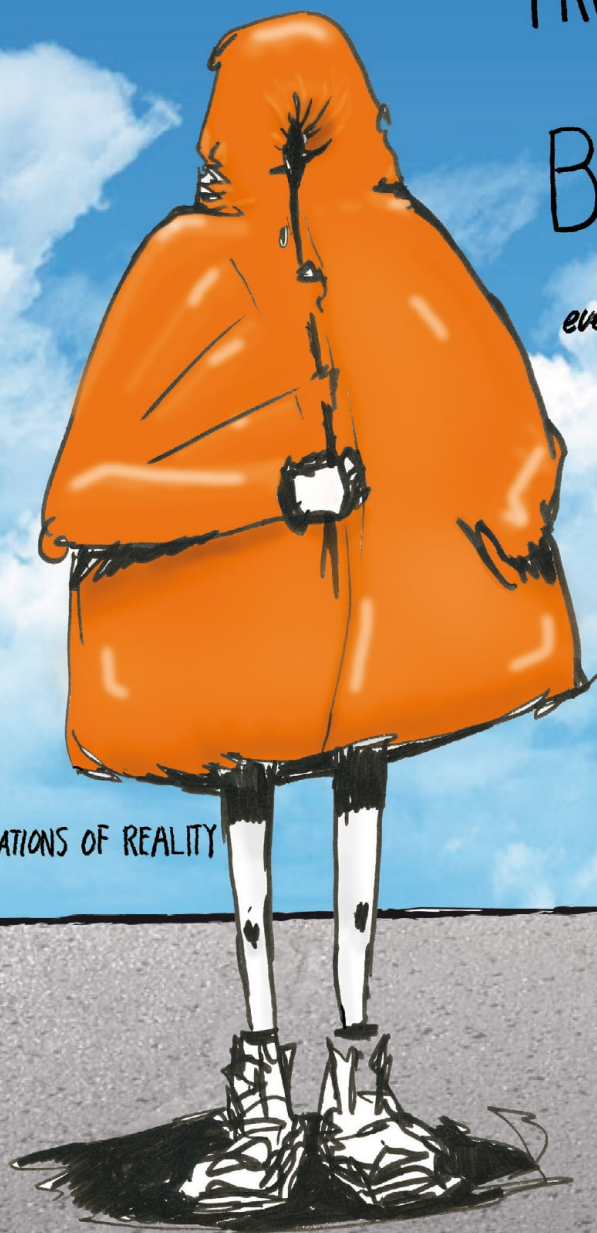


THE PERSPECTIVE

MAGAZINE No1 2017

PROTECTIVE COAT
of
BELIEFS

everyone who's anyone has one!



WITH PERSONALLY CUSTOMIZED FABRICATIONS OF REALITY

THEME:
AN OPEN MIND



ASSOCIATION OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

LUND EST. 1935

EDITORS' NOTE

“ THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT IN THE HOMOGENOUS GROUP OF LUND STUDENTS THAN ANYWHERE ELSE

As the seasons change, so does this magazine. We would like to welcome you to the first ever The Perspective Magazine, which is now the collective banner of the UPF media channels. With this change of name we have taken the final step in our journey towards becoming a fully international publication, and it's a legacy we will be proud to pass on.

THE CHANGE is not only in form but also in content, as we've gathered some reinforcements to the editorial team. Your first contributions have impressed us beyond our expectations, and we are very glad to have you on board. Also, we would like to send out a special thank you to Sofie von Schenck for enriching our magazine with some elegant and witty illustrations!

DID YOU SEE the figure in orange lurking about outside? Much like us, closed off in our student bubbles, he valiantly guards himself from any beliefs and opinions questioning his world view. The efforts are altogether successful, from all that we can tell. With this issue we wish to poke a hole in the protective coat of beliefs that we all wear, and remove the hood that safeguards us from dissidents. Perhaps this is more important in the homogenous group of Lund students than anywhere else. It is our firm belief that this is best done by

exposing ourselves to ideas, perspectives and issues different from those we are used to.

THIS ISSUE CONTAINS a variety of articles that all aim towards broadening our perspectives, revealing new angles on subjects you though were crystal clear. Among many other things, read about the benefits of mass surveillance on page 18, about the dark legacy of Nelson Mandela on page 26 or the greatness of the Chinese economic system on page 40.

WE ARE CONVINCED this is our most important issue so far, and we hope that you will find it enlightening and that it can stimulate some discussion between you and your peers.



VILHELM FRITZTON & TOBIAS ADOLFFSSON

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

TEAM

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF:

VILHELM FRITZTON
TOBIAS ADOLFFSSON

LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHERS:

VILHELM FRITZTON
TOBIAS ADOLFFSSON

LAYOUT:

TOBIAS ADOLFFSSON
VILHELM FRITZTON
EMMA ÅBERG
ZIGNE EDSTRÖM
ERLEND MALMER
ISABELLE KARLSSON
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ROZENN MASSÉ
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REPORTERS:

KRISZTINA ORBÁN
MÅNS ARVIDSSON
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ERLEND MALMER
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ISABELLE KARLSSON
RITIKA JAIN
ROZENN MASSÉ
SWAANTJE MARTEN

ILLUSTRATIONS:

SOFIE VON SCHENCK

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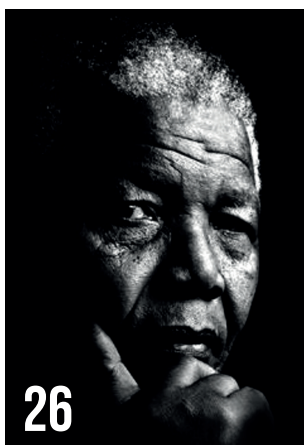
UTRIKESPOLITISKA
FÖRENINGEN
SANDGATAN 2
223 50 LUND

MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE

GOT FEEDBACK?

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

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The Perspective Magazine is the member magazine of the Association of Foreign Affairs at Lund University, published quarterly each year. The magazine has no affiliations with any political parties. Opinions presented are the writers' own.



PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

With 2017 our association enters its 82nd year and with that also celebrating 50 years since we changed our abbreviation from UF to UPF. At the same time our radio committee is celebrating 20 years! So what could be more suitable than to celebrate these anniversaries than by changing the name of our media outlets?

THE NAME **THE** Perspective could not be more suitable. This since our goal is to facilitate discussion and debate on foreign affairs. By creating a platform where many different perspectives are met and shown we hope to contribute to giving the students in Lund a better understanding of the world around them.

ONE PERSPECTIVE **WE** hope to bring up even more in the future is international issues related to East and South-East Asia, this since we just entered a new collaboration with the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies. We have them, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, SIDA, MUCF, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and King Gustaf V's 90-year grant to thank for making our daily operations, such as this magazine, possible.

WHEN YOU ARE finished with broadening your perspective on foreign affairs by reading this magazine, we invite you to join us in the other UPF activities. Maybe you are already about to join our travel committee to Rabat? Or you might be a part of our prep course with focus on international leadership? If you are not already active we invite you to visit our lectures, read the The Perspective Webzine articles, listen to The Perspective Radio or join us for a social activity such as the grand ball on the 5th of May!

AS LONG AS you are interested in the world around you the Association of Foreign Affairs has something for you!



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ACTIVITY@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE MAGAZINE:

VILHELM FRITZON
TOBIAS ADOLFSSON
MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE WEBZINE:

MICHAEL GIEDA
KLARA FREDRIKSSON
WEBZINE@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE RADIO:

ANNA SVEDERUS
EBBA BERGSTRÖM
RADIO@UPFLUND.SE

CAREER COMMITTEE:

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JULIA BERGSTRÖM
CAREER@UPFLUND.SE

TRAVEL COMMITTEE:

FREDRIK BLIX
CAROLINE ASKER
TRAVEL@UPFLUND.SE

UFS REPRESENTATIVE:

FREJA RAHM
LUND@UFSVERIGE.ORG

HEAD OF IT:

FELIX KAYSERS
IT@UPFLUND.SE

THE SWEDISH

HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

March 31 - April 2

humanrightsfilmfestival.se

Friday, March 31

13.00 – 13.10 Introduction

13.10 – 14.40 The World of Us

19.00 – 21.05 Loving

Saturday, April 1

13.10 – 14.40 The Day My Father Became A Bush

15.00 – 16.50 Ma'Rosa

18.00 – 19.30 Dead Donkeys Fear No Hyenas

Sunday, April 2

13.00 – 14.30 The World of Us

15.00 – 17.10 Sameblod

18.00 – 19.30 The Borneo Case

Biografen Kino, Kyrkogatan 3, Lund

RAOUL WALLENBERG INSTITUTE

OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW



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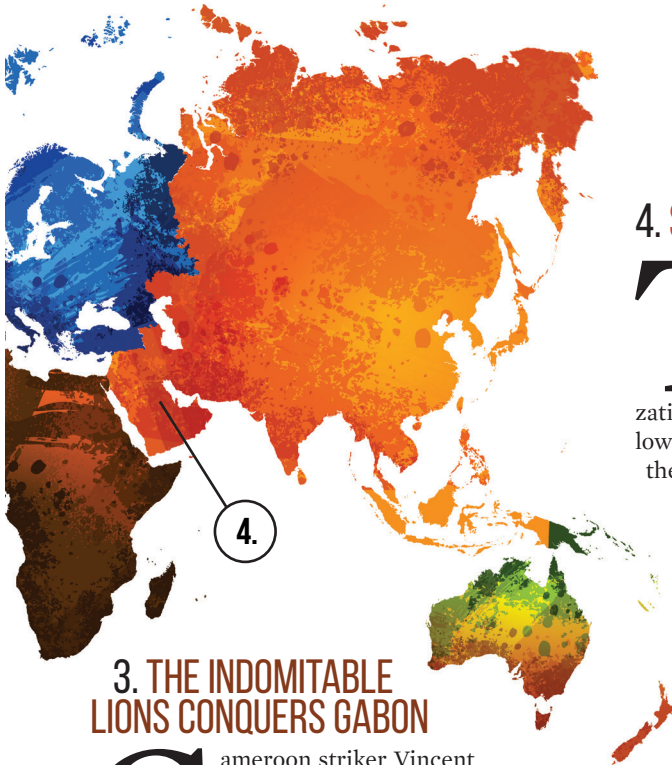
1. BIG BOTHERS FOR BRAZIL

The B in BRIC, once one of the fastest growing economies in the world is suffering from its deepest recession since measured started. With a political crisis unfolding simultaneously international investors are alarmed. The main reason for the descent is connected to China. Brazil is a big exporter of oil, metals and soy, and demand for those products used to be high, which led to years of Brazilian super growth. But when China started to stumble, demand for Brazilian goods dipped. Throw corruption into the mix with the scandal that concerned former president Dilma Rousseff and included a lot of big Brazilian companies, and Brazil has got a vast crisis on their hands. In the wake of all this, Brazil has seen a 76% rise in unemployment – a social disaster. At this time, it is really important that the Brazilian government somehow manages to reform public spending in a way that would ease the tension from the twelve million unemployed. Luckily, economist believe that the situation has now reached its nadir and that Latin America's biggest county is in a turning point. Hopefully things won't look as grim a couple of months from now. ●

2. A RADICAL SOLUTION TO AN OLD PROBLEM

On the 8th of Mars, the International Women's Day, Iceland become the first country in the world to suggest a bill (which is all but guaranteed to pass) that would require of companies to give equal pay for equal work regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality or nationality. The law would force companies to undergo certification showing that they comply every three years, and would come with sanctions should they not. For eight consecutive years Iceland has ranked the top country in the world to be a working woman. Despite this, there is still a 14 to 18 percent gap between women's and men's wages, and so Icelandic Equality and Social Affairs minister thinks "the time is right to do something radical about this issue." The government expects the law to be able to help bridge the gap by 2022. There has been some opposition saying that the law puts an unnecessary bureaucratic burden on the companies, but the minister replies saying that "we put such burdens on companies all the time when it comes to auditing your annual accounts or turning in your tax report." ●





3. THE INDOMITABLE LIONS CONQUERS GABON

Cameroon striker Vincent Aboubakar's 88th minute shot against Egypt wrapped up the 2017 African Cup of Nations in Gabon. Aboubakar managed to come out on top against three Egyptian defenders before firing a well-aimed volley behind Essam El-Hadary. As a consequence, the 44-year old Egyptian goalkeeper missed his opportunity to become the first one in history to win five AFCON gold medals. The Indomitable Lions, as the Cameroon side is known in Africa, now has the second highest number of AFCON wins, leaving Ghana on third place. The runners up in January, Egypt, has the most. The tournament featured a lot of upsets – one being that The Indomitable Lions ended their 15-year wait for the continental crown. Senegal looked like the strongest team in the group stage and had their hopes up of getting their first AFCON win ever, having tried 13 times. But when Africa's most expensive footballer ever, Sadio Mané (bought by Liverpool for £30 million), missed his penalty kick Senegal, yet again, had to leave the tournament empty-handed. Two years of waiting lie ahead before next hosts, champions Cameroon, will welcome the African football family to yet another football feast. ●


4. SENTENCED BY SHARIA

Two Pakistani transgender persons were tortured to death by police in Saudi Arabia, and more than thirty others were arrested, reported many trans rights and human rights organization in the beginning of March. The event followed a police raid on a house in Riyadh where the group held a Pakistani ceremony celebrated in the transgender community. The tortured victims were both Khawaja Sara, a third gender legally recognized in several South Asian countries. Saudi Arabia, however, regularly persecutes and prosecutes transgender and cross-dressing people. Eleven of the people arrested were allowed to leave after paying bail of 150.000 Ri-yals (\$40.000) each; the rest are still detained, without clear indications from the government on further action. Saudi Arabia has forcefully denied that any torture took place and that anybody was killed. One person, it was admitted, died in custody after the raid, but the cause was said to be cardiac arrest. What will happen to those still locked up, and what the future hold for transgender people in Saudi Arabia, remains unknown. ●

AGRICULTURE

HUMANITY'S GOLDEN TICKET BUT FOR HOW LONG?

For millennia, the soil has been feeding us. As a primary need, food is in the heart of the international community's concerns. While the world's population keeps soaring year after year, a fundamental question is raised: how shall we feed all these mouths? Over the past fifty years, the answer has always been the same: produce more.



Since 1960, the green revolution aimed to reinvent agricultural practices worldwide in order to solve starvation. It had turned local traditional farming into global industrial business by standardizing the food production processes. Large scale agriculture realize short-term performance at the expense of the environment; of life. There is only a small amount of land that is able to feed us. However, we are losing kilometers daily because of excessive exploitation, erosion and expansion of cities. Consequently, deforestation became the solution to gain cultivable land. We are destroying entire ecosystems with small grasp of the implications.

“ LOSE THE SOIL AND EVERYTHING GOES WITH IT

MONOCULTURES MAY HAVE direct economic benefits, but in the long run it represents a tremendous danger for the ecology. It simplifies nature and depends on external inputs and energy. Chemical interventions are turning water into poison. This agro-capitalist production also have dramatic effect on socio-economic issues. GMOs present in food are creating new disease and weakens public health resistance. It is also important to understand that the food industry is managed by a hand of multinational corporations. They control every detail, from the seed in the land to the final product at your plate. Small farmers thus became simple instrument of their slot machines, sentenced to produce more or disappear.

“ SOON, WE WILL WALK ON AN INFERTILE GOLDEN BAR AS CURRENT FARMING STYLES ARE HARMFUL IN MANY WAYS

WHAT IF I told you that intensive agriculture doesn't even solve hunger? Indeed, industrial agriculture produces more biofuel and animal fodder than food. We are able to feed 12 billion people today but 30% of food is wasted or thrown away as it doesn't fit market standards.

FACING ALL THESE environmental, social and economic limitations, industrial agriculture has reached a turning point. Either we keep going and we won't be able to grow anything within 60 years, or we find alternative ways to feed the world. We need systems that have high but sustainable production, work toward and not against biodiversity and maintain low pollution rates. Worldwide, many are becoming increasingly aware of the emergency, and thus have started to create new forms of agriculture.

“FREEDOM IS KNOWLEDGE. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND EARTH TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

THERE IS A question we never ask: will the land still feed us tomorrow? Often, alternative agriculture is interpreted as old-fashioned. However, agroecology combines traditional farmer's knowledge with modern science and creates a dialogue of wisdoms. Less chemistry, more cleverness. Agroecology is between industrial and biological agriculture. It attempt to mimic and rebuild the natural ecosystem's strengths into crop production. For example, inter-dependency, self-regulation, self-renewal, and self-sufficiency. In the forest, nobody puts any fertilizers and yet it grows.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES of agroecology relies on intercropping. No more ploughing and keeping a constant plant cover. First of all, growing simultaneously two or more plant help tackling the use of pesticides. Insects are attracted to one crop while leaving the other one growing. Secondly, we underestimate power of a living ecosystem. Nature should be seen as an ally. Instead of tilling the soil, we let nature freely work for us. Forage Radish's deep roots or earthworm's galleries enable water and nutriments to circulate. Some other plant, such as the field bean, are able to catch nitrogen from the air and return it to the soil, instead of fertilizer. Finally, a permanent cover of the land prevent erosion and recreate a dynamic biodiversity.

AGROECOLOGY IS A sustainable system based on a small-scale and long-term approach. Regarding the current climate upheaval and economic crisis, it seems to be a great perspective: producing more on less land, using less energy, less water, and saving biodiversity.

AN EFFICIENT SOIL restoration takes times. It require five years to set up the self-sufficiency processes, while positive results arrive first after 10 years. As modern society is impatient, time is money. Money is better saved within the agro-industrial pocket for those who make profits on fuels, chemicals and machines. It appears that even if governments acknowledge the limits of conventional practices, no outstretched hand is offered to small actors in transition to agroecology.

“THE HERO OF TOMORROW IS THE PEASANT

FORTUNE LIES IN soil protection, not in chemistry, but lobbies don't want to accept it yet. Agriculture is a matter of sovereignty. Industrial businesses own a majority of the hectare but do not feed the world. Indeed, 75% of the world's food is produced by small farmers (who own less than two hectare). These farms are not new, they existed for centuries. It's economic, ecological, fruitful and still not promoted. In reality, farmers have the power. You want food? It's them. You want drinking water? It's them. You want the carbonic gas fixed in plants to make oxygen? It's them.

WE LEARN SOMETHING new every day. Science has given us power to create sophisticated farming processes. We need to uses it in order to broaden ecosystem knowledge. Understand the soil's life instead of simply sowing, harvesting, and killing the land. The future of agriculture flourish in recreating the cycle of life. ●

MONUMENTS



AND MOURNING

Artists in Germany seek to come to terms with the past through what they create – the past being the traumatic and dark history of Germany during the second world war. The art market loves it, but it's also problematic.

To focus on personal traumas when creating a painting, a song, a poem, a play or street art has been done as long as art has existed. A writer doing a book about an abusive childhood or a painter making a piece symbolizing their schizophrenia-diagnosis uses their art to tell others about what they believe needs to be told, but also as therapy. But can this be done as a collective, a group, a nation?

THE CONTEMPORARY ART scene is very globalized, and the market has never before been dominated by a single nation in the way it is today. Germany is, by far, the most represented country. German

artists are the most popular and pieces by them are being sold for millions. Sotheby's, one of the world's largest brokers of fine art, says that there is an unprecedented interest in German post war artists. What the market seems to be so interested in is the Germans' work with confronting their nation's history – and their attempts to come to terms with it.

TRADITIONALLY, THE WELL-KNOWN and defining artists that tends to get attention, recognition and fame within the art market are usually American or British. But for the moment the spotlight is aimed at a bunch of German artists such as Georg Baselitz, Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke and An-

Photo: Fabio Omero/flickr



Georg Baselitz - Jumping over my shadow

Photo: Andrew Russett/flickr



Sigmar Polke - The Miracle of Siegen

Photo: Yann Caradec/flickr



Gerhard Richter - Stadtbild Paris

Photo: Raphaël Labbé/flickr



Anselm Kiefer - Sternenfall

selm Kiefer. The artists active today were small children when the war ended, and the "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to terms with the past) has been a defining and shaping concept for them, whether articulated or expressed sub-consciously. In an interview with The Guardian in 2015, German artist Georg Baselitz said "This pressure of being German really made us what we are. Had we not had it, I don't know whether we would have succeeded as artists."

ANSELM KIEFER'S WORK "Athanor" features a painting showing the very symbolic fire in the Reichstag in 1933, that served as a start of Nazi-Germany. It also includes pieces asking existential questions and brings up both historical and mythological themes. To The New York Times, Kiefer explained

about how it actually happened? One can argue that remembrance and monument-making can become a routine creating a consensus about history, when what actually helps to come to terms with the past is continuously discussing, debating and questioning how it happened. The monuments and art created are often abstract, and lacks immediate connections with the victims. A criticism aimed at this kind of art is that people and artists are so busy remembering, that they forget what they're really trying to illustrate.

THE DE-IDEALIZATION OF history is an ongoing process. A counter-reaction to the practice of remembrance, is debating the process leading up to the establishment of new monuments. For example, the Holocaust memorial in central Berlin

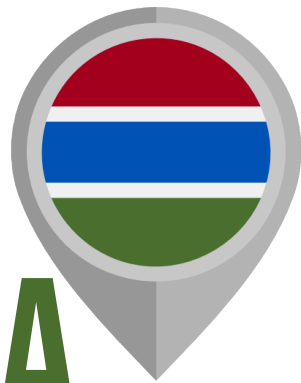
“ ARTISTS ARE SO BUSY REMEMBERING,
THAT THEY FORGET WHAT THEY'RE
REALLY TRYING TO ILLUSTRATE

that history is very important for him as a painter, that is what he's rooted in. "Artists don't create ex.nihilo", he said. "Athanor" will in the following months go to market, and is expected to be valued at about two million euros.

So, how can art be used in a nations strive to accept and move on? There seems to be a common understanding between religious scholars as well as psychoanalysts that the mourning a group of people goes through after a traumatic or sad segment of its history are mainly done in two ways - by quickly forgetting and denying what happened or, as in Germany's case, the opposite. Some claim that Germany are world champions in remembrance with the endless amounts of monuments and museums about the holocaust, the Nazi-past and second world war. But is this effort of remembrance really coming to terms with the past? Or is it a way of idealizing history, and avoiding talking

created by architect Peter Eisenman caused a lot of debating about it being controversial when it was announced. Partly because it's a monument for the Jews that were killed, and critics said that the piece was neglecting the other millions of just as innocent victims that were killed for other reasons. Another big debate was the fact that it's, as mentioned above, too abstract and averted from the victims it aims to pay respect to. On the inauguration of the monument, architect Eisenman said: "It is clear that we won't have solved all the problems — architecture is not a panacea for evil — nor will we have satisfied all those present today, but this cannot have been our intention."

THE RIGHT WAY of remembering and dealing with the past, if there is a right way, remains unknown. But one thing is for sure - the art market is indulging in the traumatic past of the hottest artists in Germany. ●



THIS IS AFRICA

The picture of Africa as a continent defined by starvation and misery is fading – an Africa distinguished by economical growth and urbanization is starting to emerge. A new cause for cheer, even though severe problems remain, is how democracy in Gambia was protected earlier this year.



So the day came. On the 1 of December, 2016, the former president of Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, lost the presidential vote to Adama Barrow. Being voted out of office after ruling for 22 years (he once said that, if Allah decreed it, he would continue for a billion years) the autocratic leader initially conceded defeat, but later contested the result. After the electoral commission admitted some errors, Mr Jammeh wanted the election annulled, although the commission insisted the errors did not affect the election outcome.

DOING SO, MANY feared that Gambia would overshadow a region moving towards democracy. Both Nigeria and Senegal have experienced successful democratic transitions lately. In Burkina Faso the dictator Compaoré was ousted from power after trying to change the constitutional law regarding terms of office. Even though the transition was tough and included a military coup, things settled – much thanks to the pressure from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.

AND IT TURNED out to be ECOWAS and AU that would, once again, play a major role in domestic African affairs – now regarding removing the defeated president in Gambia. To prevent political disorder, both organizations took action. Meeting in Addis Ababa, the AU Peace and Security Council called on Gambia's security forces to exercise. In a statement, they also warned of "serious consequences in the event that his [Mr Jammeh's] ac-

tion causes any crisis that could lead to political disorder, humanitarian and human rights disasters, including loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties". They clearly stated that the African Union "will not recognise" Mr Jammeh as The Gambia's leader after his terms end.

ECOWAS WENT ONE step further. After a month-long stand-off, with what is to be regarded as West Africa's regional power bloc, Mr Jammeh fled Gambia on January 21 as ECOWAS had threatened to send in troops. But it seems like Mr Jammeh did not forget his luggage in the rush: apparently he had time to ship away two Rolls-Royces and one Bentley. The one hosting him is Mr Obiang, the dictator in Equatorial Guinea, and the two seems to have a lot in common. Both seized power through coups, both have clinged on to it, and both have violated human rights. And most times, fear of extradition doesn't make power transitions more attractive – something that may have affected Mr Jammeh's pick.

“ THAT ONE OF THE POOREST REGIONS OF THE WORLD ENFORCES DEMOCRATIC NORMS IN SUCH A WAY SHOULD BE CELEBRATED

BUT DEMOCRACY SUCCEEDED in Gambia, and Mr Barrow was sworn in as the country's new president. That one of the poorest regions of the world enforces democratic norms in such a way should be celebrated. More than once ECOWAS has refused to turn a blind eye when democracy has been threatened. As early as 1990 they sent their own peacekeepers to the Liberian civil war when the West had their eyes fixed on the Gulf war. And now new hope arises that ECOWAS, with its 15 member states, will officially vote that no head of state should serve more than two terms. At the last vote two years ago only two countries vetoed

the suggestion – whereof one was Gambia, led by Mr Jammeh. ECOWAS is, in many ways, leading the hard work for democracy in West Africa. In today's West Africa, no one can stage a coup or cancel elections without the risk of getting a lot of unfriendly neighbors. Disorder is in nobody's interest, especially since it tends to spread.

“ DISORDER IS IN NOBODY'S INTEREST

IN TIMES LIKE these it is also much needed that the African Union takes initiative. Several challenges await – the civil wars in South Sudan and Libya require immediate actions. Same goes for the fight against terrorism in Somalia and the big Sahel region. The ongoing crises in Burundi and Democratic Republic of the Congo could also turn out to destabilize entire regions, experts say. In the light of such issues, hopefully, the successful handling of the presidential shift in Gambia will act as an inspiration and lodestar that unites the continent in these times of trials. ●



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Gambia's ex-president, Yahya Jammeh.



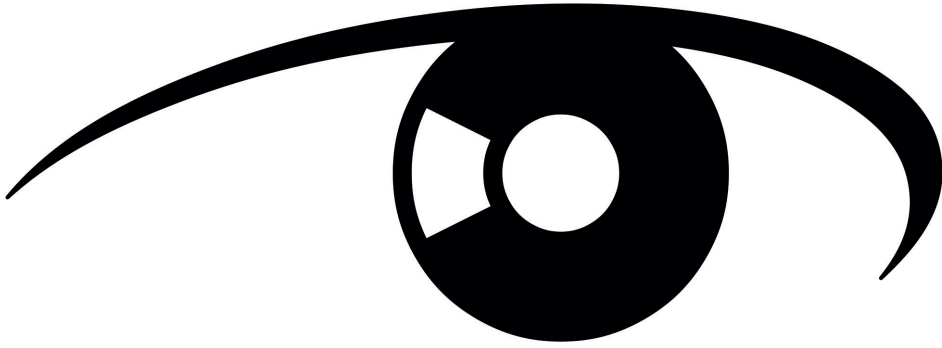
THEME:

AN OPEN MIND

Is what is good always what is convenient?
Are there evils we must accept in order to do good?
How much do we sacrifice for our adherence to dogma?
What are the consequences of a distorted world view?
As tiny people in a global world, how can we ever be certain of our ideas?

Do you meet differing opinions with ignorance or inquisitiveness?





JUSTICE FOR ALL PRIVACY FOR NONE!

THE BENEFITS OF MASS STATE SURVEILLANCE

Imagine walking around in the middle of the night in a major city, feeling totally safe and calm. That feeling is pretty rare in today's society, but can that change? The increasing state surveillance is a topic which has received mostly bad criticism, leaving people feeling exposed and afraid. The benefits of the surveillance state are, however, larger than you would have imagined.

I am not talking about a Gestapo type of surveillance state, where people will go to jail for being open minded or being of a different political orientation. Instead this article will highlight some potential benefits of the mass surveillance state, which possess surprising elements people may not have thought of. Terrorism is the classic example of how state surveillance will benefit the society. There are, however, others that seldom appear in the pro column of surveillance, such as petty crime, street crime, violent and sexual crime, research and prevention of global epidemics.

COMMON CRITICISM OF mass surveillance is the assumption that everyone is deemed a suspect in the eyes of the government, in a Orwellian kind of way. Other common criticism includes that it violates privacy rights and diminishes the right to express political opinions and ideas freely. However, this is the extreme form of a total surveillance state, where the government uses surveillance to control its inhabitants, rather than helping them. Governments usually attempt to legitimize their mass surveillance by saying that it prevents terrorism, which is of course a big part of it, but they should

however highlight the other major benefits such as prevention of worldwide epidemics, huge access to research material and local crime.

BEFORE EDWARD SNOWDEN revealed the large scale state surveillance, the Government was already gathering information and “spying” on its citizens in a big way without its citizens even knowing. Total censorship is not something that is desirable for a democracy, but on the dark web pedophiles, potential terrorists and rapists are getting in touch, supporting each other and talking together, which strengthens their ambition and will help them carry out their crimes and desires. Wouldn’t it be better if the state surveillance had a firmer grasp on this in order to prevent it? Would you rather have more privacy rights and more sexual

“ IF YOU’RE NOT DOING ANYTHING ILLEGAL, WHY WOULD YOU CARE?



Photos: Wikimedia Commons

offenders? If you are not interested visiting these sites, why would you care if they are monitored? The usual criticism of state surveillance are based on the iffy feeling of being watched. Often this is just an irrational feeling of insecurity.

WITH AN INCREASE in street cameras and the proper personnel to handle it, it is highly likely that public crimes would be obsolete, leaving only a few violent crimes from the heat of the moment or very irrational crime. In the events of arrest of someone who is suspected of criminal activity, the mass surveillance is of huge benefit for the eventual trail. If the government have conclusive evidence from phone, internet and camera surveillance, the conviction of the criminal would be easy enough.

“ STREET CRIMES SUCH AS RAPE, VIOLENCE AND MUGGINGS WOULD SOON BE A NON-EXISTENT PROBLEM

FURTHERMORE, POLICE BRUTALITY would also be a near non-existent problem in the mass surveillance state. Currently, police can harass suspected criminals for no reason other than just suspicion, enter your home or detain you for several hours. This also, would be a non-existent phenomenon in the surveillance age. We have already seen how videos of this type of police errors have surfaced and brought justice to innocent citizens in cases where otherwise the authorities would have the last word. If both citizen violence and police violence decreases, that could legitimize the state's surveillance system.

THE INTERNET COMPANIES does already store all the information on our computer, so why not give that to elected government officials in charge of ruling our country to the best of their abilities? Citizens already trust their government with almost every aspect of their life such as sensitive information, medical records, finances and so on, but god forbid that they know who you talk to on Facebook.

UNTIL NOW WE have focused mostly on crime and terror, but another angle that is a major benefit of surveillance is the issue of epidemics. By tracking movements and actions of those affected, the state would with ease control diseases and predict epidemic outbreaks.

TO PUT IT IN CONTEXT, the Avian flu of 2005-06 would have been easily prevented by analysing infected people's googling for symptoms. Instead of the back-breaking trouble of going through medical journals weeks later, the government can simply

see the searches for symptoms right away. Like a weather forecast. SARS, the widespread epidemic of 2002, would have been easily contained with surveillance, but was instead reported two months later by WHO, way too late. In a highly globalized world, the spread of infectious diseases is a major concern since it potentially affects everyone.

THE SAME GOES for research, where the state will be able to use the enormous collection of data to use in every possible research and development. Information that earlier were not accessible would now be accessible for the government.

I AM NOT arguing for the mass surveillance state, but it does produce some unique possibilities that in today's society is not available. With the technology of today's societies and the ever more complex situations, the rise of mass surveillance, either openly or hidden, is an option that is very likely to happen in near future. The problems with a well-operated surveillance system in the hands of the government, is the risk of misuse. The risk of a government using the surveillance to form a gestapo-style state is there and is worrisome. In the case of mass surveillance in the future, I am sure however, that we will work out some great checks and balances system. ●

PLAYING WITH DYNAMITE

Free speech is like dynamite. Originally, dynamite was intended to make mining a safer occupation, but people quickly found out that it's also an excellent instrument for conducting terrorist attacks. Like dynamite, journalism is only what humans make out of it.



WHO ASSESSES WHERE RESPONSIBILITY ENDS AND MISUSE STARTS?

Every year since 2002, the independent, Paris-based NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) publishes the World Press Freedom Index. This index ranks 180 countries in the world according to the level of freedom available to journalists. Criteria are for example media independence, pluralism, and abuse. In 2016 Eritrea came in last, while Finland was repeatedly number one. Yet, even in Finland and other well functioning democracies, media freedom is not like sending drunk messages — once there, always there — it is instead a fluid concept that constantly needs to be taken care of. Especially when censorship is not a loanword, the level of media freedom stands for the degree to which media is hindered in taking on their social responsibility. Censorship seems so easy to circumvent, especially in times of internet where — at least in theory — all information can reach everyone everywhere at all times.

THE PRACTICE LOOKS completely different. In many countries, journalists — the ones who traditionally make the world transparent — must be protected if they reveal critical insights on criminal or fanatic groups (e.g. Italy, India). Journalists might also face official prosecution by governments or institutions which don't want the public to be informed about skeletons in their closets, e.g. Vatileaks (Vatican) or the war on whistleblowers in the USA. This shouldn't be an issue in the 21st century.

PUBLISHING ALL VERIFIABLE facts, however, does not automatically make journalism responsible. Even in an ideal world, where journalists would not have to fear for their lives, news reporting will be to some extent distorted. The reason is the larger context that journalism is embedded in, that might make a casual transformation from verifiable fact into 'news' challenging. An example:



Photo: bixentro/flickr

a journalist meets a politician in a private setting to get first-hand statements. The journalist gets the wished-for info, but the politician tells her even more than would be of interest for the public — under the condition that this information stays confidential. Tricky situation for the journalist: If she publishes that ‘confidential’ info, she loses the politician as a future information source. If she doesn’t publish, she doesn’t fully meet the requirements of acting in public interest.

BESIDES INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS journalists must make daily, there is the everlasting slippery slope between neutral and biased, or influen-

tial reporting. For example, ‘trashy’ newspapers use fear as trigger to catch reader’s attention. In Germany, the famous gutter press BILD is the newspaper that has by far the largest circulation. Given that supply and demand dictate the entire media industry, including prestigious media outlets like the Guardian, there is no escape from competing for readers. The media deal with this pressure by publishing more sensational pieces. Is this socially responsible? This question goes by the board, because in countries where freedom of expression is a highly valued good, newspapers like BILD *must* be on the market. However, a slight risk for power misuse cannot be denied.

IN OUR COMPLEX societies where labor is divided, journalism can be perceived as the entity that is responsible for investigating issues, reviewing the 'data', and presenting them to their audience in an as accurate, objective, and neutral way as possible. In countries with a comparatively high freedom of the press, the media is — theoretically — enabled to take on this social responsibility properly. In practice, however, journalistic decision making processes on an individual level, as well as external forces on a macro level determine the outcome of journalistic work. At this point we could content ourselves: a little bit of opinion on what is right or wrong and a little bit of emotionally distorted reporting are okay. As long as there is something

corner of the country and written in the right tone. It is full of hate-speech and propagates Nazi-ideals, and the readers love it. Sounds familiar? If a newspaper like this would come up in today's Germany, it could be banished because law prohibits the circulation of such contents. If pursuing radical freedom of press, though, as well as letting the economic concept of emerging demand legitimate the distribution, it would be unacceptable to ban such a newspaper. In a narrow sense, this scenario displays a restriction of the freedom of expression. It is an extreme example, and in Germany, the banning law is only effective for one specific exception. But who decides what the exception is? Who assesses, where responsibility ends and

“

**MEDIA FREEDOM IS NOT LIKE
SENDING DRUNK MESSAGES
— ONCE THERE, ALWAYS THERE —
IT IS INSTEAD A FLUID CONCEPT**

on the news market for everyone, we don't have to bother. Or could exactly this become the problem? reporting are okay. As long as there is something on the news market for everyone, we don't have to bother. Or could exactly this become the problem?

IN THE RSF's World Press Freedom Index ranking, Germany is number 16. Imagine a newspaper that is attractive to consume, because it's cheap, delivered to every

misuse starts – and what can be done against misuse, if the news market is left to regulate itself?

FREE SPEECH is like dynamite. Dynamite would have been invented eventually. Also, you cannot prevent 'wrong' people to get their hands on it. But is it therefore a good idea to legally sell it over-the-counter and skip the safety instructions on the packaging? ●

AN OPEN MIND: FEATURE
VIDE WASSBERG

THE MANDELA LEGACY

CORRUPTION, GREED AND SOCIAL DESPAIR



Was the abolition of apartheid really the last chapter of the democratisation process in South Africa? The legacy of Mandela is fading within his former political party, the African National Congress (ANC). The young South African democracy is under attack from infected parts of the ANC party, as corruption and greed spreads through the state. Will democracy let it self be beaten?

Almost three decades after the end of the apartheid system, the situation in South Africa is still problematic to say the least. On the one hand, South Africa has one of the most progressive legislations in the world, with the right to human dignity, education, housing and freedom of expression and laws protecting the rights of LGBTQ persons. On the other, society is still resting on conservative values, widespread patriarchy and homophobia, divided through socio-economic groups with a smoldering apartheid legacy resting underneath the surface, one breath away from full blown forest fire.

IN 2012 THE white South African Brett Murray, an anti-apartheid activist, artist and former ANC supporter, portrayed South African ANC President Jacob Zuma with his genitals showing on the body of an old communist Lenin propaganda poster. "The Spear", as the satirical artwork was named, was Murray's response to sexual scandals surrounding President Zuma. Brett Murray has been known for his satirical artworks ever since the apartheid era, during which the government closed down one of his exhibitions in 1984 as it was criticising the racial structures of society.

THE ANC'S REACTION to 'The Spear' was strong and it called for it to be censored, claiming it had racist intentions which were set out to harm the ANC and President Jacob Zuma's reputation, who were in the middle of an sensitive election period. After a South African court ruling, establishing the

artwork as non-racist, the fight was brought out onto the streets. The artwork was portrayed by the Zuma administration as an attack on the black community. Memories from the repressive apartheid system were used as a baseball bat, sending a curve-ball away from the president, reigniting an old ethnic conflict. Riots broke out and threats were directed to Murray personally, culminating in a call to publicly stone him for his work, by a spokesman from the Shembe church with over 6 million followers. No voice of reason came from either the ANC nor Zuma himself to calm the masses. 'The Spear' later got vandalised by two different men on the same day, minutes apart, with the same brand of paint. One a young black taxi driver from Limpopo allegedly defending Zuma's honour and the other a white man with academic background, wanting to hinder conflicts between the racial groups within society.

IF THIS WAS a coordinated chain of events, nobody knows. What is clear, however, is that old ethnic conflicts were used to the advantage of and by pro-Zuma members of the ANC. The unhealed wounds of the black community were once again ripped open, reminding people of the atrocities from barely three decades ago. The white population seems to face difficulties expressing valid critique against the ANC, without being labeled and portrayed as pro-apartheid.

FOR DECADES THE ANC have had the luxury of ruling South Africa politically unchallenged. The ANC's position as the natural leader of South Af-

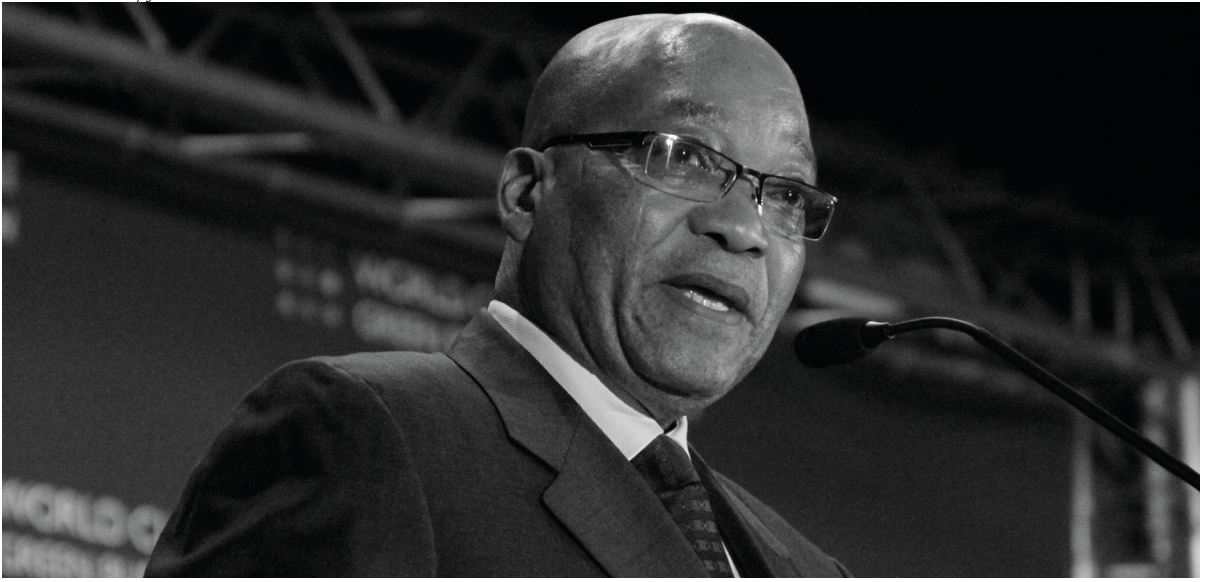


Photo:Wikimedia Commons



South African President Jacob Zuma, and his tax-funded mansion.

rica has even been described as ‘a mandate from god’, according to the secretary-general Gwede Mantashe, resembling the party’s journey to power with biblical stories. Since 2009 the presidential post was given to the ANC’s Jacob Zuma, a man supposedly representing the voice of the less fortunate population. Scandal after scandal have followed Zuma throughout his presidency. Rape accusations, corruption and misuse of public money, with taxpayer funded renovations of his rural residence, reaching 23 million dollars, tenfold from the original budget, eight times higher than the security improvements of two Mandela homes and 1000 times the cost of last apartheid president FW de Klerk. Accusations have led to Zuma publicly apologising and repaying 500.000 dollars.

RECENT REPORTS ALSO raise serious concerns around President Zuma’s suspicious relationship with the powerful Gubta business family, indicating that

“ WE HAVE SEEN A
WEAKENING OF CRITICAL
INSTITUTIONS DUE TO
POLITICAL MEDDLING FOR
PRIVATE INTERESTS

-NJABULO NDEBELE, CHAIRMAN OF
THE NELSON MANDELA FOUNDATION

“ WE ARE APPALLED
THAT A SMALL HANDFUL
OF PEOPLE HAVE DECIDED
THAT THEY WOULD CAPTURE
THE STATE, ITS INSTITUTIONS
AND RESOURCES FOR
THEIR OWN BENEFIT

-CHARYL CAROLAS, FORMER ANC AND
ANTI-APARTHEID FRONT FIGURE

government policy and cabinet appointments were influenced for personal gain. The president and his powerful followers within the ANC are moving the pieces, infesting the state with corruption and anti-transformational policies. Failed accusations of fraud towards finance minister Pravin Gordhan has been seen as yet another move by the greedy factions within the pro-Zuma gang to delegitimise and take over crucial state institutions. The young democracy of South Africa is under attack from within their own government, destabilising public and state spheres.

DOUBTS THAT ZUMA will be able to sit through his second presidential term, ending in 2019, are strong. The opposition party the Democratic Alliance are gaining votes, and other parties are emerging challenging the old two party structure. The ANC's support of their president are start-

ing to crack as the cancer of corruption spreads through the economy, betraying the younger generations of South Africans. Opportunists within the very same party that brought them freedom, are robbing the nation of its future. Using the legacy of the party and the crippling effects of poverty for selfish political and economic gains. Due to the recent development of the South African political climate, doubts on the durability of the Mandela legacy are growing stronger.

IN SPITE OF the contemporary, worrying situation in South Africa one has to remember that Mandela merely planted the seed of democracy in the South African soil. It's a seed that needs continual nurturing to be able to flourish. His legacy was not the African National Congress as a such; the ANC were merely the tool to reach freedom. One has to separate the ongoing revolution for full democracy from the party. The revolution belongs to the people, not the ANC. Mandela's legacy is something each and every member of society should live up to. Nelson Mandela can not be blamed for the shortcomings of democracy, certainly not after his death. He urged South Africans to take over. At the end of the day he is still just one man, and there are limits of what one man can achieve. The institutions for democracy are in place but the role of institutions cannot be blindly trusted; institutions are not something permanent but something to be developed. The future of South African democracy is threatened by forces from within the state; it's up to the people to continue the battle for democracy and embody the Mandela legacy. The everyday struggle for a decent world is not something that will be complete or has a clear finish line. A young democracy as the South African one are just as vulnerable as any other democracy to the forces of corruption, greed and social despair.

“My inspiration are men and women who have emerged throughout the globe, and who have chosen the world as theatre of their operations and who fight socio-economic conditions which do not help towards the advancement of humanity wherever that occurs. Men and women who fight the suppression of the human voice, who fight disease, illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and hunger. Some are known, others are not. Those are the people who have inspired me.” -Nelson Mandela ●

THE BEST OF THE WORST SCENARIOS



CLIMATE CHANGE?

WE KNOW ABOUT THAT:

THE CASE OF 1980'S DROUGHT, FAMINE AND
MIGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

When I think of Africa I think of injustice. The darkest spells of recent World history cast grey clouds over us. Now, there is the pressing problem that climate change poses, and Africa as the most 'vulnerable' of the world's regions is faced with further tragedy.

The worst-case scenario of climate change in Africa, as drawn out by scientific models, reveals a scary and disturbing picture riddled with water scarcity issues, rampant migrations, resource conflict, drastic inequality and other complications. The current discourse of our situation is heaped in negativity. But, what people have seemed to forget is that Africa has been experiencing climate change already. We have gone through spells of drought and compounding famine. We have gone through the change of our cultural climate caused by Western Colonizers and neo-colonialism. We have gone through perpetual genocides, and seen the brink of humanity. We know what it looks like, because we have experienced it. But within that experience is resistance. When there was no light, life still grew here.

IT IS WITHIN this context that I write this essay on the drought that devastated West Africa between 1982-84. With climate change set to exacerbate the unpredictability and frequency of rainfall in West Africa, referring to the drought of the early 80s can provide an example of what to expect in terms of human reaction to severe climate hardships. But for the purpose of this work, I will illuminate the ways people most vulnerable to the disaster were able to resist. It goes without saying that the situation in the early 80s is quite different from that today, but also very similar for those who have seen very little of modernity's touch, for better or for worse.

Contextualizing the Sahelian Drought of the 1980s

WEST AFRICANS HAVE LIVED with a dry climate that has experienced short-term and long-term changes in weather for centuries. Below average rainfalls characterized the decades from the 60s-80s culminating in the drought of the early 80s. Famine, however, is a socially constructed concept and is defined within the context of social, economic and political relations at different levels from local to global. Drought doesn't always lead to famine.

IN ASSESSING THE drought of the early 80s, which produced the lowest rainfalls recorded for over a century, it is important to highlight the stresses placed on the environs which consequently interfered with reproduction of social living, especially for those directly reliant on their local environment. At the time large swathes of West Africans lived in rural areas and were primarily farmers, a situation that still persists today to some extent. Desertification of the Sahara encroached on productive Sahelian lands (almost 200,000km² lost by 1980), species richness along with tree density and plant cover reduced drastically, and the incidence of bush fires increased as was the case in Ghana where large portions of forest and agro-forest were lost.

IMPORTANTLY, THERE ARE other human related factors that cause and shape desertification. Mainly, they involve land use practices and in the case of West Africa these practices are down to livelihood

Bani, Burkina Faso



“ WE KNOW WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, BECAUSE WE HAVE EXPERIENCED IT. BUT WITHIN THAT EXPERIENCE IS RESISTANCE. WHEN THERE WAS NO LIGHT, LIFE STILL GREW HERE

strategies, which impact how the land is used. Agriculture related land-use changes, as it turns out, is more a response to population changes, land scarcity issues and market opportunities. At the time of the drought there was little attention being paid to rain-fed agriculture in West Africa so farmers were solely responsible for their drought coping strategies. Simultaneously, urban populations saw a concentration of food and energy resources at expense of the widely neglected rural. Pivotal in this rural-urban shift were the availability of wage labor in the urban areas under the colonial regime. Other from that, colonization and then market liberalization realigned the practice of agriculture for many farmers to one that was land intensive and geared toward the sale of cash crops. Further complications with external variables, such as the taking away of subsidies for rural farmers under Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and competition from world food producers made farmers vulnerable to food crises, as was evident during the drought. Additionally, the increase in over grazing by pastoralist farmers, also known as

nomads/fulani, to sustain exports from cattle tore away vegetation and exposed the soil to the relentless sun.

DEFINING THE CRISIS in terms of numbers helps to clarify the gravity of the situation. Many thousands died of starvation, or diseases related from the drought. In Mali, one of the worst hit, 1.2 million people were affected by drought, famine, and related diseases. In Niger, 400,000 people were said to have migrated to find food and water. Losses of animals and crops drove hundreds of thousands of people toward major population centers across West Africa.

When the Lands went Dry...

THE SAHELIAN REGION is seemingly the most unpredictable area in terms of climate variations. The environmental condition has in some way shaped the social systems that have evolved with the land, which is never stagnant. The heterogeneity of lifestyles that define the region reflects these dif-



The Sahel region marked in blue.



ferent response systems that groups have formed in the wake of varying environmental conditions. Within these lifestyles are the seeds of resistance that came to the fore during the 1980s crisis.

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF agricultural systems is probably the most widespread process in increasing resilience in the region, and during the crisis farmers who were engaged in mixed agricultural processes were able to earn income to sustain. Farmers had been changing patterns of cropping, seeds, the location of fields, the time of cropping and importantly had been stocking on animal stock, which served multiple purposes including capital. The problem of the crisis was that food prices had increased due to continued crop failure (and other factors) and the price of animal stock had reduced so the different income streams for farmers became constrained.

MIGRATION IS PART and parcel of the lifestyle in the Sahel and as a response to drought people, mostly men, move to villages of their kinfolk to earn income and remit back to their homes. This extension of the household has been a fundamental feature of the region, and is one of the most striking problematic, which followed the creation of artificial boundaries imposed by the colonial administration. However, in the 1980s the widespread nature of the crisis meant that people were migrating to other stressed zones.

NIGERIA FIGURES PROMINENTLY during this period because the state, as a response to a deteriorating economic situation not related to the drought, ini-

tiated a program of mass deportation of non-Nigerian migrants. This resulted in the deportation of millions of Chad, Malian, and Ghanaians who had moved there for reasons outside of the drought. Additionally, the government officially closed its borders and that significantly reduced trade between the normally fluid boundaries in the Sahel. In Ghana the government was not well positioned to receive the returnees but accommodated them as best they could along with other nationals. But the situation became so dire that international food aid was needed to save the situation.

IN OTHER CORNERS of the Sahel, groups who remained in the drought stricken zones changed their diets to one more situated in the locale, eating parts of the tree not normally part of the diet, but nutritional enough to sustain nonetheless. Alternatively, the role of social capital was crucial, as distressed families used gifts, offered labor or received loans to feed themselves. Other long-term strategies were also fruitful. As was the case in Burkina Faso where Thomas Sankara, the president at independence, engaged the country, mostly women in the villages, in a re-forestation program to increase the resistance to droughts.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to explain and highlight all the strategies communities and groups adopted during the drought of the 1980s. What I hope I have done is to illuminate the various factors that make a drought a famine (political, economic, social, environmental and technology) and a famine a crisis. But even on the brink of such disaster West Africans responded to refugees with open arms and hospitality as best as they could and the situation didn't degrade to inter-state war. With these revelations a conclusion in regards to the encroaching threat of climate change, particularly the case of drought, famine and migration can be drawn. Any effort to curtail the suffering that these climatic changes may cause must start from the locality, because they bare the seeds of resistance. The problem arises when they are unable to water those seeds. ●



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AN OPEN MIND: BOOK SUMMARY

VILHELM FRITZON

WHY AFRICA IS POOR

AND WHAT AFRICANS
CAN DO ABOUT IT

GREG MILLS

Why is Africa still struggling economically? South African writer, researcher and former political advisor to the Rwandan government, Greg Mills, sets out on a mission across the continent to find answers.

It's the million-dollar question. Former colonialized continents such as Southeast Asia and South America has seen rapid growth in recent decades, both in economic terms and in quality of life. Yet lots of African countries are trailing behind. Even though the continent has seen economic growth in the most recent years, the long-term trend shows low growth together with a steadily increasing population.

QUITE EARLY IN the book Mills, somewhat controversially, dismisses a few popular theories about African development. Africa is not poor because of something external preventing it from reaching its potential. Africa is not poor because of post-colonial elements. Africa is not poor because of a lack of willingness from the private sector to work in challenging areas. He doesn't dismiss these factors totally – they have explanatory value when analysing the current situation, but they are not the fundamental problem. Mills argues that it all boils down to Africa's failure to board the train of growth: globalisation. The reason why they're still stuck at the platform is because of bad decisions by African leaders.

THIS MIGHT SEEM drastic but Mills, writing from a pro-business perspective, seeks to justify his claims. The international markets have welcomed Africa. The countries, packed with natural resources and hardworking people, has had every opportunity to benefit from global trade in the same way as Asian and South American countries has. "Success in the global economy has not required a miracle, an elixir". All it takes is wise political decisions and Mills claims that African leaders understands what these are, but still acts contrary to facts.

WHY THEN HAVE damaging policies been chosen? The major explanation is that the leaders have managed to externalise their problems – there has always been someone else to blame. First, the aid industry has facilitated this by creating a narrative

that African development is the responsibility of others (and accepted the notion that African underdevelopment is the fault of others). Second, the pressure on African politicians from the electorate has been too weak, which is due to both cultural and post-colonial factors. Last but not least, poor decisions have been made simply because they have benefited the leaders themselves.

“ AFRICA IS NOT POOR BECAUSE OF SOMETHING EXTERNAL PREVENTING IT FROM REACHING ITS POTENTIAL

MILLS ROUNDS UP his tour of Africa by offering tools for the future. He argues for sound, well-proven economic policies that have worked for others and substantial efforts to shape modern democratic institutions. But the main point is that both the international community and the African voters has to start demanding quality decisions from African leaders.

THE BOOK MIGHT simplify issues and draw too broad conclusions, but gives a refreshing, hands-on view on African politics. If we accept Millers thesis it also offers a clear path going forward. A bright future for Africa is possible as there are no hidden obstacles or external enemies to point fingers at –there's no one out there to blame. Africa's people are poor because their leaders have made this choice – but other choices are possible. ●

ON UNDERSTANDING AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN NATURE

Since my teenage years, I have been fascinated by the term and function of understanding. I've made these incompatible and perplexing realizations:

I will never understand everything.

I will always try my best to understand.

To understand understanding better, I met Mats Johansson, a university lector in Medical ethics who in the past has written a thesis about empathetic understanding.

How would you define “understanding”?

“I would choose to not define ‘understanding’. There is a tradition where you briefly try to catch a phenomenon or a term in a few words and I’m an opponent to that. Understanding contains so many dimensions and I think you can approach them in different ways. There is a difference between understanding mathematics and understanding how another human is feeling. We can expect different requirements on what understanding means depending on what the objective of the understanding is.”


How much is a human capable of understanding?

“I believe there are limits regarding what we in our biological form can handle. We are basically developed to hunt and collect on the savannah. We’ve learned how to do things but there hasn’t happened that much with our brains since then. We have obvious problems understanding those whose capability and way of life differs radically from our own. For example: what is it like to be an octopus? We cannot read the face of an octopus. We are not hardwired to do that. But we also

have problems with interpersonal connection. We tend to have weaker feelings towards people who are different from us. The more distant a person is from what we are used to, the harder it gets for us to understand that person’s life. That is, for example, the reason why it is easier for humans to canalize contempt towards people who differ from them. This is an unpleasant fact because it means that our brains are open for a categorizing of people, which cause a lot of problems. A part of the explanation for this behaviour is, again, that we are constructed to live in small communities. Probably it had a function to take distance from humans that didn’t belong to the own group when we lived in those small communities, but it has no relevance today.”

CAN WE ESCAPE those impulses?

“I don’t think that is anything we are powerful enough to change. We are filled with prejudices about who is good and bad, who deserves certain things and who do not. I usually warn about our emotional response. We are extremely badly functioning as emotional creatures. For example, we cannot handle big groups emotionally. To try to understand, for example, a war situation such as that in Syria, we need to identify individual des-



tinies to be able to rationalize that this individual destiny can represent the condition of hundreds of thousands of other people. That's why I think it's very important to bring forward other methods than our emotions."

AND WHY DO WE HAVE SUCH AN EMOTIONAL LIMITATION?

"Those abilities that advanced our chances of survival when we were living in small communities are those we have now. Is there a reason to believe that those abilities would work in today's globalized world? That would be rather strange. 'The story' we are living through now, where we seek a strong leader, where we miss respect in society and find the easy shortcut in feeling resentment for somebody else is quite understandable. The notable thing is rather that we made it for so long. Of course, we cannot and shall not exclude our sensibilities but we need to restrain them with the only tool we have left: reason."

WOULD RATIONALITY HAVE A CHANCE TO TRANSCEND OUR FEELINGS?

"In our present form, I do not think so. It might be possible in some form of ideological movement that for example encouraged people to talk about this with their children at an early age. We teach our children a lot of things, but they get to learn very little about what actually is the source of evil in our world: what you are capable of feeling. Humanity hasn't reached that insight yet. We have a serious problem with our self-image. We still live in some kind of notion that we are the crown of some composition. That we are god's creation,

god's image. That is the only thing that can make it understandable why we think we are something else other than the evolutionary product that we actually are. And therein we have the lack of understanding ourselves."

AT THE MOMENT I AM VERY CONFUSED. I DON'T KNOW WHICH INFORMATION I SHOULD USE TO CREATE THE MOST RELIABLE PICTURE OF THE WORLD I'M LIVING IN. WHAT DO I CHOOSE TO UNDERSTAND? WE CAN TAKE PART OF OUR SURROUNDING WORLD MORE THAN EVER BEFORE; DOESN'T THAT HAVE TO MEAN IT IS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND IT?

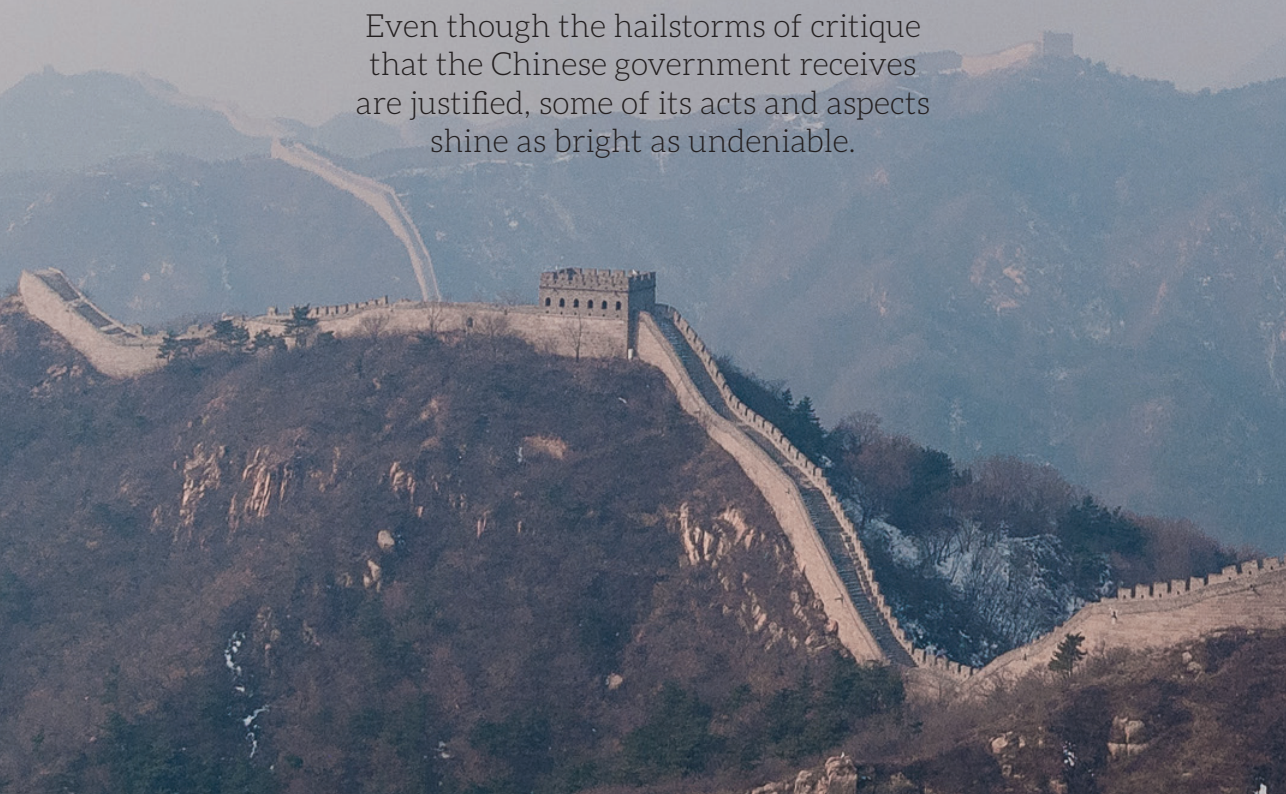
"For starters, I think you should be satisfied with that feeling. And recognize your insufficiency. It's way more problematic with those persons that feel that they have found the key to the world. What you describe is a humility towards the fact that you cannot understand that much. I believe we need to struggle with that our whole lives in order to understand the world. Leave our bubbles, try to reach the truth and go away from those sources that just verify our own ideas. That doesn't mean it isn't frustrating. But the question is: 'What would be the alternative?'"

MATS HAS TO GO, BUT I CANNOT RESIST QUICKLY ASKING HIM ONE MORE QUESTION. AND THOSE THINGS WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND? LIKE... DEATH?

"Perhaps that is wrongly formulated. Perhaps we try to create an object for our understanding which we can't catch. Perhaps it is banal. One of the old philosophers from antiquity said that we should look at our own existence like our pre-life. How do you relate to your own existence before you live? It is not a question we are that interested in. Because it doesn't worry us. There was once someone who asked a blind person: "So, what do you see. Is it completely black?" And the blind person answered: 'I see nothing.' He had absence from the impression of seeing. Death means absence of all these impressions." ●

THE GOD OF THE EAST WIND

Even though the hailstorms of critique that the Chinese government receives are justified, some of its acts and aspects shine as bright as undeniable.



The Chinese government doesn't respect human rights. We consider disregarding human rights wrong. Ergo, nothing can be learnt from the Chinese government; it is thoroughly evil, and anyone who doesn't actively dissociate from it is condoning torture, execution, imprisonment without trial, propaganda, inexistent press freedom and is a communist and a terrible human being. Right? China, for all its faults, has managed some remarkable feats. One of these probably even puts it in the world lead of most good done to the largest amount of people. Here we shall discuss some of the ways in which the Chinese economic system can be seen as superior to the Western.

"IT DOESN'T MATTER whether the cat is black or white," said Mao's de facto successor Deng Xiaoping in the dying days of the cultural revolution, "as

incentives for work and productivity upgrades, and it worked like a charm: during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, severe food shortages had been common, but now produce was flowing. Other similarly oriented policy followed, such as opening up to foreign investments and trade, loosening pricing controls and letting companies make private profits. This created conditions that allowed the Chinese economy to take off, which of course is to say that labour rich, low wage China was now ready to be plugged into the machine that is the global economy and play the strings of global consumer demand.

PRECONDITIONS ARE NOT enough, however, and China's success could not have happened without the other half of the equation, i.e. the lack of political liberalization. In parallel with the economic liberalization reforms the Chinese government made

“ IF YOUR ANSWER IS DIFFERENT
FROM THAT OF CHINA, YOU'RE PROBABLY
NOT STARVING

long as it catches mice." This basically meant that no longer is the most important question whether a citizen is a revolutionary. Rather, it is if he is able to work and contribute to the Chinese economy. It was then that the journey started, that dragged the share of Chinese living in extreme poverty down from 88% in 1981 to flabbergasting 6.5% in 2012. This Chinese explosion hasn't only meant that 800 million less people live in poverty, but also that the share of citizens with secondary education has risen from 28% in 1970 to 82% in 2012.

WHAT HAS ALLOWED this transformation is a model based on economic liberalization without political liberalization. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping introduced the first market oriented reform, changing the collective farming system to one more family based that let farmers keep some of the profits from their work (an unprecedented move). This increased

massive investments in the education of the workforce, industrial production and infrastructure. Both state owned and private energy, construction and manufacturing companies were given directions on what should be done and large investments and loans "on terms its foreign competitors would have salivated over" to achieve them. During these years China built up a national debt that would make John Williamson, who coined the term 'the Washington Consensus', cry, but the implications of the reforms and the policy are as undeniable as spectacular.

FOR OTHER DEVELOPING countries, the question the example of China gives rise to is, of course, if its model for development is better than the one promoted by Western institutions. According to renowned Zambian economist Dambisa Moyo the

main difference is the order of priority between political and economic rights. With the Chinese model prosperity is more important than democracy and individual liberties; in the Western it is not.

MOYO AND AN increasing number of economists holds the view that for any political system, including democracy, to function and have stability prosperity is necessary (a claim that might receive some support from the post-recession political tumult currently wreaking havoc on Western societies). Moyo's research shows that this is a view also supported by those actually affected by development policies. She says that for many people in emerging markets, where some 85% of the world's population lives, "the Western obsession with political rights is beside the point." This represents the fairly obvious answer to the question 'would you rather live in relative comfort without free-

dom of speech or starve with the liberty to give the government your middle finger?' If your answer is different from that of China, you're probably not starving.

IN RECENT YEARS there has actually also been some real, not just theoretical, competition going on between the models. Previously the World Bank and its entourage had a near monopoly on financial support to developing countries. A report from 2010, however, shows that China's lending to developing nations that year surpassed that of the Bank. Whether one or the other model is better, perhaps the increased competition can lead to the demands the loans entail being tailored more to the receiving nations' interests, rather than the lending.

So, is CHINESE state capitalism only good for rising out of poverty? Once that is done, should it as

Three Gorges Dam hydroelectric power plant in Sandouping, the largest hydroelectric power station in the world.



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

“ THIS SHOWS THE CAPACITY OF THE CHINESE ECONOMIC SYSTEM FOR GOAL ORIENTED POLICY; SOMETHING THAT WESTERN COUNTRIES CANNOT QUITE MATCH

soon as possible make way for a privatized economy? It's not so certain. In recent years, especially in the 2016-2020 five year plan, major efforts have been made to transform the conditions of the Chinese economy to increase not just the growth but the quality of it. Perhaps the most important aspect of this is the commitment to meet the challenges of environmental degradation. China is now in fact the world's largest investor in green energy, comprising some 36% of the 2015 global total. In hard numbers the Chinese green energy budget has increased from \$3 billion one decade ago to \$100 billion today. This shows the capacity of the Chinese economic system for goal oriented policy; something that Western countries cannot quite match. Thus China has made 2015 the first year that developing countries had a greater share of green energy investments than developed, the latter of which has a markedly slower pace in increasing their share (it's interesting to note that this also goes for India, a country with conditions much like China's, but which has adopted a more Western-like economic system). Europe's level of green investment, for example, fell 21% between 2014 and 2015.

ANOTHER AREA WHERE China differs from Western economies is financial regulation, and the difference does provide some benefits. The Chinese financial system and its dominant banks are mostly state owned, and thus tasked not only with resource growth but also with fiscal and developmental missions. Of course, this can be as big a risk as benefit, as the separation of power isn't there to do its job. Yet the possible gains of this were shown in the handling of the financial crisis. In 2009 the US economy shrunk by 2.7%; the Chinese kept booming at 9%. China's GDP fell a few points too, of course, primarily as Western consumer demand affected exports, but quick action was taken to

mitigate the effects. In contrast to the US, where most of the money the state allocated to crisis relief went to the bailout of the banks, the Chinese economic stimulus plan put money in infrastructure, housing and other projects. For Greece and the other European countries that suffered most in the recession aftermath, the remedy policy has been austerity. The Chinese way of responding to the crisis was rather with an active fiscal and loose monetary policy.

THE "OPEN" ECONOMY allows China to reap the benefits of trade and foreign investments, but keep control over its governable features. "One-party autocracy certainly has its drawbacks," as Thomas Friedman of the New York Times wrote, "but when it is led by a reasonably enlightened group of people, as in China today, it can also have great advantages." Of course, autocracy isn't necessary for financial market oversight. But as President Trump continually moves closer to repealing the Dodd-Frank act, sliding toward free market and away from state capitalism, if you wish, many might long for some "reasonably enlightened" despots to grab hold of the reins.

UNFORTUNATELY THIS DISCUSSION could barely scratch the surface of the Chinese economic system, but hopefully it can allow it to be seen in some new light. Whether or not one thinks these pros of the Chinese model outweigh the cons, it should by now be clear that there indeed are some lessons to be learned, and that the evil of China is anything but certain. This is in itself an insight of revolutionary importance. We cannot limit the scope where we search for solutions to pressing problems to those spheres where we find perfect agreement. If we do, the gravitational pull of these problems will be much too violent for our maneuvering capacity to handle. ●

THE PRICE OF HARMONY

Singapore's response in addressing tensions of diversity have been as effective as controversial. Leaders around the world have reason to take note.

Singapore as a nation is diverse in every sense of the word. It is home to almost 6 million people, 5 major religions, 4 official languages and 3 main ethnic groups. All these people live on just 719 km², or about a quarter of the size of Luxembourg. With this in mind, friction between various groups should come as no surprise. Since its inception in 1965 the government has proactively worked to maintain harmonious relationships between all religions and ethnicities. The nation differs from most in its view that multiculturalism, while cherished, is inherently unstable and must thus be regulated. Nowhere is this more clear than in the country's own constitution. Article 152 states that the government has a responsibility to "constantly to care for the interests of the racial and religious minorities in Singapore". Many constitutions speak of liberties for all; very few, if any, mention protecting minorities. In line with this view the government has, and continues, to implement active and sometimes intrusive policies.

THESE INCLUDE RACIAL harmony day, observed annually on the 21st of July, where school children are encouraged to wear their own traditional clothes, and test each other's food. It includes limits on free speech; Singapore ranks 154th out

of 180 nations in press freedom. As part of the Sedition Act, in any way insulting someone's religion or race is punishable by up to three years. There are ethnic quotas for government housing in place to prevent residential segregation. This scheme is all the more remarkable considering that an estimated 80% of the country's population live in such accommodation. Finally, certain minority groups are guaranteed representation in government. Later this year, presidential elections will be held and this time around it must be a Malay-Singaporean. The list goes on. The obvious reflex is to criticize the government for limiting the rights and liberties of its residents. Yet it is difficult to do so when taking into account its positive effects.

THE FIRST IS A nation which in fact has achieved, and upheld, harmonious relationships between its diverse population. In 2016, Singapore ranked 1st out of 142 nations in the annual Legatum Prosperity index, for its tolerance of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, only 16 people since 1948 have been charged under the previously mentioned Sedition Act for religion or race-related offences. These statistics certainly point to a cohesive society, but isolated events do occur. In 2013 a foreign worker was run over by a bus, sparking a riot involving around 300 people. The authorities were quick to

contain it. Such incidents, although rare, reveal that the nation is united but not completely free of friction.

THE AFOREMENTIONED POLICIES have paved the way for a stable society and a government not worried about reelection. Between its independence in 1965 and 1981, no opposition candidate won a seat in the parliament. The country has had the same ruling party since it gained autonomy. Theoretically an opposition party could gain control, but at present it remains far fetched. This has allowed long-term planning and foregoing the comprises traditionally associated with politics. A foundation which no doubt can explain its outstanding economic development. Between 1965-2015 Singapore's GDP per capita grew from 540\$ to 52,090\$, making it the 4th wealthiest nation on earth. Annualised this is an increase by almost 10%. In comparison China, often hailed as an economic miracle, grew by barely 9% during the same period. Another relevant comparison is Malaysia, which once controlled Singapore. In 1965 both countries

were similarly wealthy but in the following 50 years Malaysia's average GDP per capita growth was 7%. This is significantly lower than Singapore and ranks the country 49th in the world.

IN OTHER WORDS, Malaysia's development has lagged behind. In 1965 and going forward the two nations had similar prerequisites for development, such as comparable wealth levels and demographic profiles. Where they differed was government. Singapore reaped the benefits of an organised and efficient government where Malaysia struggled with corruption and toxic racial and religious politics. The Legatum Prosperity index now ranks Malaysia 58th in the world for its tolerance of ethnic minorities. Determining the degree to which Singapore's diversity regulating policies facilitated its development is difficult. Yet when observing the statistics, especially with Malaysia as a comparison, it appears to have played a substantial role.

REGARDLESS, IT IS hard to argue against the success of the Singaporean model. The only counterargu





“ 6 MILLION PEOPLE, 5 MAJOR RELIGIONS,
4 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AND 3 MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS
LIVE ON A QUARTER OF THE SIZE OF LUXEMBOURG

ment with substance is the country's autocratic tendencies. Opposition to the government is virtually non-existent, elections seem to be nothing more of a formality, and citizens rights are periodically ignored. Yet, while all this is true, the nation ranks 2nd in the world in economic freedom, is truly wealthy, has low crimes rates, and admirable educational and healthcare systems. All while maintaining a government budget surplus. All in all, no system is without fault and in Singapore's case the sacrifices of certain rights pale in comparison to the subsequent gains. The system has worked because of the nation's almost perfectly color blind meritocracy, where the population has shared equally the fruits of economic growth. In return, no one has rocked the boat. Going forward, It remains to be seen if this harmony will last as Singapore inevitably must settle for lower growth.

DECIDING WHICH RIGHTS and liberties a government should and shouldn't restrict is, ultimately, a political discussion which comes down to values and priorities. What leaders around the world should note about Singapore is the success with which such a diverse group of people can coexist. This triumph becomes all the more interesting against the backdrop of globalisation, which has undermined national borders and will continue to do. This is taking place in concert with a long-term trend of urbanisation, making cities larger and inevitably diverse. Maintaining harmonious relationships with people of all backgrounds is therefore more important than ever before. At the very least, Singapore provides useful inspiration in this area. ●



THE FORGOTTEN PAST OF SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM UNDER THE SWEDISH FLAG

Whenever we mention Swedish history, we tend to focus on events and stories that took place within Swedish or European borders. For contrast, here is a part of the Swedish history that goes beyond the borders of Europe — Sweden's colonialism and its' contribution to the transatlantic slave trade.

Growing up, I was never been particularly interested in Swedish history. The history we've been taught in Swedish schools has given me the impression that Sweden, in contrast to the rest of the world, has contributed a minimal amount to the events that has shaped our world today. In a conversation with Holger Weiss, my

perspectives on this subject widens, as he tells me a story of a Sweden that was deeply engaged in the practices of colonialism.

WEISS, A PROFESSOR of Åbo Academy, has written a book on this subject, and I ask him why it's important to shed light on this part of Swedish history. "An easy answer to this is that the colonial his-

tory challenges the one-sided story of how today's Sweden has been created; that today's Sweden consists of many stories, others more 'heroic' and 'positive', others less so. Sweden's colonial past also presents itself as very complex and includes both an internal and an external colonialization." With internal Weiss describes how Sweden colonialized the north and the lands belonging to the Sami Population. Sweden's external colonialization includes expeditions during the 17th century in Northern America's Delaware, and also the colonializing of St Barthélemy in the Caribbean during the 17th and 18th century. This colonialization of St Barthélemy is what Weiss and I continue discussing.

WEISS' BOOK, TITLED "Slave Trade and Slavery under the Swedish flag", gives a thorough explanation of how Sweden, during the late 18th century, bought a colony from France, St Barthélemy. Up until 1878, the island, situated in the Caribbean, was governed by Sweden, and the original intention was to start a blossoming plantation, but the island lacked supply of fresh water. On this tiny island Sweden established a system of which slave labour and slave trade was a key income. The harbour town Gustavia, named after King Gustav III, became an important centre for trade, and trade of slaves especially.

"SLAVE TRADE UNDER the Swedish flag – observe that I choose to use this phrase and not the limited Swedish slave trade – was although in comparison with the other European actors in the transatlantic slave trade minimal, but despite this there still existed hopes and plans among private Swedish actors to engage in this operation. Up until 1788 one could even claim that there existed a direct interest from the Swedish crown to equip or at least join in on the slave trade business", Weiss tells me. However, he points out the importance to acknowledge that these aspirations died with Gustav III.

MUCH LIKE OTHER European countries engaging in the transatlantic slave trade, Sweden benefited financially by shipping African slaves to the Caribbean. "The amount of these incomes isn't possible to state since there's no detailed documents about the annual incomes; neither how large or how many slaves were taken to and from Gustavia." Weiss claims that the number of sources and doc-

uments are restricted, which makes it impossible to know how big the Swedish impact in the transatlantic slave trade was. It is believed that the first decade of the 19th century was the most intense in terms of slave trade, but the sources to prove this in numbers is, once again, restricted. However, these exchanges do clarify that Sweden benefited financially from more than just owning a colony. Moreover, it does clarify that Sweden was taking part in a global trade that shipped numerous people across the globe, people who were destined for a miserable life in slavery.

KING GUSTAV III's will to contribute to the imperialism and the slave trade was strong, and debates regarding the moral aspects of these expeditions were non-existent in Sweden. The moral aspects of enforcing slavery were debated frequently in Britain, and the Swedish newspapers followed this debate feverishly and yet they lacked the information on their own colony. Discussions regarding ending slavery were elevated in the British parliament multiple times over the final decades in the 18th century, sowing the seeds to settle the annulment in the 19th century. The abolishment of slavery in Britain paved the way for Sweden to do the same. After years of discussions, negotiations and renegotiations, the Swedish state settled a new legislation that abolished slavery under the Swedish flag in 1840.

ST BARTHÉLEMY WAS sold off to the French in 1878, allowing the island to evolve into the mainly French-speaking land it is today. Weiss points out that the heritage of the Swedish years in St Barthélemy can be explored by its architectural remnants such as buildings and street names in Gustavia. An important note as to why the visible remnants of the slavery on St Barthélemy may be small, in comparison to many other post-colonies located in the Caribbean, can be explained by how most slaves left the island when they were freed. The slaves didn't own any land and the island wasn't very prosperous in terms of work or settlement opportunities. Where the slaves did move to is almost impossible to know, Weiss says, as there are few documents regarding these events.

FINALLY, THE QUESTION arises as to how big Sweden's impact and participation in the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism actually was, and what effect it did play in comparison to other Europe-



Photos: Wikimedia Commons

Left: Carl Bernhard Wadström, Swedish colonialist and abolitionist, showing a side of Sweden known to few. Right: King Gustav III, who fought with zealotry for the establishment of a Swedish empire.

an countries' participation. "Minimal, if even that. The Swedish colonial project was founded on free trade and Gustavia's harbour was to be accessible during war time, but there was no Swedish military presence", Weiss explains.

OBVIOUSLY, THIS HISTORY is a complex one, but it does shed light on the fact that Sweden took part in awful practices that has shaped the world we live in today. I do believe that however minimal the impact of Swedish colonialization, slavery and slave trade was in comparison to other European countries, it is still highly relevant for us to come to terms with this dark time in our history and the fact that we did encourage these kinds of actions. Many may try to reason with the rationality behind these actions, saying the Swedish King was acting in accordance with "the era", and that Sweden was, much like other countries, longing for resources, status and the pride that came with colonialization.

LOOKING BACK ON it now, pride isn't the first thing that comes to mind but rather the last. Shame dominates my feelings towards these events, yet I think it's even more shameful to neglect the existence of such a past. What's interesting about this is the fact that this part of Swedish history has been notably absent in history books. The work of Holger Weiss is therefore very important, I believe, in filling in the blank pages of a time that we have come to forget. By examining Sweden's colonial past, we may come to reflect on where we are today in terms of respecting other cultures, nationalities, and people. Furthermore, it may lead us to question how the Sami Population in Sweden has been treated for hundreds of years, how conflicts between the Swedish government and Samis still occur, and how discrimination of the Sami Population is still existent. Is this past of colonial times in Sweden really over? Or do we have a colonial present right here and right now? ●

Reasons to dismiss feminism

1. You're an independent woman who votes, works, dates a partner you're attracted to and uses the contraceptive of your choice. You feel respected by men.
2. You're a man.
3. You're transgender.
4. You're queer.
5. You're a woman of colour and you feel like feminism is white women's business. A fancy business that makes your contributions invisible and that won't even help you.
6. You're a woman in a former Soviet country and remember too well the "socialist feminism". Forced double shift labour, hurray, who wouldn't welcome that.
7. You want to stay safe and in peace. The neighborhood doesn't have to know what you think about the patriarchy. Your brothers don't have to know. This way there's no chance of getting raped, bullied or honour-killed.
8. Boyfriends, fathers, and strange men call you a feminist in order to shut your mouth whenever you stand up against slut-shaming, victim-blaming, or don't want to stand by the stove. Feminist is a swearword, right?
9. You want to marry and stay home with your children. Also, you don't hate men, to start with. Don't want to become one, either, and being a CEO is not your life goal at all.
10. You want to wear make-up, sexy clothes and watch porn.
11. You find feminism a rigid, over-carried, surreal ideology.
12. You pick your own battles and you help the refugees, fight to stop the global warming or you protect animal rights.

CHALLENGING FEMINISM IN ITS FOURTH WAVE

Say: I'm a feminist. Pretty easy, right? Allow me to illustrate from a Second World woman's standpoint how the journey to feminism is a path paved with constantly emerging questions. And that's not wrong at all.

I check my privileges. **White. Middle-class Young. Cisgender. Straight.**

STILL, I COME from a country that has taken turns of being Europe's black sheep. More importantly, I am a woman.

I READ THE feminist webzine *Hysteria*, which recently interviewed Nancy Fraser. Both interviewee and interviewer seem to strongly oppose liberal feminism because it became part of capitalism's structure. They believe that the mainstream, hegemonic feminism only reinforces the existing system. Marx, the left and radicalism are the way to go.

I WONDER, IS there such a thing as embedded feminism? I cannot help not blaming popular feminism for being what it is. As long as they know what they represent and don't wish to be more, don't try to speak for everyone. For a liberal person, liberal feminism could be the thing that for someone seeing revolution as the solution, radical feminism is. Instead, I believe the plural is legit and we should talk about feminisms to acknowledge the diverse movements.

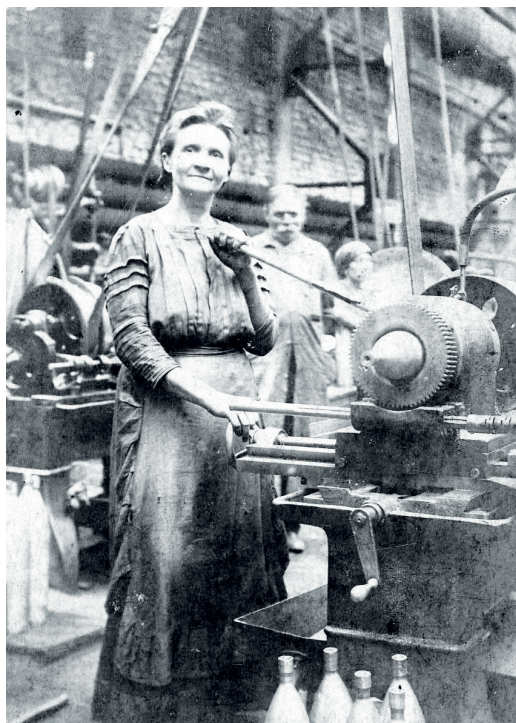
I COME FROM a country where a flower and a cheerful "Happy Women's Day!" is the proper, respectful way of celebrating the 8th of March. When I refuse to go in first through an opened door, I am intimidating colleagues and friends. I don't even mention paying on dates or how a hairy female body is perceived. But clearly my country is not the only one where shouting 'feminist' is equivalent to calling names. Not exactly what children want to be when they grow up.

JUST THE OTHER day, the Christian (sic!) Democratic (sic!) People's Party (sic!) was featured in the news because they found it sensible to write an open letter. The apropos: the university where I studied my Bachelor's had announced a gender studies programme. ELTE is a prestigious, old university and now – gender studies, a "Scandinavian luxury" that won't solve the problem with a decreasing population. Mark their words: educating people about gender and queer issues leads to more feminists, more queers, and less babies, less value in society. I can't even... so I just laugh.

I AM SITTING at a Media and Power symposium. Not one, but two Master's thesis proposals focus on hashtags that introduce hidden stories of sexual harassment. The talk on #sendeanlat in Turkey by Burcum Kesen and the one on #WhenIWas in Iran by Neda Monshi. Moreover, the Brazilian #primeiroassédio is mentioned during the discussion with the audience. I do what these initiatives are aimed at: I start to illuminate the underlying structure, to question the default meanings. I reflect over my life and recognise moments that made me feel uncomfortable but that I didn't find problematic as a child.

WHY AM I reflecting over myself instead of Turkish, Iranian, and Brazilian women? I want changes in my country, where the primary goal is still to let women decide over their bodies and that fathers babysit, and thus Western goals are apparently too high and radical. It is such an accepted claim that the white feminist movement takes its achievements for granted and universalizes these standards for the whole world. But my surroundings seem left out from this argument. My privileged

Working Hungarian woman





Housewife cartoon

self is not emancipated enough for Western everyday, nor exotic enough for intersectionality.

WHAT ABOUT SECOND World women? At this point I try to figure out whether the way to reach my sisters is to lower the Western ideals. Popularize academic feminism in order to reach the masses, if you wish.

CORRUPTED FEMINISM MAKES no sense: there is no such thing as semi-equality. But I educate myself from vlogs and I see the channels marinashut-up, Stuff Mom Never Told You, Rowan Ellis and Hannah Witton as feminist. Lisa Jalakas's paper at the symposium has a similar problem as her focus point. Lisa researched femvertising such as Always' #LikeAGirl or Dove's 'Real beauty sketches'. She reinforces the point that according to most feminist scholars and activists, a commodified feminism benefits the structure but not the individual and "the cause". As it turns out, if you ask the audience, most often they accept these viral

videos and brand activism as a necessary compromise and a possible eye opener for their friends who might meet the content when they share it on social media. However, this is not yet what I am looking for.

AT LEAST I find one answer on the way: no, Western and Eastern Europe is not about radical vs popularized. Sandra Harding had it right: it's all about standpoint. Individual experiences are valid, I am told. The key is finding my own place in a social movement, or creating my own place in it, if necessary.

I CANNOT UNDO my privileges. The best I can do is to be aware of them, actively use them for good, and to give voice to less represented groups. While at the same time I know that not even white and white are the same: Eastern Europe's locally defined challenges have to be included in the feminisms, too. ●

“ WHY AM I REFLECTING OVER MYSELF INSTEAD OF TURKISH, IRANIAN, AND BRAZILIAN WOMEN?

REALITY IS A RUMOUR

WHEN LIES MAKE UP A STORY, DO THEY BECOME THE TRUTH?



There is a war in Syria – but it isn't fought only in the air or on the ground. The war of the media is just as present, with each side's propaganda machine running on full capacity.

Have you ever wondered why you prefer a certain news outlet over another from a stream of thousands? A study published in the *Journal of Communication* found evidence of ideological selectivity in media use in the United States: we prefer information that is supportive or consistent with our existing 'beliefs'. A finding that probably can be extrapolated to the audience around the world. This selective exposure is even more pronounced when it comes to controversial issues. However, matters are grimmer than our biases towards certain news outlets. In their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, published in 1988, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman provide a propaganda model, containing five essential ingredients that filter the news before it reaches the audience. After analyzing several case studies, they concluded that the "mass media of the United States are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions and self-censorship, and without significant overt coercion."

THE "SYSTEM-SUPPORTIVE propaganda" in the mass media has played out countless times in the international arena, including before and during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The conflict in Syria has also viciously fallen prey to the 'propaganda'. The U.S. and allies and Russia and allies have accused each other of mass lies and bashed each other's propaganda with more propaganda. The U.S. and allies including France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Kingdom support the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the "moderate" rebels in Syria. Russia and Iran support the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad. Russia and allies refer to the "moderate" rebels including the Free Syrian Army as "terrorists" associated with Al Nusra Front (now called Jabhat Fateh Al Sham), which is the Al Qaeda branch of Syria, Jaysh al-Islam and ISIL amongst others. On the other hand, the U.S. and allies berate the Syrian government as "Assad's regime", dubbing the 2014 elections as farce, claiming it has committed war crimes against its' own people. Representative Tulsi Gabbard, a Democratic congresswoman from Hawaii,

“MASS MEDIA OF THE UNITED STATES ARE EFFECTIVE AND POWERFUL IDEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS THAT CARRY OUT A SYSTEM-SUPPORTIVE PROPAGANDA FUNCTION

U.S., visited Syria in January 2017 and wrote an Op-ed saying that the “regime change war the U.S. is fuelling in Syria does not serve America’s interest, or the interest of the Syrian people”, a narrative closer to the mainstream media of Russia than the U.S. She also recently introduced a bill in the Congress called Stop Arming Terrorist Act.

BEFORE GOING FURTHER, it must be pointed out that the blocks of alliances between the countries have been present for decades, long before the start of the crisis at hand. U.S. enduring pursuit for regime change in Syria is apparent from declassified-in-part documents from 1983 and 1986 by the CIA as well as from Wikileaks, that revealed a 2006 secret U.S. cable on the same subject. This is also true of Russia’s support for Syria and its Alawite minority, which is apparent from these documents. It comes as no surprise then as to why both sides’ media have their distinct agendas.

ONE MAJOR EVENT that highlights these tensions is the chemical attack in the Ghouta area of Damascus on August 21, 2013 that resulted in the deaths of somewhere between 350 and 1500 Syrians. The tragic incident is shrouded in controversy. The

“ THE REGIME CHANGE WAR THE U.S. IS FUELLING IN SYRIA DOES NOT SERVE AMERICA’S INTEREST, OR THE INTEREST OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE

media on the opposite sides were in an upheaval to place the blame. The Obama administration had ‘intelligence’ that the attack had been unequivocally carried out by the Syrian government. President Bashar al-Assad denied this in an interview with Charlie Rose of CBS. For the U.S., however, a ‘red-line’ had been crossed and interventionist discourse hit the media, along with the counter narratives that the attack was being used as a ‘false

Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

flag' to validate and hasten western intervention. The use of sarin gas was confirmed by the United Nations investigation committee. However, in January 2014, a MIT study conducted by Professor Theodore Postol and Richard Lloyd pointed out faults with the U.S. intelligence report on the Ghouta attack. Moreover, Seymour M. Hersh, Pulitzer Prize winner for International Reporting, in his article 'The Red Line and the Rat Line' made serious assertions about the sarin attack and the role of Turkey, U.S., UK and France. Hersh's story has been both intensely supported and forcefully dismissed. To this day mystery surrounds the perpetrators of the attack. In February this year, a UN resolution, drafted by France, UK and U.S., for imposing sanctions on Syria for alleged use of chemical weapons was vetoed by China and Russia.

THE NEWS COVERAGE regarding the conflict in Syria is perplexing to say the least. Different platforms, including the UN, have been used to propagate different messages from different sides. For example, on a press conference in UN on December 9, 2016, the Permanent Mission of Syria to the UN launched serious allegations on the "corporate media" of the West, including calling the White Helmets partisan and associated with terrorist factions in Syria. The press conference revealed that the White Helmets, formerly known as the Syria Civil Defense, were founded by ex-British military intelligence officer, James Le Mesurier. The conflicting side of this is that the White Helmets are neutral and impartial and have saved over

60,000 lives. They are supported, amongst others, by the "Batal Program" of the Mayday Rescue, an NGO based in Netherlands and whose director is James Le Mesurier. A Netflix documentary called The White Helmets documenting the bravery of these volunteers won an Oscar award this year. Both the demonization and romanticisation of the White Helmets in the opposite blocks is truly stupefying.

THESE INSTANCES MAY be new, but the tricks are old: facts are turned into fiction and fiction into facts. The media's adherence to the political agendas of the states has grossly undermined the core journalistic values that these institutions claim to uphold. Poor reporting, political prejudices and insufficient peer and public accountability plagues journalism. News outlets on either side going against their mainstream narrative are labelled "fake news" and are swiftly dismissed. Furthermore, the play by the media on "worthy" and "unworthy" victims of conflicts, "us" and "them", is mixed into our preferences and political bias and allows us to take a self-righteous and high moral stance. We are unaware that our ideological selectivity is used as mortar in the manufacturing of consent in order to legitimize what is illegal and illegitimate. History testifies that we have fallen for this trap time and again. Is the situation so bad that Orwell's words have come true, that "war is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength?" ●

“ POOR REPORTING,
POLITICAL PREJUDICES
AND INSUFFICIENT
PEER AND PUBLIC
ACCOUNTABILITY
PLAGUES JOURNALISM



Photo: Kremlin

“BEING A ZIONIST DOESN'T

February 7th, 2017: Israel's parliament passes a well as 5500 new homes in the West Bank. Ofir tonight for the connection between the Jewish people

The recent developments have mostly been received negatively in European media. Especially in Sweden, one of the first EU members to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, Israel is often pictured as the evil party of the conflict, suppressing the much weaker Palestinians. Israeli forces killed 110 Palestinians in the past year, attacks by Palestinians have caused the death of 18 Israelis during the same period – a fact that fits the victim role Western media often assigns the Palestinians.

THE RECENT LEGALIZATION of Israeli settlements has increased tensions between the parties and fired up the never-ending debate. In a pro-Palestinian society like Sweden, it can be difficult to find sympathy or understanding for the Israeli actions. To get a better insight, I decided to investigate how the people our age in Israel view the situation.

Lea is 20 years old, from Germany, and studies Jewish studies. Part of her family is Jewish and lives in Israel. Elie is in his mid-twenties. He is from Chicago and served in the Israeli army for three years. The two share an apartment in Tel Aviv. Majan is 21. She lives in a Kibbutz in the North of Israel. While interviewing them, I realize that despite their strong connection to Israel and Judaism none of them is purely taking Israel's side. Surprisingly to me, they all have a hard time expressing their standpoint. “It's complicated” is a phrase repeated over and over again. What sounds a little fuzzy is actually quite accurate: Western media often paints the conflict in black and white. It might not be that simple. “There is a lot of international pressure on Israel, but I don't think the world really understands the situation. It is extremely complex and there is no good or bad”, Majan says and sounds frustrated. “There is not one answer to this problem, no easy solution.” Elie agrees, he thinks the conflict is simplified to the basic premise that the strong side is the wrong. But both sides make mistakes.



Photo: Rolf Neumann/flickr

“IT IS IMPORTANT to see the whole context”, Lea adds. What is the “whole context” then? One aspect often overseen is that Israel has proposed different versions of a two-state-solution, but without success. Palestine's proposition is simply not viable for Israel since it would mean abandoning all settlements, misplacing almost half a million Israelis. “I don't think we always should keep building new settlements. But there are old settlements that people have been living in ever since the state of Israel was established”, Majan argues. From a security perspective, it would be very risky for Israel to split the state into two parts, like Palestine is proposing in order to form a unified Palestinian state. Both the Palestinian and Israeli

MAKE ME ANTI-ARAB

bill to retroactively legalize Israeli settlements as Akunis, the cabinet minister, says: “We are voting and their land. This whole land is ours. All of it.”



societies have widely accepted that only a two-state-solution can solve the conflict in the long-run, but both parties would then have to make heavy compromises. Furthermore, the negotiation between Palestine and Israel is difficult due to the political situation in Palestine. “Who are we even supposed to negotiate with? The Hamas is a terror organization and the Fatah are not much better if you ask me”, Lea grunts. However, it is not just the political situation in Palestine that blocks the peace negotiations. Both Lea and Elie thinks that the Israeli government is too right-wing and that a two-state-solution has been pushed away even further by legalizing the Israeli settlements in retrospect. “Israel wants to exemplify Western

values but their settlement policy shows the complete opposite. It is unfair and inhumane”, Lea concludes. “Under this government, there will not be successful peace negotiations.” Elie is not a big supporter of the current government either: “A lot of people abroad think that just because I’m a Zionist, I automatically agree with settlements and everything else the Israeli government does. But that is not true. I can also be an American patriot without approving all the wars my country are involved in.”

“
UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT,
THERE WILL NOT BE SUCCESSFUL
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

I WANT TO know what the general feeling in the Israeli society is like. “People here are often quite numb because they experience the conflict on a daily basis”, Elie says. Young Israelis are very influenced by their surroundings. They grow up with the view that the Palestinians are the enemy and often simply accept that opinion and make it their own, Lea explains. However, counterexamples do exist. Lea and Elie themselves live in a mixed neighbourhood in Tel Aviv, side by side with Arabs. Lea has lived and worked in a town that promotes the peaceful communal life of Israelis and Arabs. Elie says: “Being a Zionist doesn’t make me anti-Arab and being pro-Israel doesn’t make me anti Palestinian rights.”

PAINTING THE CONFLICT in black and white by putting the Palestinians in the victim position is too simplified. After all, it takes two to keep a conflict going. The recently passed bill does push a two-state-solution further away, and Israelis are aware of that. The most important lesson to remember is to not demonize a whole population for the actions of their government. ●

MAKE FRANCE GREAT AGAIN!

The Perspective Magazine is taking a closer look at the upcoming French presidential election. Zigne Edström has met with Maria Hellman and Louis Aubert at the Swedish Defence University and asked how the outcome of the election might change French foreign policy as well as relations with key international actors.

In April and May eyes will shift from the aftermath of the US election to Europe and France. After what has been considered an unsuccessful presidency of socialist François Holland, the election of 2017 revolves around how to reinvent a failed political system. The voters are desperately seeking for a candidate able not only to solve the domestic problems, but also to ensure France's status on the international stage.

AT THIS POINT, there is no clear winner. The election has suffered from political scandals and accusations of corruption. The French have, simply put, had enough of the political elite. The top candidates are hence running their campaigns claiming that they are not part of the system and promising change. A critical question is how the outcome of the election will affect the rest of the world.

THE PERSPECTIVE MAGAZINE has met with Maria Hellman, associate professor at Swedish Defence University, and intern Louis Aubert. They are writing a report on behalf of the Swedish Cabinet on what consequences the election could have on French foreign relations. What impacts will it have on US and NATO relations? Will French ties to Russia change? How will the EU and the rest of Europe be affected?

FRANCE IS EMBODYING the importance of a multipolar world order rather than an American hegemony, and most significantly an order where France holds a position of influence. François Fillon, representing the Republican party, has driven his campaign on the image of him being the inheritor of the Gaullist legacy, Maria Hellman explains. He presents himself as the strong man capable

of restoring France as a great power. Marine Le Pen, the Front National's candidate, is also emphasising the importance of France's sovereignty. She is a hardliner on national security, economic protectionism, and anti-immigration policies. In contrast, the centrist Emmanuel Macron stresses the importance of alliances to ensure a strong and influential France. He portrays himself as a new hope for France with his newly established party "En Marche!".

WHEN ELABORATING ON how the election could change French relations to the US and NATO, Fillon can be expected to maintain the current position. He wants to ensure that France keeps its seat at the table as a key member, as long as this does not include any kind of submission to the US, Louis Aubert points out. Le Pen, on the other hand, views NATO as a complication to French sovereignty. Therefore, with a Le Pen presidency, we

“FRANCE IS EMBODYING THE IMPORTANCE OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER RATHER THAN AN AMERICAN HEGEMONY

could expect France taking distance from Washington and Brussels. Macron wants to preserve France's strong role within NATO, but would put Europe before the US in case their interest would collide. Consequently, a slight disconnection from the Alliance could occur if Macron wins the election.

WHEREAS FILLON'S PRESIDENCY would indicate the restoration of French independence from the US, rapprochements towards Russia seems likely. Fillon argues that France should improve its relations with Moscow, and wants to cancel European sanctions against the Russian federation. However, he is not unique in this regard as all three candidates want a stronger relation between the two countries.

SHOULD WE WITNESS a French withdrawal from NATO, the development of old alliances is possible with Le Pen as president. According to Louis Aubert, her presidency would change French foreign policy both from a geopolitical and an ideological perspective. France would cooperate significantly closer with Moscow. In fact, Le Pen's campaign has received financial support from Russia and she has publicly supported the Russian annexation of Crimea.

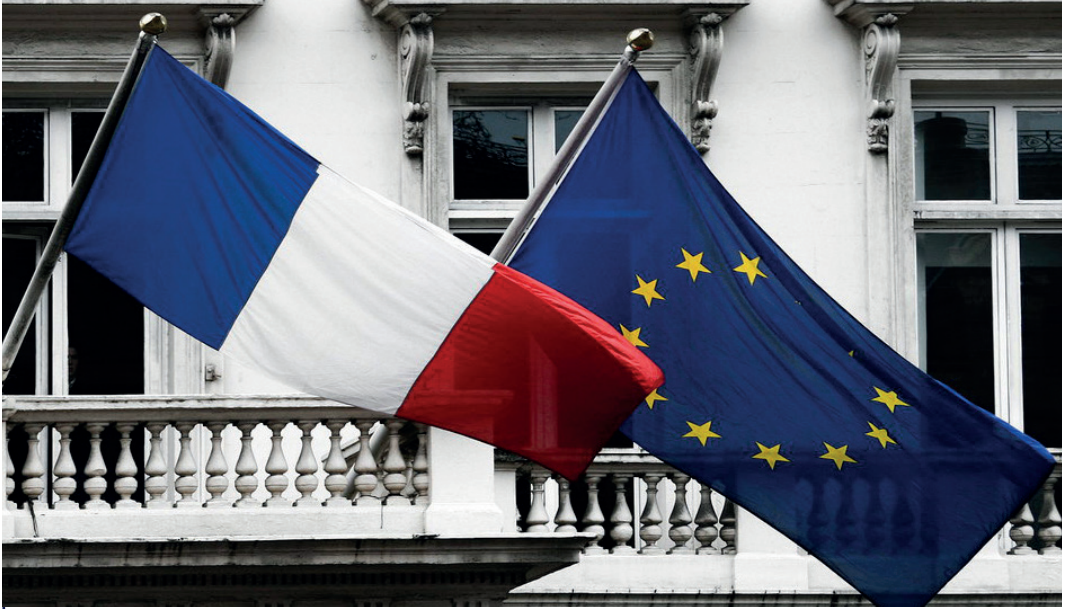
MACRON ALSO FAVOURS improved relations and cancelled sanctions. However, he does not share the vision of the new political and cultural world order which is promoted by president Putin, Louis Aubert clarifies. For Macron, the main emphasis lies in a close alliance with Germany. Maria Hellman explains that after Brexit, the

A Fillon presidency could improve relations with Russia.



Photo: Russian Government

Photo: Wikimedia Commons



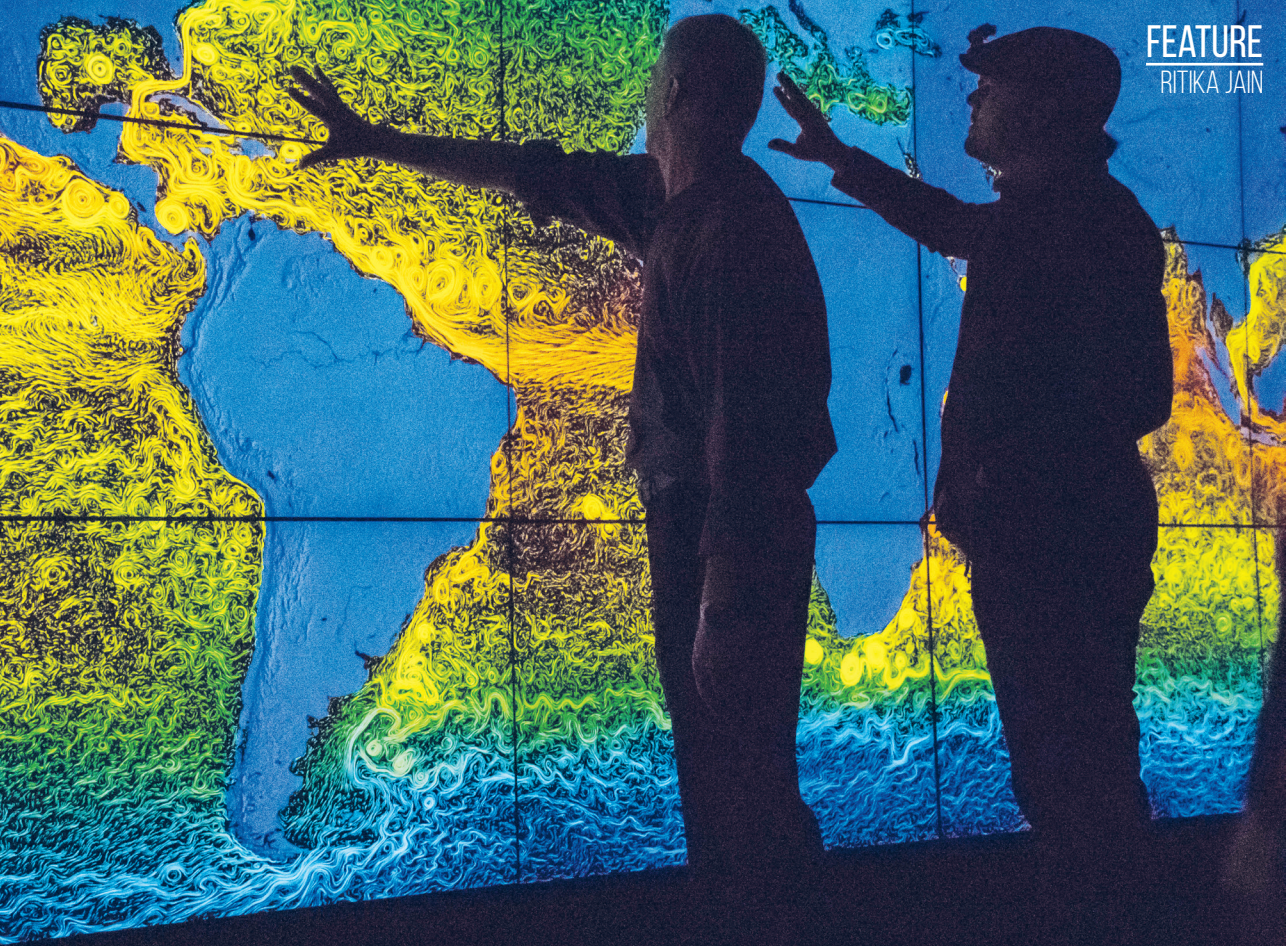
France's role within the EU could change drastically after the election.

future of the EU rests upon two pillars; i.e. France and Germany. Macron wishes to recreate balance within the EU by strengthening these pillars. According to the analysis of Louis Aubert, Macron's presidency would focus on rebuilding the relation between the two European powers and lead a renewal of the Union.

FILLON SEEKS TO secure the European borders against illegal immigration, and it is likely that the European Defence project will be strengthened under his presidency. A Le Pen presidency would weaken the whole structure of the Union and put a potential Frexit on the agenda. Her preferred isolationism could deeply weaken the relation with Germany, hence disturbing the entire mechanisms of the EU and eventually lead to a collapse of the Union from within, Louis Aubert elaborates.

THE OUTCOMES OF the French election 2017 can potentially lead to a geostrategic slide towards the East. Louis Aubert does not exclude the establishment of a geopolitical link between Paris, Berlin and Moscow. In fact, a new attitude towards Russia could end a decade of escalated hostility and increased tension in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Sea region. The EU's position in international politics can, arguably, weaken further. With Donald Trump in office, an American withdrawal from Europe cannot be excluded, and the French election has revealed a growing acceptance for a pro-Russian and an anti-Europe presidency in France. Consequently, there is no doubt that the French election this spring will be of great importance not only for the French voters. ●

“HER ISOLATIONISM COULD DEEPLY WEAKEN THE RELATION TO GERMANY, HENCE DISTURBING THE ENTIRE MECHANISMS OF THE EU



REACTION TO CLIMATE ACTION IN THE FACE OF RISING RIGHT WING POPULISM

With growing right wing populism and strong nationalistic sentiments across the globe, what is the future of climate change negotiations? Is this trend a threat; the biggest threat of our time?

Taking a look back at the year 2016, it is hard to resist thinking of all the controversies, calamities, terror strikes, political changes and the general darkness that surrounded us. With right wing governments gaining power in big democracies like the United States, Europe, Britain and India a global ideological shift was clearly noted. Another hot topic on the global news, was the climate; from pictures of melting glaciers in the Himalayan region, to scientists reporting the death of Great Barrier reef down in Australia. Last year we truly came face to face with the burning issue of climate change as we witnessed some of its hard hitting consequences. News articles claimed that we had officially hit the carbon ‘tipping’ point last year, and the struggle to keep the global temperature below a 1.5-degree rise, had just become harder.

IN THE PRECEDING year, the “historic” Paris climate agreement was signed and the world leaders pledged to fight climate change together. With an aim to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius, countries came forward with their In-

tended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, to outline climate action post-2020. But come 2016, the Brexit referendum and Trump’s unexpected, or expected, win in the US changed this seemingly positive picture into a grim one for climate change activists. A rise of right-wing populism across the globe, could be interpreted as revolt against the apparent failure of the established parties and activists. And now, the fate of this planet entirely lies with countries and their continued willingness to fulfil this promise.

LET’S TAKE a look at Europe, which is seen as a world leader in environmental initiatives and climate action. With the EU in trouble, their economic and social problems call for increased levels of cooperation. A plethora issues which have cropped up in the past few years, it has made people more nationalistic and closed, thus resisting any further transfer of power to Brussels. Within a few weeks of UK coming out of the EU, they did away with some of their domestic green policies. For example, tax incentives for cleaner cars and subsidies for solar power initiatives were cut down. With no added pressure to keep up with the

2015 Paris Agreement



2020 EU renewable energy targets, UK took a step backwards from their position as a world leader on climate change action. As the UK will most likely divert its focus towards the impending period of economic and political instability, it might compel them further to take climate policy down a notch on their priority list. While on the other hand, the EU now has to reconsider its climate goals without the UK. All in all, a long wait and a hot summer lies ahead of us until the Paris Agreement is ratified.

“THERE IS NO TIME TO PLAY GAMES AND PASS THE BUCK AROUND

GOING FURTHER WEST, America's right-wing populists elected a climate change denialist as the next POTUS. Along with rumours of the 'US pulling out of the Paris deal' and 'withdrawing from the UN' doing the rounds, bitter attacks rained upon climate scientists on different news channels, following this event. President Trump openly mocked climate change, calling it a hoax fabricated by China for economic benefits. Recently, Lund University hosted a panel discussion on the impact of the incoming American president and the struggle against climate change. Prominent climate scientists and professors from the US voiced their concern over research funding being cut short and prospects for future projects on climate science looking dim. Add to this, gag orders from the government agencies to shut down all external communications from the Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA), which came out this January, we are now faced with a multitude of questions: how much damage will be caused nationally in the US? How will the US affect the climate negotiations internationally?

PLAYERS FROM THE developing world like China, India and Brazil have been expected to take leading roles on this topic. There is mounting pressure on these major emerging economies, to take on more ambitious mitigation commitments since the developed countries are progressively 'claiming' to have reduced their carbon emissions while the developing countries are still on an upward trend. Though this issue calls for another debate, the message is clear: We have to step up and take action! However, a strong nationalistic sentiment can be seen the developing world too and offers an interesting lens to look at climate change negotiations through. Countries like India put forward a logical reasoning for them to take it more lightly, claiming nationalistic exceptionalism. Put in simple words, as the Indian prime minister went on to say, "nations which are now striving to fulfil their 'right to grow' cannot be made to feel guilty about their development agenda, as it is a legitimate aspiration".

THIS LEAVES ONE with more doubts than any reassurance. Climate change negotiations may take a backseat in the coming years, as more and more nations begin to look inwards. Country leaders looking away from the global picture is not an option anymore, because climate change is the most complex global problem we have ever faced collectively. Whether it is the US is calling climate change as a hoax or the developing nations are calling it a western plan made for sabotaging their deserved shot at development, there is no time to play games and pass the buck around.

THIS DISCUSSION CAPTURES the general sentiment towards climate change activism in the face of rising right wing populism. But the question we must ask ourselves is, will simply silencing the Environmental Agency in the US or not following the agreement work? Or will it instead spark the fire for activists around the world to step up their game? The popular public view can greatly influence the importance given to climate change initiatives on the national agenda. Maybe with such strong actions from the government's end, stronger reactions from the community will arise and pave way for an increased momentum in the fight against climate change. One can hope that the right wing doesn't forget to fight for what is indeed, right. ●

WHISTLEBLOWERS: ANOTHER WORD FOR SNITCH OR CRIMINAL?

Today, whistleblowing is a very contested term: is it wrong or is it right? Should the whistleblower be convicted or praised? There is no clear way of determining the significance of a whistleblowing, until the deed's been done.



A whistleblower was, from the get go, someone who reported insider information about illegal activities occurring within an organisation. Today, it has received a negative connotation and is regarded as a synonym for a snitch. Who was originally meant as the equivalent of a referee in a sports game, is now seen as a criminal. If it's disrupting the peace, would it be more suitable if people disregarded the truth? Are there certain elements of society that we should be unaware of? However, eliminating whistleblowers from society would take away our fundamental rights as citizens. Therefore, is it fair to those who alert the public of what is going on behind closed doors to undergo public scrutiny and be convicted of a crime?

“WHO WAS FIRST
SUPPOSED TO BE SEEN
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GAME, IS NOW SEEN AS A
CRIMINAL

SOME SAY THAT whistleblowing has helped us in shaping policies and form great historical events, though this is a very debatable subject. Opposing parties suggest that whistleblowers should be locked up and face significant prison time for attempts to provoke tension between civilians and corporations. Yet there are of course “good” whistleblowers, like the Time Magazine’s Persons of the Year in 2002 Cynthia Cooper, Sherron Watkins (who exposed corporate misconduct) and Coleen Rowley (who exposed details regarding the FBI’s investigation to the 9/11 attacks). This recognition proved symbolic for the average person as it was

seen as acknowledgment and support of whistleblowing, regardless of the outing of corporations. At the same time there are whistleblowers that have received terrible repercussions for their outings, such as Jack Kiriakou (who exposed the US government of torturing suspected terrorist) and Donald Vance (who outed the military for illegal arms sales in Iraq). There are also the whistleblowers who are stuck in grey areas, such as Edward Snowden.

WHAT MAKES A whistleblower good or bad? Is it what they reveal, or the magnitude of the repercussions corporations or governments have to face that determine the outcome? Whether or not governments or organisations want to prevent whistleblowing from happening, it won’t be an easy task. Society relies on whistleblowers to a certain degree, not only when it comes to outing the government for wrongdoing or illegal corporate actions, but also for more relatable, everyday situations. Take the film *Super Size Me* as an example, it worked to expose the dangers of fast-food diets and safety hazards associated with the industry. This movie has received many positive accolades for its investigations and clarified many popular misconceptions of fast-food. These situations are often met with great gratitude and positive feedback. How is this different from the exposure done by some of our “bad” and “grey area” whistleblowers?

THE “BAD” AND “grey area” whistleblowers are often related to secret, undercover government oriented subjects, such as the outing done by Edward Snowden. Snowden outed that the American government has been eavesdropping on its citizens and others across the world. It can be claimed that he has not caused any long lasting harm to the national security in the US, while still shedding light on information that the public deserved to know. But you can also say he is a narcissistic criminal, who did not foresee the consequences that would arise. Where should we draw the line on what the public deserves to know? Who should have the final say in this? It is hard to say what is right and what is wrong; there will always be two sides to every story. How do we know what information is true and what it entails? ●



A NEW GLOBAL ORDER AT OUR DOORSTEP?

Independent watchdog organization Freedom House, dedicated to examining the levels of democracy in the world, reports that 67 countries suffered declines in political rights and civil liberties last year. The assumption that the liberal democracy-fueled global order is here to stay seems more fragile than ever.

In 2016, populist and nationalist political forces made astounding gains around the globe. This surge created evident turbulences within the European Union, with the future of the entire Union sometimes being called into question. On the other side of the pond, the election of Donald Trump followed by his frantic diplomatic statements and executive orders did not contribute to a stabilisation of the international system. Trump's open statements saying that the disintegration of the EU would benefit the US interests only adds to the headache.

THE SOLIDITY OF the Transatlantic link is being questioned to this degree for the first time in about

ed degree. The past unsuccessful and unpopular interventions to Iraq and Libya shifted the US's attention from outward to inward. Internal social policy questions are of increasing salience within the US whereas the support for an engaging and active foreign policy is shrinking. The question remains if these tendencies will translate into the cease of the US being regarded as the world's policemen.

MEANWHILE IN EUROPE we're coping with the aftermath of the Brexit vote and quite restlessly wait for the turnout in the upcoming French presidential elections. The undemocratic developments in Poland and Hungary quietly poses additional wor-

“ THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY-FUELED GLOBAL ORDER IS HERE TO STAY SEEMS MORE FRAGILE THAN EVER

six decades. President Donald Trump has not only celebrated the EU's turbulences, but he has also sent some highly controversial and conflicting signals about the future of NATO. It is important to grasp how monumental this is.

FROM A BUSINESSMAN'S perspective, questioning the quality and necessity of a business alliance might bring about a better deal. However, the same tactics do not apply to international politics. In fact, it might even do irreparable damage. Expressing doubts about the invocation of Article 5 on collective defense for whatever purpose negatively affects the credibility of the alliance. With Russia's increasing unwillingness to obey international law, the timing could not be worse.

TRUMP'S 'AMERICA FIRST' policy makes us witnesses of a rather strange situation, where the strongest power in the world willingly wants to hold itself aloof from the rest of the world to an unprecedented-

ries if the member states of the EU still share the same values. What is clear is that the strength of the once very stable global alliances — be that Europe and the US, NATO or the EU itself — is being severely challenged. The fractured relationship and changing roles may lead to substantial change of the design of the international system.

IN ADDITION, the global trends showing the decline of democracies as well as the emergence of fake news born out of the information revolution makes a fertile soil for highly threatening political developments around the globe.

ARE ALL THESE things just single isolated events or do they represent something much bigger — a changing global order in which liberal democracies are under threat and the balance of power is fundamentally shifting? If we are about to witness a new global order or, if you wish, a disorder, how much of a curse will it be? ●

LAST WORDS:

**BERTRAND RUSSELL'S
TEN COMMANDMENTS
FOR LIVING IN A HEALTHY
DEMOCRACY**

- 1: Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
- 2: Do not think it worthwhile to produce belief by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
- 3: Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
- 4: When you meet with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
- 5: Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
- 6: Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
- 7: Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
- 8: Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
- 9: Be scrupulously truthful, even when truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
- 10: Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness.





Photo: Street scene in Morocco, Anders Ackfeldt

Spring program 2017

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES | LUNDS UNIVERSITY

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Events during CMES 10th Jubilee Week April 4 - 7

APRIL 4 "The State of the State in the Middle East: Status and Implications", Ellen Lust, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

APRIL 5 "Disrupted Borders, Security and the Trapped Subject: the Lebanese/Syrian border", Michelle Obeid, University of Manchester

APRIL 6 "From the Books to the Guns: Students and the Palestinian Revolution in Historical Perspective", Ido Zerkovitz, University of Haifa, Israel.

APRIL 7 "From Sayyad Qutb to Seyyed Khamenei: Islamist Challenge of modernity", Abbas Milani, Stanford University

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