLICY
Jared Kushner's Growing Stench of Treason
The U.S.-Pakistan F-16 fiasco
A Map of China, By Stereotype
This Map Shows China's Hilarious Stereotypes of Europe
BY TABOOLA

Reon Energy Solutions
The Industrial Solar Specialist
For a quote call, 0302-8241857

latest
The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble — APRIL 6, 2019, 1:11 PM
Our Best Weekend Reads — APRIL 6, 2019, 6:15 AM
India Has a Mindset Problem — APRIL 6, 2019, 5:52 AM
Trans-Atlantic Trade Is Headed Toward Disaster — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:33 PM
How to Defeat Political and Religious Extremism — APRIL 5, 2019, 6:06 PM
SEE ALL STORIES

TRENDING
1 The Improbable Rise of Huawei 2191 SHARES
2 5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows 510 SHARES
3 India Has a Mindset Problem 90 SHARES
4 Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No. 35768 SHARES
5 The Christian Coalition That Helped Elect Bolsonaro Has Started to Crumble 192 SHARES

voices
What Democrats Can Learn From the Left — JAMES TRAUB
5 Very Important Things About the World Nobody Knows — STEPHEN M. WALT
Erdogan Is Weak. And Invincible. — STEVEN A. COOK

© 2019, THE SLATE GROUP