

[illegible]

LUND • EST. 1935

EDITORS' NOTE

Sunday 18:37. Sofia and Isak are fixing the last tweaks for the first issue of 2019. Sofia is desperately trying to find inspiration for the editor's notes. Sofia turns over to Isak.

SOFIA: This is hard man. I mean it's not winter anymore, summer is coming but not really here yet. I'm Swedish, what do I write about if not about weather?

ISAK: I can't be bothered really. Why don't we just write something cheesy about how great the editorial team are?

THIS NOW MAKES Isak seem like a very cynical and non-appreciating character. With that being said he really means that the editorial team are the ones that really create the Magazine. While "Editor In Chief" is just a fancy title for the persons who have an extra responsibility to nag on the others in the committee. Sofia agrees.

ISAK: Have a look at this. What do you think Sofia?

ISAK SHOWS SOFIA a short paragraph where he has written: "I like to compare this issue with spring itself. The ideas of this committee have sprung up like the crocuses in Lundagård. As the first spring rays of sun have touched our faces it has also reflected in the Magazine content."

SOFIA: I like it but I think it would be better if you delete a few words...

ISAK: Wich words in particular?

SOFIA: All of them.

ISAK: Great editorial work Sofia. Back to square one.

SOFIA: Kill your darlings.

SOFIA KEEPS THINKING about what to write and finally comes up with an idea.

SOFIA: Do you know what people like?

ISAK: What are you getting at?

SOFIA: Puppies. People love them. In all shapes and forms. People don't want to read about foreign affairs. People want to see puppies. Let's just leave the editors note with a picture of a puppy.

ISAK: But it doesn't really reflec...

SOFIA LOOKS AT Isak with her puppy eyes.

ISAK: Puppies it is.



ISAK FRITZON & SOFIA GJERTSSON
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

TEAM

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF:

ISAK FRITZON
SOFIA GJERTSSON

ERLEND MALMER
HENRIC SVENNINGSSON
RUI JOHNSON PETRI

ERLEND MALMER
HENRIC SVENNINGSSON
JESSE WASSON

LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHERS:

ISAK FRITZON
SOFIA GJERTSSON

REPORTERS:

ISAK FRITZON
SOFIA GJERTSSON
EMMA EHRENBORG
ANNA JASTRZEMBSKA
SUHAIB M. IBRAHIM
GABRIEL ZETTERSTRÖM
MORITZ NEUBAUER
FREDRIK FAHLMAN
RUI JOHNSON PETRI
LIZAVETA ZHUK
VIDAR WIRÉN GIMLE
ABRISHAM AHMADZADEH
LOUISE MOBERG
STUART STOKELD

ILLUSTRATIONS:

SIGNE DAVIDSON
TILDA KAJBJER

PRINT:

TRYDELLS TRYCKERI AB

EDITION:

700

CONTACT:

UTRIKESPOLITISKA
FÖRENINGEN
SANDGATAN 2
223 50 LUND
MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE

This material is entirely or partly financed by SIDA, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. SIDA does not necessarily share the opinions found in the magazine. The responsibility for the content rests fully on the writer.



CONTENT

4. PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

6. WORLD BRIEF

8. GUEST ARTICLE

10. 'FALL FALL, THAT IS ALL'
PEOPLE OF SUDAN ARE RISING

14. TURKEY IN SYRIA:
COUNTER-TERRORISM OR ETHIC
CLEANSING?

**18-67. THEME:
IDENTITY POLITICS**

20. THE BELARUS CASE: IS
THERE HOPE FOR EQUALITY?

24. SAMI WITHOUT SAMI RIGHTS

27. IDENTITY AND SHARED
SPACE: IMPLICATIONS OF THE
BORDER IN IRELAND

30. STUDENTS VOICES ON
IDENTITY AND BREXIT

34. UNVEILING AN INVISIBLE
ORIENTATION

37. THE LOSERS OF GLOBALI-
SATION

40. THE VIOLENT STRUGGLE
FOR THE CHINESE NATIONAL
IDENTITY

42. THE BACKLASH OF IDENTITY
POLITICS

46. FIGHTING FOR LIBERAL IDEN-
TITY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM
IN HUNGARY

50. SWAPPING SUITCASES

52. MORAL AMBIGUITY: THE
CASE OF THE GLOBAL GAG RULE

56. THE INTRICACY AND IMPOR-
TANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

59. SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS
IN AFRICA

62. THE UNIVERSITY AS A
BATTLEGROUND

66. IDENTITY OF POLITICS

The Perspective Magazi-
ne is the member maga-
zine of the Association of
Foreign Affairs at Lund
University, published
quarterly each year. The
magazine has no affilia-
tions with any political
parties. Opinions present-
ed are the writers' own.



PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

At the start of our operation year, we sat down to consider what we as presidents would like to envision for the association. A cluster of ideas on a messy 15-page document, we had a range of visions for what we wanted to accomplish. Still unsure about the different challenges that lay ahead, one thing was of particular importance in our coming journey: to ensure a sustainable and comfortable environment for our board and members, so that they can together realize their ambitions.

LOOKING BACK NOW, we learned a couple of very important things. Considering the things that we have accomplished thus far, and the new projects and ideas that spur up each day from our board and members, there is no limit to what we can do. We possess a tremendous range of competences that always bring something new to our everyday work, and from what we have seen, this capacity has been well-reflected in the events and content we create. Now in order to do this, we of course needed to ensure a safe space for everyone. But this was never simply our task, and it has been up to everyone involved to listen, emphasize, and stand up for everyone's right to be heard and leave their mark on the association. We know that there is always room for improvement in this regard, but the most important lesson we have drawn is that whenever one of us struggles, there will always be someone offering a helping hand.

NOW WE ONLY have about three months left of operations for 18-19, but there are still so many exciting things to come.

WE HAVE BEGUN the process of electing a new board, which will be decided at the annual meeting on the 11th of May. The travel committee is once again taking off and this time, they will land in Tbilisi, Georgia. The lecture and activity committees are planning a range of interesting and fun events for the sunny days ahead, including an EU-week, and, of course, the annual UPF Ball at Grand Hotel which will be held for the third time. Our media committees continue to produce thought-provoking articles and podcasts for us to enjoy with the morning coffee. The career committee is busy with the prep course and mentorship programmes to prepare us for work in the exciting and demanding world of foreign affairs. And of course, the PR committee is working hard to spread our amazing work in Lund and beyond... Not to forget, they're finally getting us sweatshirts!

LAST BUT NOT least, the Nordic Convention on International Affairs will take place for the first time on the 24th to 26th of May. After months of hard work by the project group, we will finally be able to bring you the weekend we've all been waiting for, full of interesting lectures, seminar, a career fair, and plenty of opportunities to connect with students from Sweden and the Nordic countries.

THE COLD DAYS are soon over and the temperature is slowly rising (for better or for worse). We hope that the sun will bring more smiles to our faces and motivation to fulfil the important goals we have set out. However, we can't always rely on sunshine, so remember to continue supporting each other all the way so that we can all finish 18/19 with a bang!



MICHAL GIEDA & ZIGNE EDSTRÖM
PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

BOARD 2018-2019

PRESIDENT:

MICHAL GIEDA
PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE

VICE PRESIDENT:

ZIGNE EDSTRÖM
VICE.PRESIDENT@UPFLUND.SE

TREASURER:

SIMON LEO
TREASURE@UPFLUND.SE

SECRETARY:

CHRISTOPHER ANDERSSON
SECRETARY@UPFLUND.SE

LECTURE COMMITTEE:

ANDREW M. NIWAGABA
JESPER OLSSON
JONATHAN GARBE
LECTURE@UPFLUND.SE

PR COMMITTEE:

JOEL EKSTRÖM
JULIA VÁZQUEZ SANTIAGO
PR@UPFLUND.SE

ACTIVITY COMMITTEE:

LOUISE GRÖNSUND
NINA LANGELOT
ACTIVITY@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE MAGAZINE:

SOFIA GJERTSSON
ISAK FRITZON
MAGAZINE@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE WEBZINE:

SIGNE DAVIDSON
TIMOTHY PARKER
WEBZINE@UPFLUND.SE

THE PERSPECTIVE RADIO:

OLGA RUDAK
JONATAN KLEFBOM
RADIO@UPFLUND.SE

CAREER COMMITTEE:

ENDRIT BYTYQI
HENRIETTA TUOMAILA
CAREER@UPFLUND.SE

TRAVEL COMMITTEE:

COLETTE HEEFNER
MATILDA WILHELMSSON
TRAVEL@UPFLUND.SE

UFS REPRESENTATIVE:

HANNES BERGGREN
LUND@UFSVERIGE.ORG

HEAD OF IT:

JACOB WOLLHEIM
IT@UPFLUND.SE



HUMAN RIGHTS CHANGE FOR ALL

Raoul Wallenberg at his graduation 1930

RAOUL WALLENBERG INSTITUTE

OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

We combine evidence-based human rights research with direct engagement in close collaboration with our partners to bring about human rights change for all.

The institute is named after Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Jews and other people at risk in Hungary at the end of World War II.

Want to know more about our work? Sign up for our newsletter at www.rwi.lu.se or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter & LinkedIn

1.

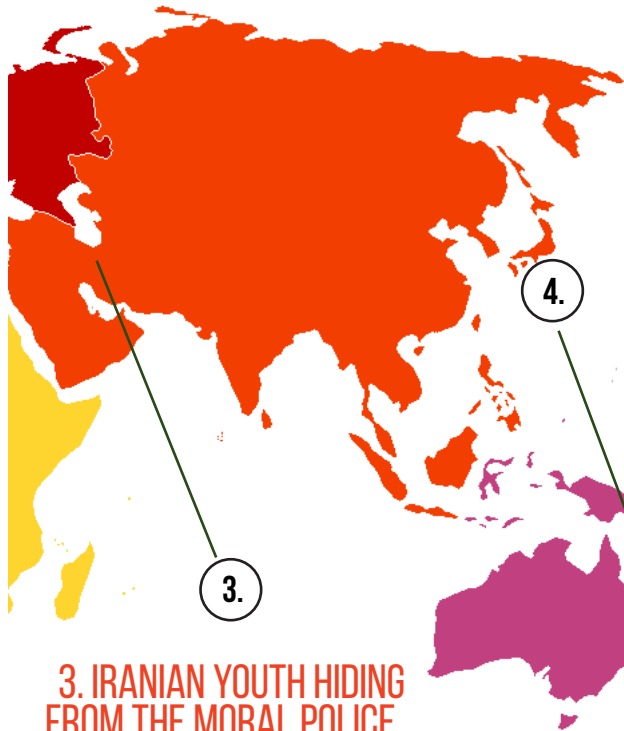
1. LIBERAL SPRING FOR POLAND?

Every other week Poland makes headlines when the newest ideas of its conservative government enrage the world. Along with Hungary, the two countries are often called “illiberal democracies.” However, just in time for the European and Polish parliamentary elections, there seems to be a ray of hope. This February saw the formation of a new centre-left party called Spring (pl. Wiosna). The party is inspired by the Scandinavian model and its core ideas concern gender equality, civil partnerships for same-gender couples, green politics, and increasing the political participation of the citizens. Spring is headed by Robert Biedron, who was the first openly gay Polish MP in the 2000s, as well as the founder of one of the biggest Polish LGBTQ+ organizations (Campaign Against Homophobia) and an advisor to the UN. The proposed transformations to the retirement and health care funds seem to be positively resounding with the society. In an interview Biedron stated that Poles are “no longer scared of gays and lesbians” and they are ready for a liberal change. Less than a month after its formation, Spring became the third most supported party in the country with a 16% support. ●

2.

2. END OF THE 20-YEAR RULE?

Tens of thousands of Algerians have been taking part in nationwide protests since February 10th when the Algerian 82 years old president Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika announced his candidacy for a fifth term in office. He has been ruling the country for 20 years (with major health issues for the last six months) since 1999 when he won a controversial election amid the black decade in Algeria, a bloody 10 years civil war. On the 4th of March, he formalized his candidacy. After weeks of protests and just a few days of his candidacy formalization, the president bowed to the pressure and withdrew his candidacy. The election was due to be held on 18th of April, but the latest official statement also included postponing it without putting a specific date. The official statement also said that a convention would be called to write a new constitution and that a new government would be formed. Those decisions were considered a partial victory for the people's movement. However, the protests want more change. The demands of Algerians are not limited simply to a delay in the elections, and the dropping of a fifth term. They want a transition period and a government of national consensus. ●



3. IRANIAN YOUTH HIDING FROM THE MORAL POLICE

The youth in Iran are fighting back on the regimes “dress code”. Iran has long been a place where going out without clothing that is accepted by the regime is against the law. However, with the technology of today, the youth of Iran have come up with a solution to their problem. The app Gershad allows the youth to keep track of where the moral police are and with that helping them to avoid the police. Many see this as a positive thing, as the youth standing up to the regime in order for them to have the life and future they want. The app is based on people who spot the police writing where they are, allowing others to see where the moral police are and they can, therefore, avoid that place. Even though the app has many supporters there are some who remain critical. Seeing it as a way to disrupt the police authority which can be considered as something negative. However, the majority seem to think the app is something positive. Whether it is to avoid the moral police in order to wear what you want, or if you see it as standing up to a regime you do not agree with. ●

4. #EGGTIVISM

The video of a teenager egging the Australian far right Senator, Fraser Anning, has turned into an internet sensation. The incident followed a statement from Anning blaming Muslims for the Christchurch shooting, in New Zealand, calling Islam; “the religious equivalent of fascism”. Anning received a lot of criticisms for the statement that later was removed. One of the critics was Australia’s prime minister Scott Morrison. “The remarks by Senator Fraser Anning blaming the murderous attacks by a violent, right-wing, extremist terrorist in New Zealand on immigration are disgusting. Those views have no place in Australia, let alone the Australian Parliament” he wrote on Twitter, referring to Anning’s statement. A lesser-known critic was the 17-year-old boy, Will Connolly, now more known as Eggboy, who threw a raw egg at senator Anning during a news conference. Connolly fast turned into a world known hero for standing up against racism and bigotry with his rather unique take at activism. A GoFundMe page was started dedicated to Eggboy, with the intention to cover his legal fees and to buy him more eggs. Eggboy has decided to donate most of the money raised in his name to the victims in the Christchurch shooting. Eggs are one of the most versatile foods and looking at the Eggboy incident it can also be put to effective use in activism.

IDENTITY CRISIS IN POLITICS

Identity politics is the common factor that binds the populist left and the populist right together and nourishes the polarization that we see in almost all western countries. People argue over who has the best right instead of what is best for the society.

Since today's politics has shifted from class to culture, the old distinction between left and right has lost its meaning. The universalistic mindset has been forgotten and been replaced by a particularistic one, where societies are driven by emotion rather than ideology.

TO TRULY UNDERSTAND identity politics, we need to be aware that it begins with the reactionary right, but it does not end with the reactionary right. Identity politics has its roots in racism and nationalism as a reaction against the era of Enlightenment. During the 19th century nationality, race and ethnicity were used as tools for emphasizing that there were particular values embodied in group identities.

AS RADICALS, LATER on, challenged inequality and oppression they did it in name of universal rights. They argued that equal rights belong to all, and it fueled movements that have formed our modern society, such as the suffragettes, the fight for LGBTQ rights and the civil-rights movement in America.

IDENTITY POLITICS LATER provided a function in the struggle against oppression through the perspective of minorities own culture, ideas and visions. But as time has taken its toll, identity has become a meaning in itself, where identity politics rather has the function of dividing than uniting. For many people, politics has become a collective action in pursuit of increasing the benefit based on, ethnicity, group of belonging or culture rather than a vision of what values we want in our society. As the left's earlier successes always were connected to the universalistic thinking figure with; equal healthcare, equal education, child benefits and so on, identity politics focuses on specific excluding measures, such as quotations. Something that creates frustration for the people who does not reap the benefits of these measures.

THE PROBLEM WITH identity politics is not that people demand that the group you belong to should be treated with respect or demanding that you should not be discriminated against. Women's claim for equal pay and the black people of America's protests against the police brutality are legitimate.

The problem is when these groups claim that their own experience of discrimination is the one and only truth. A truth that can't be understood by someone outside of the group.

THE PROBLEM IS when an experience is as seen as a substitute to facts or even trumps expertise. People have their own right to describe their experience but shouldn't have the right to dictate the narrative of history based on their own experience. The society should strive for creating a meritocratic society where people's knowledge and competence is what's important. Not gender, religion, ethnicity or colour of skin.

THE IDENTITY-DRIVEN LEFT can't believe that a white middle-aged male judge can give a black gay woman a fair sentence. As the same time, the identity and populist right can't believe that a black and gay woman judge can give a white middle-aged man a fair sentence. Because both of these groups believe that ethnic and cultural aspects are far more important than competence.

AN EXAMPLE OF what happens when identical politics influence decision makers is the Swedish left-wing parties latest swing and miss. A month ago, the party voted that the Statistical Central Organization (SCB) should start collecting data over citizens focusing on ethnicity, religion, skin colour and sexual orientation. Some weeks later the environmental party's parliamentarian Leila Ali Elmi followed.

IF THIS SHOULD become reality it's like opening Pandora's box. It doesn't matter if the intentions are good. A state that registers citizens religion, ethnicity, race and sexual orientation is a state that opens up for this to be used in politics. The focus on identity in politics has made categorizing legitimate again, it puts minorities in ethnic and cultural boxes, which divides societies and creates polarization but unites left-populism and right-populism. ●

Disclaimer: I'm Jewish and a minority, so you can in no way criticize this text.



Tobias Schreiber

“FALL FALL, THAT IS ALL” PEOPLE OF SUDAN ARE RISING

In Sudan, 54 people died during anti-government protests which are approaching their fourth month, and mainstream media isn't covering it. Here is what's going on there.



Photo: Private

On the 19th of December 2018, massive spontaneous protests sparked in many cities across Sudan. They were ignited by the shortage of fuel and bread, which lead to rapid prices inflation in addition to cash deficit. People had spent the last months in long continuous queues at the gas stations, ATMs, and bakeries. The demonstrations broke out first in the provincial city of Atbara, and quickly spread to Khartoum. They quickly escalated and picked up by various social groups, and supported by the opposition and political elite. It then furthered the demands of wanting to overthrow the regime. These protests are the longest wave of anti-government protests. They are considered the strongest, largest, most widely spread and threatening to the regime, one which seized power in a coup in 1989 and has stayed in power since.

THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT was in the middle of implementing an economic recipe described by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2011, to mitigate the economic crisis ensued South Sudan secession. The major measure that ignited this movement was lifting subsidies on basic commodities, gas and wheat, exacerbating the suffering of the already poor population.

“

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IS JUST A
MANIFESTATION OF AN UNDERLY-
ING POLITICAL STRANGULATION
AND GOVERNANCE FAILURE.

SUDAN LOST ABOUT three-quarters of oil production, two-thirds of exports, and half of the fiscal revenues in the secession in 2011. Since then the government has failed to provide sustainable solutions to the crisis despite the country's excess of natural resources. Instead, it opted for temporary solutions and relied on grants from its Arab allies (KSA, Qatar, UAE) and kept ignoring and postponing the impending economic collapse.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS is just a manifestation of an underlying political strangulation and governance failure. This made the very idea of any reform under this authoritarian regime seems very difficult, if not impossible due to the high political cost of this reform, which will inevitably be faced by those who are advantaging from the status quo. Moreover, the regime has always adopted a security mentality and repressed the opposition in order to stay in power, while simultaneously running the national economy in a reckless and irresponsible manner.

TO STAY IN power, the regime has always employed the same measures. It used intimidation, levelled conspiracy accusations against protesters and most importantly presented itself as the only eligible alternative to total chaos. An efficient rhetoric, considering the fact that Sudan has witnessed two big revolutions against two dictatorships (1964 & 1985), resulting in nothing but the worsening the situation for the Sudanese people. More recently, the Sudanese population have been discouraged by the Arab Spring development which has in turn discouraged them from taking to the streets themselves. The people know that the country is in a fragile political situation and almost approaching its tipping point if exposed to any thoughtless disruption. This trump card was successfully played by the government to contain any unrest.

NOW WITH NOTHING but frustration, total failure, and the prospect of a governmental collapse -and potentially the state-, people are no longer scared. They have come to the realization that this government has to step down, and the longer it stays in power, the more costly this change will be. They have realized the price and have shown willingness to pay it, even if the cost is their lives.

SINCE DAY ONE of the movement, the government followed two parallel tactics to defuse the protests. firstly, through their media discourse, describing the protestors as infiltrators, saboteurs and traitors in an attempt to isolate them from the population base, which will enable repressing them and legitimize aggressive cracking down on the protests. Second tactic was using violent and brutal force -even live ammunition- in cracking down on demonstrations. They mobilized security forces to chase, arrest and torture the protesters in order to intimidate them. According to human rights organisations there are now 54 death tolls.



Photo: Wikimedia

TO THE GOVERNMENT'S surprise, these measures failed completely this time. Instead, they spurred protests to expand, gaining social grounds among different society segments. This pushed the government to shift its initial media discourse, and instead admitting to the fair concerns and legitimate claims of Sudan's youth. At the same time, they maintained harsh security measures and even accused the protestors of the killings that their forces had committed. This was an accusation that failed miserably in the era of smart-phones live-streaming the killings on social media. This pushed the government to retreat from this narrative to admitting responsibility.

LATER, THE REGIME announced its intention to engage in a dialogue with youth to work on addressing their concerns and resolving the existing issues. This was received with a complete rejection from the crowds and the political opposition due to the accumulated distrust in the regime. They believed it was just a tactic used by the government to contain anger and buy more time. That's why they stuck to one specific slogan (Fall Fall, that's all), shutting all doors for any dialogue with the government and demanding solely to overthrow the regime. A slogan that might not be politically smart, but manifests the frustration imbuing the population.



PROTESTERS THIS TIME have adopted new tactics, both on the ground and on the media discourse in order to reach out to a broader audience and to mobilize more diversified society segments. The protestors united behind the banner of one entity; Sudanese professional Association (SPA). An entity that was founded some years ago, but never had any appearance in the political scene. SPA was very successful in uniting people, mobilizing diverse groups, leading and organizing the demonstrations on a large extent countrywide, which earned them a sort of revolutionary legitimacy.

ON THE 22ND of February the president Omar El-Bashir came out in a speech with many unprecedented announcements, applying deep surgeries to the governmental body. It's a clear indication that those protests have shaken up the system and prompted it to make major decisions in an attempt to please the demonstrators. El-Bashir declared a state of emergency for one year, dissolved the central government, sacked all the state governors and appointed a full military government. He was playing his last card and leaning towards the military support to stay in power. These measures did not please the protestors who still wish the regime to step down. They have shown good political awareness and understanding of the

“

THE PEOPLE HAVE COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT THIS GOVERNMENT HAS TO STEP DOWN, AND THE LONGER IT STAYS IN POWER, THE MORE COSTLY THIS CHANGE WILL BE.

political dynamics. Their commitment to peaceful demonstrations has pressured the regime which tried to push the protestors towards violence to legitimize using force against them.

AT THE TIME of writing this article, this movement is still ongoing and the political scene seems to be open for all options. However, what has been established so far is irreversible. Now, the political

scene involves a new prominent player, and that is the population and especially the youth. They took the initiative and put the pressure on the traditional political powers (government and opposition) to accommodate the youth and their fair demands and live up to the historical responsibility to save the country a bloody transition. The change seems to be inevitable. Now what really concerns people, is which path and at what cost it will come?! ●





TURKEY IN SYRIA: COUNTER-TERRORISM OR ETHNIC CLEANSING?

One year ago, Turkey engaged in a military operation near its southern border on the basis of counter-terrorism. Ankara considers it a success, with little to no civilian casualties. In interviews with The Perspective, locals who experienced the war say they are being discriminated against and forcefully displaced.

In late January 2018, Turkish tanks and Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels crossed into Afrin from their bases in Turkey, in an operation dubbed Olive Branch. Afrin is a region in northwestern Syria, which has been controlled by the Syrian-Kurdish movement Democratic Union Party (PYD) since civil war erupted in the country. While they are strategic partners to the United States, Ankara considers the group a terrorist organization.

THE PYD CONTROLLED parts of Afrin until March 24th, when they lost their last territory and began conducting guerrilla warfare. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan had said earlier that he aimed to give Afrin back to its rightful owners, without specifying who those owners might be. Turkey and the FSA have since been accused of attempting to demographically change Afrin from its Kurdish majority to an Arab and Turkmen one. The latest in a string of allegations comes from American congressman Tom Garrett. He visited northern and eastern Syria in December and later spoke about people who have been forcefully displaced from their homes.

ONE OF THOSE who lost their home is Hasan. Originally from Aleppo, Syria, he and his family fled to Jindires, close to the Turkish border, due to the fighting in Aleppo. In Jindires, he was teaching courses in English and Arabic when he once again experienced the war first hand.

“JINDIRES CAME UNDER very intense bombardment. Our house was struck by artillery three times. We were only counting on luck that we wouldn’t be hit. The Turkish army and rebels fired at everything,” he tells The Perspective via WhatsApp.

HIS FAMILY FEARED being captured by Turkey and its proxies. After a few days, they fled to his fa-

ther’s house, seven kilometers away from the fighting, where they stayed for a month. But the frontline kept drawing closer and they soon had to leave again. In late-February, the family went to Hasan’s aunt’s village close to Afrin city, but this stay was also short-lived. Hasan remembers the day well.

“MARCH 17TH WAS the hardest day of our lives. Warplanes and artillery targeted Afrin indiscriminately and I was sure that death was certain for us. My son was injured in one attack. We had already packed the most vital things in our car and rushed for it, but everyone tried to escape at the same time. The drive to safety would normally take an hour but it took us thirty hours to get there. None of us slept”, Hasan says.

SINCE THAT DAY, Hasan and his family have lived in Shahba, south of Afrin, which is jointly controlled by the Syrian government and the PYD. A while after being displaced he learned from a previous neighbor that the roof of his old house had been repaired, but also that fighters belonging to the FSA had moved in.

“

I WOULD BE ARRESTED,
TORTURED, RAPED AND
MAYBE KILLED.

– Lorin, in response to what would happen to her if the FSA found out she had been talking to journalists.



Photo: Private

Hasan's old house in Jindires, now occupied by FSA forces. The text on the wall reads "Forbidden. (Belonging to FSA group) Faylaq al Rahman". The crossed out text reads "Civilian", again followed by "Faylaq al Rahman", indicating that the house has changed ownership several times. Photo by Hasan's neighbor, republished with Hasan's permission.

AT THE CAMP, while continuing his work as an English teacher, he came into contact with Vian and Alan, young children who had also been displaced from Jindires. Their mother told Hasan that FSA fighters from China had moved into their old home.

THE CHILDREN'S MOTHER suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder after the artillery strikes. In one of the attacks, her husband received a head injury, which resulted in mental impairment. Vian and Alan go to school in turns, as one must always stay at home to take care of both parents and their family's small shop.

WHILE MOST KURDS fled, some still live in Afrin. Lorin* is a woman in her late twenties still living in Afrin city, where she is originally from. According to her, the region was secular under the PYD's administration, but it has since turned radically Islamic in a short time. She says she is forced to wear a headscarf, alcohol has been banned, and families of FSA fighters have moved into houses previously occupied by Kurds.

"AT FIRST I didn't want to have this conversation", Lorin tells The Perspective. "If the FSA saw me

writing these things I would be arrested, tortured, raped and maybe killed. But people should know what is happening here".

LIKE HASAN, LORIN used to work as an English teacher before Olive Branch. Her husband was a lawyer. She says qualified work is impossible for Kurds to find now; she is unemployed, and her husband is working as a farmer. They are saving money to leave like most of their friends and family did, but because they recently had a baby, it is both inconvenient and expensive. In the current situation, she sees no future for Kurds in Afrin.

“

WE HAVE TAKEN UTMOST CARE TO AVOID CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.

– Turkey's foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, regarding operation Olive Branch.

“WHEN THE FSA moved in, they started arresting people at random. They call us nonbelievers, kidnap Kurds, and demand ransom from their families. Turkey allows this. Road signs, schools and municipal buildings have changed names from Kurdish to Arabic and Turkish since they came. Kurds that left are not allowed back and there are only the flags of the FSA and Turkey flying over official buildings”, she says.

ANKARA IS SHARPLY at odds with these allegations. While the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not reply to The Perspective’s enquiry for a comment, they have repeatedly argued for the necessity of military action.

WHEN EGYPT REJECTED the operation, Turkey’s response read, “the claims that the operation is violating the rights of civilians and deepening the humanitarian crisis in Syria are not true. The operation has rescued the civilian population from the oppression of a terrorist organization and paved the way for sustainable security and stability”.

TURKEY’S FOREIGN MINISTER, Mevlut Cavusoglu, has described his government’s reasoning in opinion pieces published in The New York Times and Foreign Policy. There, he argues that the PYD is not a true representation of Kurds in Syria, and he denounces allegations of war crimes that have been attributed to Turkey and the FSA.

“THE TRUTH IS that we have taken utmost care to avoid civilian casualties”, Cavusoglu says. He argues that the operation is necessary to combat terrorism and that it is vital for Turkish border security. “Terrorists in the Afrin region in Syria were menacing the lives and property of both the people of the region and Turks along the border”, he continues.

LORIN DISAGREES STRONGLY when she sees this. “Kurdish lives and property are in danger now, not before. The invaders have killed more than five hundred civilians and stole half of our olive oil harvest last fall. PYD are not terrorists, the jihadists that came here are”, she says. ●

**For her safety, Lorin is a pseudonym and not her real name.*



| Afrin locals fleeing the city as the fighting draws closer. Photo by Hasan.

Photo: Private

The image features a dark green background with a subtle pattern of small, light green leaves and branches. Six hexagonal frames are arranged in a honeycomb pattern, each containing a photograph of a large crowd of young people. The people are dressed in casual attire, and the overall atmosphere suggests a social event or festival. The word "IDENTITY" is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the image, with a slight shadow effect.

IDENTITY

POLITICS

IDENTITY POLITICS SEEM to be the new buzzword around the world. The term first came to use in the 1960s and has grown ever since. Identity politics serves as a way to give voice to those who feel oppressed and what makes identity politics so interesting is that it is driven by self-interest. This makes the political questions very opinionated.

WHEN WE THOUGHT of this theme, we saw it as an opportunity to dig deep into what identity politics means. We have a broad range of articles discussing different aspects of the topic such as intersectionality, asexuality, the global gag-rule, China's quest for national identity, the yellow vest movement, the sovereignty of regions in Africa, and much more.

THE BELARUS CASE: IS THERE HOPE FOR EQUALITY?

“The women’s place is in the kitchen,” –
in Western countries, this phrase no longer accurately reflects
the state of inequality between men and women. Unfortunately,
it still finds resonance in many countries. But, some countries like
Belarus, despite all the constraints, start acting on it to change the
situation for the better.

A culture of silencing problems is embedded in Belarusian society. Both the historical background and the controlling nature of the state influences the people's ability to speak up and give the issues of inequality the required space. Despite some visible progress, the position between men and women in Belarus remains uneven. For example, according to the Belarusian National Academy of Science, every other woman has experienced violence.

INEQUALITY AND UNFAIR treatment affect women and men unevenly, where women remain at a significant disadvantage. Yet, there are few civil society organizations that are actively undertaking efforts to make the issue more visible, and potentially heard. One such example is a campaign including an art project launched by a number of Belarusian activists to shed light on the issues that are usually being silenced.

“
DESPITE SOME
VISIBLE PROGRESS,
THE POSITION BETWEEN
MEN AND WOMEN
REMAIN UNEVEN

IT ALL STARTED with one of the most resonating news of summer 2018, a so-called “BelTA case.” BelTA stands for the Belarusian Telegraph Agency, which is one of the biggest state-owned news agencies in the country. That summer, several other independent media agencies were accused of illegal access to the paid subscription of BelTA. Soon enough the searches of the media agencies' premises, seizure of electronic evidence and detention of several journalists and editors-in-chief, followed the accusations.

WHEN COMMENTING ON this situation, journalist Dmitry Kriat published the following on his Facebook page: “I do not know these women personally. And maybe they are quite nice and very useful (literally translated from Russian – convenient) when it comes to household duties. But, in the professional sense, they are extremely annoying.” The whole campaign grew out of this statement. The activists revealed later that they think that these kinds of statements are symptomatic and repetitively used in the public discourse when referring to women's professional performance.

I HAD A chance to talk to some people standing behind the project called #ConvenientWomen who tell more in detail why they decided to launch it and how it has grown since.

(Q) WHY HAVE YOU DECIDED TO LAUNCH THIS CAMPAIGN? AND WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU PERSONALLY?

ANTONINA STEBUR:

“This project “Women's place is in the kitchen” or #ConvenientWomen was born almost out of nowhere, impulsively. I remember that my colleague, Anna Karpenko, and I, were abroad when all the events were taking place. We were really worried about the detained journalists. And the last drop was a statement of Dmitry Kriat. The specific part about the “convenience of women when it comes to the household duties” seemed to us not only insulting but symptomatic. Yes, the Belarusian society still remains quite patriarchal: household duties are still mostly carried out by women. They also earn, on average, three times less than men. So, we didn't want to leave it as it is. We decided to use this reference and see what we can do about it. We wanted to show that discrimination does exist in the Belarusian society and that women do not want to be “convenient.”

ANNA KARPENKO:

“I think that gender perspective is always somewhat personal. I always wanted to keep this personal vibe. Before the launch of this project, we were frequently discussing with Antonina the topics connected to the role of women not only in the history of art but in different forms of social representations. I think our conversations eventually has grown into this project, which is a sort of art activism or, how we call it, activism.”

LIZA KAPCHIKOVA:

"I was inspired by stories of courageous and successful Belarusian women. I wanted to show them to the public. I have chosen several women that significantly contributed to the development of Belarus. For example, Nadia Khodasevich Léger – a girl from a remote village who was adventurous, followed her heart and became an artist in Paris."

SIARHEI HUDZILIN:

"For me, this is an opportunity to shed light on the issue of inequality and to speak up about the discrimination that women face in the Belarusian society. To some extent, this is also a desire to react to the foolish things that people share on Facebook without thinking about the consequences."

(Q) WHAT COMPONENTS DOES THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDE?

ANTONINA STEBUR:

"The project includes two components. The first one is called "instructions" where we talk about gender discrimination, economic inequality, and distribution of household work. The second is called "portraits" where we want to showcase strong and committed women who significantly contributed to the history of Belarus. The women we can be proud of and who can be role models for girls and women today."

ANNA KARPENKO:

"We also launched a "challenge" and a fundraising campaign to support the different parts of the project. More than 300 people already took part in this challenge. It consists of publicly sharing a personal story of discrimination with a #ConvenientWomen hashtag."

(Q) WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN SAYING "INSTRUCTIONS"?

ANDREI STEBURAKO:

"We worked with statistical data on gender-related issues in Belarus. When we were thinking about how to illustrate what we do, the reference of the journalist came in handy. We just took it literally and showed "successful examples of using women in households." We were inspired by the instructions for furniture assembly, like the ones that you can find in IKEA. However funny the result turned out to be, unfortunately, I think that this is an allusion."

(Q) DO YOU THINK THAT THIS CAMPAIGN IS CAPABLE OF

PRODUCING A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY?

ANNA KARPENKO:

"We are very critical in terms of the influence that such initiatives can produce in patriarchal societies. You will reach the people that share the same values anyway. The problem is to reach the people who still think it's okay, for example, to discipline their children using violent measures instead of positive parenting. Here we meet difficulties. As there is no space for open discussions on socially important issues, any act of speaking up is considered to be a criticism of the existing regime. Therefore, we do clearly understand that we are not talking about change, but rather about formulating the issue and making it more visible."

LIZA KAPCHIKOVA:

"It's unfortunate that in Belarus society the people are used to silence the issues. That is why I like that #ConvenientWomen is a provocation that pushes people to think about the roles of men and women in the society, about relationships, changes, and compromises."

“

WE WANTED TO SHOW
THAT DISCRIMINATION
DOES EXIST
AND THAT WOMEN
DOES NOT WANT TO BE
"CONVENIENT"

IT IS HARD not to agree with the fact that despite all the small and scattered initiatives taking place in Belarus, the situation changes slowly. But it can already be seen how these sporadic initiatives start gaining strength by joining and supporting each other. The desired equality between men and women is still not the priority for the country, but its recognition and importance grow and becomes more important for ordinary people thanks to initiatives like #ConvenientWomen that break it down, make it simple, but, more importantly, shed light on the issue. The vision is equality. The country is Belarus. The changes happens slowly, but more and more steady. ●

A WOMAN

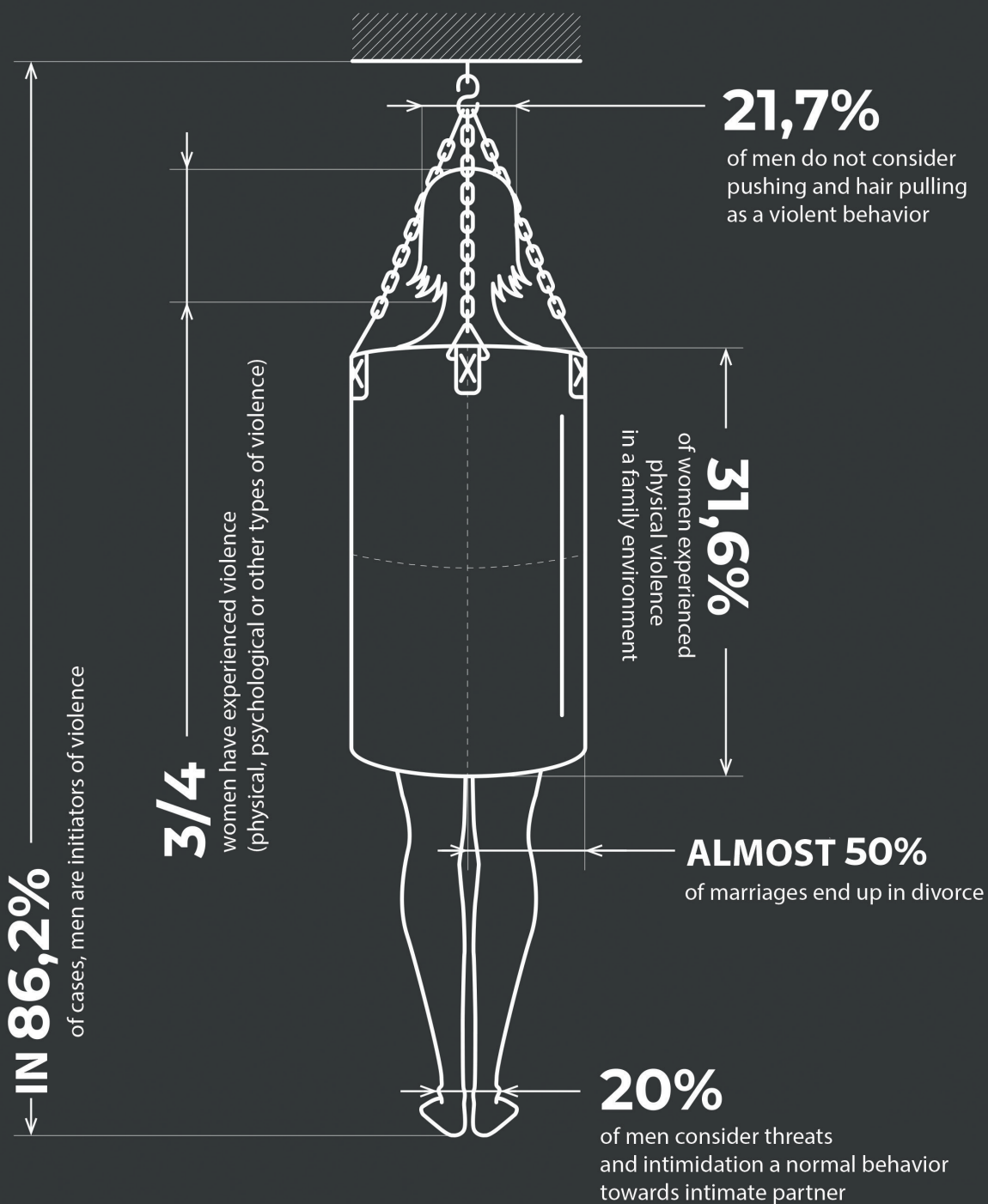




Photo: Morten Oddvik / flickr

SAMI WITHOUT SAMI RIGHTS

Today the traditional practice of reindeer husbandry is protected under Swedish law as an exclusive right for the Sami for the safeguarding of their indigenous rights. However, the legislation has also had major negative impacts on Sami identity and questions of self-definition.

Some findings suggest that the Sami have lived in the Arctic, northern parts of Sweden for thousands of years. They were originally a nomadic people, but today the majority of the Sami live in modern housing. Sami culture is rich and multifaceted. It is comprised of dialectical variations, different types of crafts and traditions, as well as various forms of industry such as fishing, hunting, and reindeer husbandry. Many Sami have moved into the larger cities. Today there are approximately 20 000 Sami living in Sweden, of which ten per cent earn a living from herding reindeer. For centuries the Sami have been discriminated against and subject to racist practices such as eugenics. Furthermore, despite having resided in northern Sweden for thousands of years, they have been denied land ownership rights up until the present day.

THE SAMI PEOPLE in Sweden have been recognized by the United Nations as an indigenous people. Meaning that Sweden has an obligation under international law to guarantee more rights to the Sami particularly in regard to land, water, and self-determination. Sometimes the level of discrimination against or interest to preserve a particular group's rights or culture requires additional protection. In some cases, this leads to laws being passed granting special rights to vulnerable social groups in order to strengthen their position in society. One example is the Reindeer Husbandry Act. The first Reindeer Husbandry Act was passed

in 1886 and was aimed at settling land ownership disputes between the Sami and local residents. Since then the act has been revised several times. In its current form, the act gives reindeer herding Sami a special entitlement to that industry, as well as the right to hunt, and fish on state-owned land.

NONETHELESS, THE REINDEER Husbandry Act stipulates clear boundaries and defines who can and cannot demand special rights as Sami. For instance, in order to claim your right to herd reindeer, you have to belong to a Sami village. So for



AS A CONSEQUENCE,
SAMI WHO DON'T
HERD REINDEER AREN'T
CONSIDERED
"GENUINE SAMI"

the Sami who belong to a Sami village, the special protection of reindeer herding is undoubtedly positive. However, membership is not guaranteed and is often capped, which means that not all Sami are able to claim their reindeer herding rights. The Swedish Supreme Court has declared that reindeer herding is a civil- and constitutional right for



THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE REINDEER HERDING ACT HAS LED TO MANY SAMI BEING DENIED THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

all Sami people. Thus, the enforcement of the act has led to many Sami being denied their constitutional rights.

FURTHERMORE, THE REINDEER Husbandry Act has had a divisive effect on Sami identity. Granting special rights requires defining the group to whom they apply. It boils down to the question of who is and isn't included. The Reindeer Husbandry Act has divided the Sami people into two groups: reindeer herders and non-reindeer herders. It has institutionalized the idea that only reindeer-herding Sami living in Sami villages are entitled to special rights. Furthermore, it has led to different rights applying to different Sami. As a consequence, Sami who doesn't herd reindeer are not considered "genuine Sami." At least not Sami enough to receive special rights.

THROUGH THE PASSING of the Reindeer Herding Act, the Swedish state has created a stereotype of the "Sami" as reindeer herders. The state has failed to recognize Sami identity as being multifaceted and differentiated. As a consequence, central elements of Sami culture are excluded, such as other forms of business, languages, and ways of living. This is a result of the Sami people never being handed the power to define their own identity in Swedish policy.

THE SWEDISH STATE has failed to recognize Sami identity as differentiated and has implemented laws that don't correlate with Sami identity as they themselves define it. A true politics of recognition would require the Swedish State to design policies that correspond with the Sami people's own definition of identity. ●



Photo: Felipe Tofani / flickr



Photo: Unsplash

IDENTITY AND SHARED SPACE

IMPLICATIONS OF THE

BORDER IN IRELAND

“Teorann” the Irish word for “border” has an alternative meaning: limitations.

The potential limits imposed by the return of a border in Ireland affect not only the movements of goods and people, but also the way we think about collective and national identity.

As Brexit negotiations drag along with seemingly no end in sight, a problem that has been ignored from the beginning remains the spanner in the works of a potential agreement. As things stand Northern Ireland, as part of Great Britain, will leave the EU, whereas the Republic of Ireland will remain. The reestablishment of a border between the two has profound implications not only because of its potential physical reality, but also its psychological resonance. This is a problem that has deep undercurrents in the national history and identity of the relevant countries, many of which continue to be ignored.

NATIONALISM IN ITS traditional form has a deep relationship with territory. The 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic asserts as a key aim “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland”. These ideas resonate deeply and have done throughout history. The Irish have asserted this right in every generation, and six times over the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. The main antagonist in these struggles has been Britain and its forces of colonialism and empire, which have maintained a presence on the island for hundreds of years till this day. The Irish claims to territory met a massive hurdle in Northern Ireland, which is a part of Britain’s union. The reasons for this are complicated, but the area was historically home to a large number of people who identified as British rather than Irish. Generally, Unionists feel a closer affinity to Britain due to their Protestant religion, in contrast to Republicans who identify with Ireland due to their Catholicism.

“

THE TROUBLES RAGED FROM 1968-98 AND DEEPENED THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN IDENTITY BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES

THE TWO GROUPS became divided along these fundamental differences in identity when the Unionists maintained power over Northern Ireland throughout the late 20th century, significantly marginalising the Republican minority. This sectarian state manifested itself through the segregation and ghettoisation of major cities such as Belfast, with the two groups having completely separate access to schools and institutions. This deeply polarised society was the melting pot for a wide range of political movements and counter-movements, many of which resulted in violence. The conflict escalated over several decades leading to the formation of paramilitary groups on both sides, such as the Irish Republican Army and Ulster Volunteer Force. They used violence and terrorism to impose their political will, and their struggle for ascendancy resulted in the death of more than 3,500 people. The conflict in Northern Ireland, known as The Troubles, raged from 1968-98 and deepened the fundamental differences in identity between the two sides, as lines drawn in the sand filled with the blood of family and friends.



IN THE CASE of such a violent conflict that was so deeply rooted in divisive identities, it was clear that any peace process would need radical solutions. The 1998 Good Friday agreement aspired to this, and was successful not only in establishing a government where power was shared between the two major parties, but also allowing a shared space to grow. It recognized that there was no winner from the zero-sum game of competing nationalisms and that framing the question of identity in terms of either British or Irish returns no good answers. It sought to move away from these static forms by allowing identity to become fluid, multiple, and subject to change. Citizens became able to identify as either British, Irish, or both. There was a concerted effort to distance from the idea that national identity is rooted in a territory. This was done through changes in articles 2 and 3 the Republic of Ireland's constitution: from claiming the whole island as national territory, to "uniting all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions".

THIS WAS VITALLY important in bringing about peace, as it represented a radical reimagination of what national identity is, and how it defines and separates people. Popular support for this on both sides of the island showed the democratic will to redefine the collective identities that had led to violence, from ideas of self and other in favour of institutions that reflected a new desire for tolerance and pluralism. In the referendums that followed, 94% in the South and 71% in the North

agreed with the changes outlined in the peace process. It is important not to gloss over divisions that still exist. In fact, there are still movements that oppose the agreement. However, it allowed the emergence of a shared space; a civilised context where dialogue about these issues could be aired. This was impossible during the height of the conflict.

IT IS THEREFORE quite ironic that Brexit, a process driven by monolithic English nationalism, is threatening to undermine this. The border between the two countries, which snakes its way through 310 miles of farmland and villages, has a deep mental significance. It makes sense that there is no better representation of division than the physical manifestation of division itself. The border becomes the perfect metaphor for the processes which have unfolded on the island. It was heavily militarized during the troubles, and crossing it meant travelling through armed checkpoints where goods and people were rigorously searched. It was a symbol of the wider conflict and was targeted by paramilitary groups on both sides. It was a fundamental pillar of the Good Friday agreement, and greater cooperation between the two nations has led to its softening. The watchtowers have been pulled down and it is now almost invisible, fading into a patchwork of farms and roads. Around 30,000 people travel across it every day without any trouble, with work and homes on either side. The shared space that has flourished on the island should be protected. A division in the territory should not be allowed to result in a dangerous division of people. ●





STUDENTS VOICES ON IDENTITY AND BREXIT

In the wake of Brexit, the long and intertwined relationship between the UK and Ireland was highlighted. I sat down with Hannah, Erin and Katie to understand their perception of national identity.

European media is currently dominated by the separation of Britain from the European Union. In the 2016 referendum, a majority of British voters decided to renounce their connection with the EU. In addition to the political aspect of Brexit, which so far has failed to provide a solution to the question of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, a more personal question arises: What does Brexit mean for the identity of young Britons and Irish?

ORIGINALLY FROM DEVON, UK, Hannah is a graduate student at the Department for Economic History

at Lund University. Erin is an undergraduate student in Law & Politics at the University College Dublin, as is Katie who studies Biomedical Science.

IDENTITY IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE AND DEPENDS ON SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR IDENTITY AND CHALLENGES THROUGH SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS?

HANNAH: My identity fluctuates and changes regularly depending on the feeling of achievement. My experiences, the way I was raised and how I overcome challenges have made me who I am. I experienced numerous challenging environments



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

due to the fact that I lived in many places.

KATIE: I believe that identity is not purely defined by one's nationality. I am immensely proud to be Irish and European but my identity as an Irish person has been challenged by those with the unfortunate habit of dismissing my country as simply being "part of Britain". It saddens me that young people from other nations are not aware of this and evokes a sense of determination to be proud of my heritage.

THE STORY OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND IS ONE OF ARMED STRUGGLE, VIOLENCE AND DEEP DIVISION BUT ALSO ONE OF FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE. DID HISTORY PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR FAMILY OR EDUCATION?

ERIN: Personally, it has played a role in my family's history because one of my parents is from Northern Ireland and I have a lot of family there. The history of the relationship with the UK plays a part in the education of every Irish person in terms of the teaching of languages and history. * For more on this look at the article by Stuart in this issue.

KATIE: From an early age, we were taught about British rule in Ireland and the injustices that were

imposed on Irish people. Traditionally, Irish Catholics were poor farmers at the mercy of British Protestant landlords. Inequality was imposed on people purely based on nationality and religion.

HANNAH: I don't think mine is the 'common' British opinion because I have lived in both the UK and Ireland, where I studied Irish history. I think many Britons are not aware of Irish history and the struggles associated with British colonial rule. However, even before moving to Ireland, history was an important aspect of my upbringing and might have contributed to forming my identity to some degree.

“

I BELIEVE BREXIT IS
A GLORIFICATION OF
BACKWARD VALUES

HOW DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR IDENTITY IN THE LIGHT OF BREXIT? IS THIS POLITICAL EVENT – A DIRECT VOTE FOLLOWING WEEKS OF POPULISTIC CAMPAIGNING THAT MIGHT SHAPE THE FUTURE, A JUNCTURE OR NOT RELEVANT FOR YOU?

HANNAH: Brexit has made me question my identity and the level of pride I have in my 'Britishness'. I believe Brexit is a glorification of backward values, people have failed to separate politics from racial bias and too much air time has been given to those with little democratic legitimacy. I do not want to associate myself with those attitudes and many British people are strongly against Brexit. There is definitely a divided British identity in the UK that is split in half between the two political camps of *leave* and *remain*.

ERIN: I suppose it depends on the outcome and the degree of loyalty the EU shows to Ireland in terms of keeping its promises on the border issue. I feel slightly more inclined to identify as a citizen of Europe as opposed to purely Irish, but I do not expect it to have any significant effects on my identity.

DID IT BECOME MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS BRITISH/ IRISH DUE TO THE BREXIT DISCUSSION? WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR FUTURE?

HANNAH: I don't think my identity changed due to this process. However, I am frightened by the future of the UK because nobody knows what will happen politically and economically. The future of the Irish border will also be tricky, nobody wants to go back to the past and re-live the Troubles either.

INFOBOX

The relative peace at the Border between Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland was a result of the Good Friday Agreement, signed in 1998. This agreement ended decades of ethno-nationalist fights with more than 50.000 casualties, known as the Troubles.

KATIE: Brexit is a frightening development for Anglo-Irish relations, especially for the youth. With regards to post-graduate opportunities, I find myself discounting the UK due to the uncertainty surrounding its future relationships with Ireland and the rest of Europe.

DID BREXIT ALREADY INFLUENCED YOUR DAILY LIFE OR DO YOU THINK IT WILL?

HANNAH: I would love to see Britain united around higher quality values that are inclusive and progressive; values that fight ignorance and unite the population. This may take some time and Brexit may push out that population that aspire to those

morals. It has influenced my way of life as I have started to consider a long-term future outside the UK.

KATIE: Our island is perceived as the victim of Brexit that needs protection in the eyes of the EU. The recent developments have encouraged me to treasure the EU citizenship and to live abroad. The future is uncertain as to how Brexit will affect daily life, especially with the border question. Ireland and Northern Ireland did not ask for this and it does not reflect how we perceive our relationships with Europe. Yet we will ultimately pay the price.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE POWER OF OUR GENERATION TO RESHAPE THE PICTURE OF NATIONALITY-BASED IDENTITY?

HANNAH: I think the majority of young people in the UK are pretty politically savvy and aware. Furthermore, the world becomes more multicultural and mixed. I will always be proud of my nationality and do hope Brexit is a blip that will pass - if it actually happens!

KATIE: I think young people appreciate how much Europe has offered us in terms of university education, travel or lack of roaming charges. Our generation can only hope that we reinstall a sense of openness and positivity in Europe. Forging relationships with other EU citizens being part of the EU enables us to be proud of our nationality and instils respect for our European counterparts. ●



Katie



Hannah



MA in Middle Eastern Studies (120 Credits)

CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, LUND UNIVERSITY

Late Admissions for Fall 2019 open on April 5th!

Our international Master programme in Middle Eastern Studies draws on the interdisciplinary contemporary research conducted at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES).

Programme Overview

The interdisciplinary Master's Programme in Middle Eastern Studies aims to develop deeper knowledge about the Middle East of today. The programme trains students in critical thinking and gives them the ability to apply this to current events and debates in and about the region. The programme also aims to educate students in social sciences theories and various research methodologies, as well as provide opportunities for the application of methodological skills.

The Middle East is analysed as a historically changeable concept, rather than a delimited geographical region. Particular emphasis is given to the processes, norms and flows that continuously shape the Middle East, such as migration, refugee ship, legal, political, social and economic conditions as well as cultural and gender constructs.

Course Design

The programme offers a combination of compulsory courses in social science methodology and theory, and elective courses related to the four research areas at CMES: Democratization and Social Development; Migration, Multicultural Societies and Minorities; Environment and Sustainable Development; and Religion, Processes of Interpretation, and Identity Formation.

The second year includes a field course in which the students carry out scientific field work or an internship, or can be devoted to exchange studies. The programme's final semester consists of a degree project, with supervision and seminars. Students' development is emphasized through supervision as well as in contacts with the research network to which the programme offers links.

Admission Requirements:

Students are required to have a Bachelor's degree equivalent to 180 credits. Oral and written language skills in English corresponding to English 6/B from a Swedish upper secondary school is a requirement. Recognition of qualifications is based on national guidelines.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website - cmes.lu.se/

Or contact buleza.emerllahu@sam.lu.se

UNVEILING AN INVISIBLE ORIENTATION

“You just haven’t met the right person yet.” How many times have you heard this sentence, from your close ones or in media? In a society oversaturated with images of romance and sex, saying that you are not attracted to anyone seems incomprehensible. But asexuals are slowly gaining a little visibility.

An asexual is someone who does not experience sexual attraction to people of any gender. It is probably the least spoken about sexual orientation, with hardly any representation in media and its existence regularly denied or ridiculed. Even Microsoft Word underlines “asexuals” in red. Meanwhile, those who come out often have

to follow it up with a definition of asexuality and its meaning for them—sometimes only to be told that they are just confused or possibly should get their hormones checked.

ASEXUALITY DOES NOT mean abstinence or waiting for marriage. It does not mean that someone is cold, prudish, or a tease. It is neither a phase nor a

THE ASEXUAL UMBRELLA

Asexuality is an umbrella term, combining a number of sexual and romantic orientations:

asexual - doesn’t experience sexual attraction to any gender

romantic asexual - experiences romantic attraction to others (same gender, cross-gender, all genders, or anywhere in-between)

aromantic asexual - doesn’t experience romantic attraction to any gender

demiromantic - experiences romantic attraction only to the people they know very well

demisexual - experiences sexual attraction only to the people they know very well

grey-romantic/sexual - experiences romantic/sexual attraction very sporadically

allosexual - a largely-accepted term for someone who experiences sexual attraction and/or doesn’t identify with the asexual umbrella

Asexuals can also be cis-, trans*, gender-fluid, agender, or anywhere in between. They can be a combination of any of the above and it adds to the confusion surrounding asexuality.



“ NO SEXUALITY IS DETERMINED
BY WHO ONE HAS SEX WITH—
IT IS ABOUT ATTRACTION.

Photo: Simon Maage/Wikipedia

choice. It does not mean that one is immature, ill, repressed, or broken. It is not related to religious or cultural factors. Asexuality simply means a lack of sexual attraction. Asexuals can date, they can get married and have children. They might engage in sexual activities and they might enjoy them. No sexuality is determined by who one has sex with—it is about attraction. People who identify as homosexual are attracted to the people of the same gender. Asexuals are attracted to no one.

EVEN THOUGH THE word “asexuality” itself is fairly new, it does not mean that asexuals appeared out of nowhere at the turn of the century. One of the most common accusations is that asexuality is just a fashionable label for people who have read about it on Tumblr and are looking for attention. It does not help that the data available on asexuals shows an overrepresentation of young people in the Western world. However, it is more related to internet accessibility, sexual education, as well as relative safety of sexual expression. Many people who experience asexuality might not have a word to describe it, or might believe that straight or gay

are the only viable options and keep “looking for the one.” Many more might fear stigma and prejudice. One of the biggest issues here is the medicalization of asexuality.

ASEXUALITY IS OFTEN misdiagnosed as a medical condition, usually linked to hormonal imbalance, mental health problems, or traumatic experiences in the past. However, while the levels of certain hormones or some medications can affect the libido, libido is not the same as the feeling of sexual attraction. Neither is asexuality caused by brain tumours, whatever “M.D. House” may have lead you to believe. However, the medical stigma continues, also within the medical community itself, which can make asexuals reluctant to talk about their orientation with their doctor or reach for the help of a therapist if they need it. The stigma also works the other way round. People suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health problems, the disabled, and those on the autistic spectrum are often assumed to be asexual. It is a harmful assumption for both sides and there is no direct link between the two.

THE RELATION BETWEEN the asexual and the LGBTQIA communities is not straightforward, either. Some asexuals feel that they are “queer” among the straight people and identify as a part of the LGBTQIA. Some identify also as gay, bi, trans*, etc. However, some are homo- or transphobic. Additionally, many people identifying as a part of the LGBTQIA have not heard about asexuality, either. Some communities embrace the asexuals, recognizing that they share some common experience. Sometimes asexuals are less welcome, as many of them “pass for straight” and, therefore, are not subjected to the same persecution and prejudice. Additionally, many of the LGBTQIA communities focus on the issues of romantic and sexual attraction, which might be alienating or even un-

(people who experience sexual attraction). The community is centred mostly around combating invisibility, raising awareness and educating people about different forms of attraction. It is about fighting stigma and prejudices, and teaching that it is okay not to feel attracted to anyone. It also teaches about consent and takes a firm stance against “corrective rape.” This is sadly not an unusual practice, often performed by the asexual’s partner or someone close to them, who thinks that they are doing the asexual a favour and that once they try sex, they will actively pursue it. Because of that, it is not uncommon for the asexuals to support the feminist and LGBTQIA movements, fighting together for equality of gender and sexual rights.

“MANY PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE ASEXUALITY MIGHT NOT HAVE A WORD TO DESCRIBE IT, OR MIGHT BELIEVE THAT STRAIGHT OR GAY ARE THE ONLY VIABLE OPTIONS AND KEEP ‘LOOKING FOR THE ONE.’”

comfortable for some asexuals. There is also some tension around the letter “A” in LGBTQIA, as it is sometimes thought to stand for “allies.”

THE ASEXUAL COMMUNITY is not a political movement. Asexuals are not fighting for any special rights and they are not any more likely to be anti-sex, anti-gay, or anti-straight than allosexuals

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT asexuality has a lot of potential as it challenges the normative stance on sex and romance. Moving away from the (mostly Western) focus on romantic and sexual attraction as “what makes us human” can alleviate a lot of cultural and religious tensions. It could mean stepping away from the constant attempts at regulating what sort of interpersonal attractions are considered “natural.” It could challenge the stages of emotional development signified by the first kiss, first romantic relationship, and first sexual encounter. It could ease the cultural pressures surrounding the construct of “virginity” and couple-based relationships. It could be a step towards the further acceptance of people identifying as a part of LGBTQIA. It could start a more positive approach to the topics of gender, sex, and sexuality, one that prioritises the issues of health and consent, instead of worrying about one’s genitals and sexual preferences. So, by all means, let’s talk about sex—or lack thereof. ●

FURTHER READING:

“*The Invisible Orientation*” by Julia Sondra Decker.
Asexual Visibility and Education Network:
www.asexuality.org



Photo: Unsplash

THE LOSERS OF GLOBALIZATION

The Yellow Vests are taking to the streets throughout France. Its luminous supporters are gaining attention all over the Western world. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008, a new identity wants to make its voice heard: the outsiders of the globalized world.

Paris' riot police are, in some of the worst riots the capital has seen since the 1968 student protests, having a tough time controlling protesters who wreak havoc in the city's fanciest neighborhoods. Surely, you know the story by now. In mid-November, proposals on raised fuel taxes were initiated and – seemingly out of nowhere – an angry, yellow vest-clad mob took to the streets, rallying thousands of protesters all over the country. When it reached Paris, the riots gained a hold on Champs-Élysées with some good old Arc de Triomphe-vandalism, which on some occasions ended in violent clashes with the police and cars being set on fire.

AS IT UNFURLED, the fuel tax rise was merely the spark that then burst into a broad protest against Macron's alleged bias in favour for the metropolitan elite. An elite that is being accused of overlooking rural France by inflicting a direct tax on diesel, as well as a carbon tax which hits disproportionately against the vast majority of people whose livelihoods are more or less dependent on the fuel. Initial government responses to the movement highlighted the aloofness of the political rulers to the real lives and concerns of the citizens, when starting to guilt-trip, as well as denigrate, the protesters for being egocentric and narrow-minded. Condescendingly, in an aim to discredit the movement at its core, disregarding parallels were drawn between the yellow vests and the "Jacquerie"; a peasant revolt in the 14th century, in the northern peripheries of France. The moral lecture: whatever small complaints the uneducated might have, how could it possibly matter in the light of the planet's apocalyptic future in terms of global warming?

IN LIGHT OF this reaction, the infamous phrase – commonly attributed to Marie Antoinette – "Qu'il's mangent de la brioche!" echoes eerily when former-Rothschild-banker-turned-politician Macron instructs an unemployed gardener to find a job "just by crossing the street!" The French president is also widely accused of caring solely about loosening labour laws and suppressing taxes on wealth – which applied to those who possessed taxable assets of more than 1.3 million – rather than focusing on raising the minimum wage. Demonstrations are continuing, even after prime minister Édouard Philippe's concessions in form of putting taxes on hold as a response to some of the move-

ment's demands, after finding it had widespread support among the population.

PARALLELS HAVE BEEN drawn to the student protests of May 1968. Only, the current protests do not consist of the cultural intelligentsia lacking personal or artistic freedom. They are rather a roar from France's forgotten periphery, simply trying to scrape by in the modern world. The heterogeneous yellow vest-movement has managed to rally protesters spanning from the extreme-right to the extreme-left, across age, profession and geographical region. Rather, it delineates an identity that has been largely overlooked. Yet, the insurrection of France's squeezed working class – to a large extent resident in small or medium-sized towns in rural or de-industrialised areas, far away from the ever-concentrated wealth and power of the modern, globalised city – seems to have found a global echo.



IT DOES SEEM LIKE LARGE PARTS OF THE WESTERN WORLD ARE NOW LOST IN AN IDENTITY AND GLOBALIZATION LABYRINTH

FRANCE SURELY HAS a track record of protests and violent uprisings; it is written in its political DNA, even since before the Revolution. But the notion of taking to the streets, wearing a yellow vest as a symbol of the feeling of being somewhat overlooked and left out of modern life, found resonance outside France's borders. The yellow vests began to spread to the neighbouring Netherlands and Belgium, as well as Greece, Germany, the UK, Poland, Canada, Israel, and Australia. Thus, the insurgencies that are taking place in Paris every weekend might be viewed as an epitome of a reaction against the "inside"–"outside" divide all over the Western world. Some protesters speak of a "yellow identity"; your average citizen – the "little guy" if you will – just trying to make ends meet.

THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL Crisis of 2008 hit hard against rural France; the disposable annual in

come has decreased by, on average, 400 per year with rising unemployment. Some scholars find that drastic changes in the socio-economic standard for large groups of people will lead to extreme conditions and a division between winners and losers of modernity. The latter will then develop a general distrust and loathing for the political and cultural establishment. It does seem like large parts of the Western world are now lost in an identity and globalization labyrinth; the notion of things happening outside of one's own reach is something that resurrects within a lot of contexts.

"TAKE BACK CONTROL" was a key phrase for the "Leave"-campaign prior to the Brexit referendum. For someone who feels that their voice in the new political landscape has been muffled, whose world has been turned upside down by forces un-

beknownst to them, the slogan spoke volumes. We can see the same tendency in Italy, in the USA, in Sweden, and in Eastern Europe. When the system came crashing down in the last global financial crisis, the taxpayer's money was what helped the very financial institutions that caused the recession to get back on their feet. A monumental feeling of exclusion followed.

THE MOVEMENT that fought to be seen in 1968 achieved the cultural representation it sought; it slowly became the elite. Due to the massive coverage the yellow vests are gaining, we are yet to see how it affects their cultural mark, and what inclusion may follow. After all, the luminescent vests – an aid supply that all French cars contain – speaks volumes: the protesters put them on to not be overrun, or simply in order to be seen at all. ●





Photo: Chi na / flickr

THE VIOLENT STRUGGLE FOR THE CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY

What strikes fear in the most powerful authoritarian regime in the world? In 1989, the answer was a loud and persistent civil movement demanding democracy. Thirty years later, the Chinese government has found new enemies: identity politics and cultural diversity.

Taiwan, Tibet and Tiananmen, known as the three T's, are all taboo subjects that are not discussed publicly in China today. The first two are famous regions where local movements have challenged the Communist Party of China (CCP) by claiming autonomy. Tiananmen, on the other hand, refers to a bloodstained incident taking place almost thirty years ago at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. On the night of the 4th of June 1989, the Chinese Liberation Army entered the square - which up till then had served as focal point for the country's democracy movement - and put a ruthless end to the demonstrations. On CCP orders thousands of students, factory workers, and teachers were murdered by the military and the Chinese democracy movement reached a devastating end.

“

THE CCP STRATEGY HAS
BEEN ALL ABOUT ONE
THING - FORGETTING

JUNE 4TH 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of the massacre. On that day, Tiananmen Square will most certainly be under heavy surveillance and the CCP will have taken all measures to stop any memorial acts from taking place. How come? Well, since the events of 1989 the CCP strategy has been all about one thing - forgetting. Huge efforts have been made by the party to repress the Chinese people's collective memory of the massacre. Through an ever increasing censorship of national media and the rewriting of educational material, the CCP has succeeded in making the Tiananmen massacre a taboo subject. Making people forget what happened has been a deliberate and very efficient strategy from the party in order to reach a clear goal. To move the weapon of identity from the Chinese people to the CCP. To give the party an uncontested monopoly on defining and narrating the concept of the Chinese national identity.

THE CURRENT PRESIDENT of China, Xi Jinping partly describes the national identity through a concept he calls his “Chinese Dream”. According to Xi's

dream the ideals of wealth, national pride, and obedience to authority are what every good Chinese citizen should strive for. Since the launch of the so-called Patriotic Education Campaign following the Tiananmen massacre, the schools promote a “victimization narrative” in their history education. The underlying tale is that China has suffered exploitation and degradation, but that the CCP is now leading the resurrection of the powerful China of old, nostalgically referred to as the “Middle Kingdom”. The purpose of the education campaign has been to spur patriotism, a positive attitude towards the CCP and an antipathy towards what is referred to as “Western ideals”. Chinese media also plays its part by systematically reporting on national and international events from a clearly patriotic and nationalist point of view.

WHY IS A monopoly on defining identity so important to the CCP and Xi Jinping? The answer is intuitive. A state that is able to foster a common national identity without any external contestation can exercise greater control over the political interests of its subordinates. Also, the monopoly serves as a protection against the destabilizing effects that diverse understandings of identity, within the Chinese society, could have on the legitimacy of the CCP.

CHINA'S RAPID ECONOMIC growth during the decades following the Tiananmen massacre used to be the main legitimizing source for the CCP, but by the time Xi Jinping was elected president in 2012 the economic development had started to slow down. Since then, the CCP has found themselves increasingly reliant on alternative legitimizers to ensure that their rule remains largely undisputed. The party's ability to maintain national stability and nurture patriotism of the people has had growing importance for its prospects of maintaining legitimacy. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the CCP considers any act of separatism or manifestation of identity politics that doesn't conform to the official idea of the Chinese national identity to be dangerous threats to the party.

IN RECENT YEARS ethnic minorities, religious societies, and foreign NGO:s have all been targeted by the CCP in the name of national stability and unity. The group that has arguably suffered the most as a result of CCP's desperate conquest for national harmony are the Uighurs, an ethnic minority pri

“

THE PURPOSE OF THE CAMPS IS EVIDENT; TO WIPE OUT THE UIGHUR CULTURE AND FORCE THE ETHNIC MINORITY TO CONFORM

marily located in the Xinjiang province in eastern China. The CCP has responded to what they consider a threat of Islamic extremism posed by Muslim Uighurs with the introduction of so-called reeducation camps. As of now, several hundred thousand Uighurs are believed to be held against their will in these camps, where they are being subjected to political indoctrination. Former camp internees claim to have suffered a wide range of abuse including assault, brainwashing, and torture. The purpose of the camps is evident; to wipe out the Uighur culture and force the ethnic minority to conform to the heterogeneous Chinese culture championed by the CCP.

In 1989, the student representatives of the democracy movement at Tiananmen Square were eager to point out that their demonstration, as critical

of the political system as it was, still remained patriotic at its core. Thirty years later, the CCP has made it clear that there is no room for any other interpretation of patriotic or cultural identity than the one sanctioned by the party. In short, the CCP has managed to turn the potentially contentious concepts of identity and patriotism from threats to the rule of the party into the very foundation on which it builds its current and future legitimacy. Cynics might applaud the efficiency with which the CCP has managed to tighten its grip on power after the Tiananmen massacre using censorship and state-sanctioned identity politics. Yet, as the establishment of the Uighur reeducation camps betrays, the foremost tool of the CCP remains the same as in 1989. The overshadowing threat of violence reserved for the citizens who refuse to conform. ●



THE BACKLASH OF IDENTITY POLITICS



The American Civil war, the Civil Rights movement, 1968 student and worker strikes and the election of President Barack Obama, have advanced minority politics and given power to the powerless, but also created a political backlash - increased white nativist politics and right-wing populism.

Globalism brought rapid economic and social change, that in turn created much more diverse societies around the world. In the US, alongside older political minorities, such as women, native and Afro-American rights, these new diverse societies crave recognition for and from groups that previously were voiceless. In gaining that power and recognition, a “backlash” occurs due to the dominant groups feeling threatened by what they perceive as a minority who are increasingly gaining power. This is not a new phenomenon and can explain many political upheavals in recent decades.

ANGRY AND SCARED American voters cry out for a return to normal order, which has been the Republicans bread and butter for decades, winning election after election even though they represent fiscal policies that seemingly only serve a small group, the rich elite. Political backlashes can be traced back to 18th century England and Edmund Burke, where conservatives tried to block any group that attempted to gain power or rights. The election of Barack Obama, the American civil war, student and worker strikes of 1968 and women suffrage all sparked a conservative backlash, initiated by those who feared the loss of power of people who believed they “deserved” it.

IN CONTEMPORARY US politics this so-called backlash is arguably amplified by the political structure and their dominant two-party system. Increased identity politics can be described as groups in societies who feel that their sex, gender, religion or ethnicity do not get the proper political recognition and therefore experience a loss of dignity, respect or place. When proper recognition is gained, certain other groups feel threatened. It does not necessarily need to be a credible threat, but a perceived threat that might in some way undermine a current dominant status that for example white male Americans feel they inhabit. Identity politics was created and wielded by the political left. Contemporary scholars such as Francis Fukuyama and Mark Lilla are well versed in identity politics, the rise of right-wing populism and white nationalism. They usually start with the root and creation of identity politics, which they prescribe to left-wing politics and that the identity politics created by the left have witnessed a backlash by the right-wing spectre and used against them.

A NOTABLE AND often used example of this backlash is the increased white nationalism in the US and Trump being elected into office. Left-wing identity politics have focused on the voice-less and down-trodden groups of society, leaving a large majority feeling neglected and displaced. The conservative backlash that follows is an old chestnut in American politics.

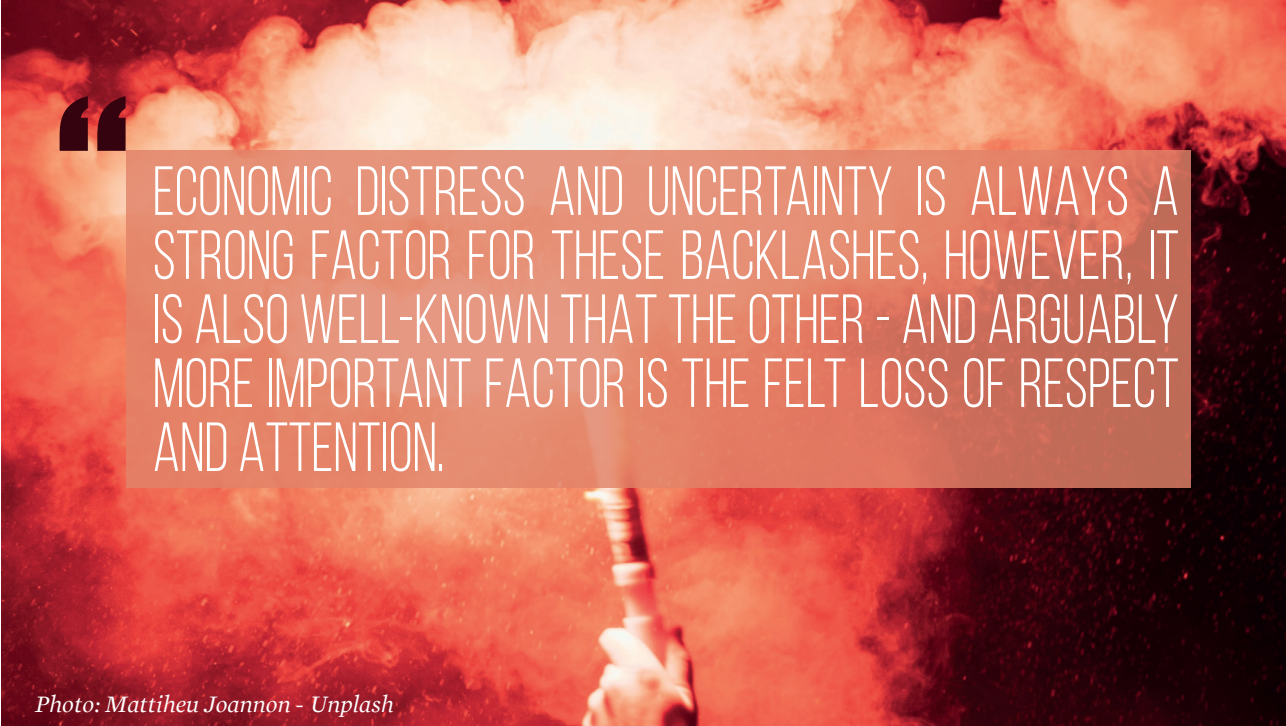
THE BACKLASH BECOMES visible when the white power hegemony is challenged, something that can be seen throughout political history, especially in the US where one can witness very clear lines in this political ping-pong game. Political backlashes seems to rise when so-called left-wing identity politics are successful. This can be viewed in several different ways. One can say that minority identity politics are a result of majority dominance and when any headway is made by the minority, the majority will try and gain leverage again. It can also be said that American politics have always been dominated by identity politics which originally gave the white elite the power in the first place and want to keep it that way.

“

CONSERVATISM IS AT ITS HEART
ABOUT THE FELT EXPERIENCE OF
HAVING POWER, SEEING IT THREATENED,
AND TRYING TO WIN IT BACK -
COREY ROBIN



Photos: Chris Johnson - Unplash



ECONOMIC DISTRESS AND UNCERTAINTY IS ALWAYS A STRONG FACTOR FOR THESE BACKLASHES, HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO WELL-KNOWN THAT THE OTHER - AND ARGUABLY MORE IMPORTANT FACTOR IS THE FELT LOSS OF RESPECT AND ATTENTION.

Photo: Mattiheu Joannon - Unplash

AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE is the Ku Klux Klan. The American civil war ended in 1865 and slavery was abolished. In the midst of this change something else had begun. The KKK was established in 1865 as a counter-movement to the government's free slavery politics and the new laws regarding former slaves. Even though white Americans enjoyed tremendous privilege and power, the thought alone of losing that drew thousands of people to terrorist organizations such as the KKK. In 1915 a second wave of the KKK emerged as a response to what they perceived to be a "growing decadence" brought on by immigration from countries such as Italy, Germany and Southern Europe. Not surprisingly, the third wave of the KKK came around the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

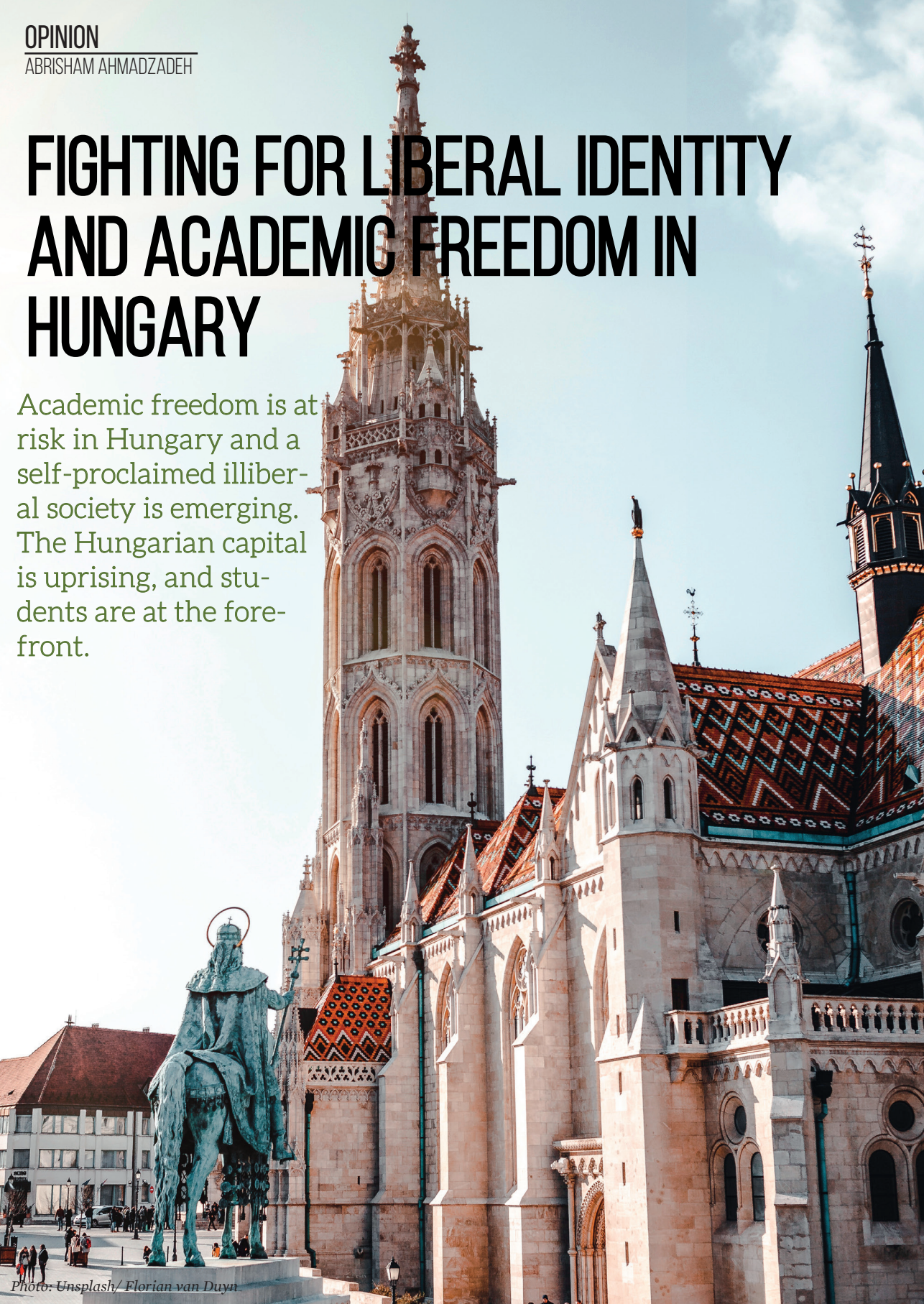
IT WAS NOT only KKK that witnessed a revival, but also a general fear among the white population in the US, which the Republicans capitalized on by moving rapidly to the right on racial issues and setting the Southern Strategy in motion. The Southern Strategy was a political strategy launched by the Republicans in the 1960s, after several groundbreaking minority rights acts passed, to gain white voters in the south by using subtle racist rhetorics, mostly associated with former president Nixon. The supreme court ruling on *Brown vs Board of Education* made it illegal to have segregation laws in public schools - followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which stated that public segregation was illegal as well. As a reaction to increasing empo-

werment of minority groups, white Americans grew discontent and fear spread, resulting in the election of conservative candidate Richard Nixon in 1969. The conservative French president, Charles De Gaulle was also re-elected in 1968 in the aftermath of the student and worker strikes for political rights and recognition.

IN THE SAME way, the election of Barack Obama in 2008 created a backlash, and can be considered as a key factor of the election of Donald Trump in 2016. The Tea Party movement gained real traction in the aftermath of the election of Obama with slogans such as "Take our country back". The Tea Party movement paved the way for the likes of Trump, establishing a populist, nativist, media bashing rhetoric, before Trump escalated this trend. Obama did however succeed in winning a second presidential period, winning with the least amount of white American voters since Jimmy Carter in 1980. The historic election a liberal Afro-American president like Obama made the backlash more severe, resulting in the electing of what can truly be defined as the opposite candidate, who seemingly tries to erase much of the legacy left over from leftist identity political successes. In trying to illustrate this ping-pong game between the two political sides, it becomes evident that lasting change is hard to come by - that many of the successes of identity politics might face a backlash that threatens to erase that same success. ●

FIGHTING FOR LIBERAL IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN HUNGARY

Academic freedom is at risk in Hungary and a self-proclaimed illiberal society is emerging. The Hungarian capital is uprising, and students are at the forefront.





After unchallenged re-election in Hungary in April 2018, Fidesz's party leader Victor Orbán has brought chaos to the people of Budapest. His far right pro-Hungarian, family-oriented narrative has led to the introduction of three catastrophic laws. Standing to eradicate left-wing identities throughout Hungary, under the crushing authoritarian thumb of right-wing nationalism.

ON THE 18TH of June 2018, the Hungarian government signed off on the so-called "Stop Soros" bill, which pledged to put a 25% tax on foreign donations to NGOs that support migration into Hungary. In August 2018, Orbán banned the teaching of Gender Studies nationally, stating the programme takes away from the Hungarian economy and doesn't align with his government's policy. On the

1st January 2019, the Overtime Act was passed, increasing the possible overtime hours/year from 250 to 400, and granting companies a three-year banking period, up from one.

IN HIS STATE of The Nation speech in February 2019, Orbán claimed: "what cannot be left out of the equation of democracy is the demos, the people." His annual proclamation of personal success revolved around the importance of the economy, families, and nation of

Hungary, aligning with his mantra: "Hungary first". This propaganda described Europe's left-wing politicians as "Gravediggers of nations, the family and the Christian way of life", and didn't fail to mention George Soros as one of many "large predators swimming in the water...working tirelessly to bring hundreds of thousands of migrants into Europe." Quite frankly, it was hard to ignore Orbán's nationalistic approach to Hungarian leadership. He outwardly condemned the EU's migration laws, claiming integration encourages violence towards women and general social instability.

ATTEMPTING TO DISCOVER a silver lining to Hungary's current affairs, I spoke to Eve Rogers, an exchange student at the George Soros funded Central European University. On the 1st of December, the institution was forced out of the Hungarian capital for the next academic year, after a 20-month struggle against higher education laws that insist on foreign universities having a campus in their



own country, as well as Hungary. The legislation, tagged 'LexCEU' is widely seen to directly target Soros' university and was passed in parliament with 123 votes for, but only 35 votes against.

ROGERS, 22, is an active member of the student activist group Szabad Egyetem (Free University). Founded in September 2018, with the intention of defending academic freedom, "amongst a shady discourse of back-dealing". A mix of International and local students have worked together tirelessly to organise mammoth student acts of civil disobedience, catching the attention of unions and government alike. Their acts of activism have changed the tone of Orbán's political rhetoric, showing the antithesis to his seemingly stable, majority government. The Hungarian capital is uprising, and students are at the forefront.

THE GROUP'S PUBLIC action began in November, with their first organised march, walking between each of the universities in the city. Ten days later, they marched again. Following a wide call out for support, thousands attended: a coalition of people entirely organised by students. The march ended in Kossuth Square outside the parliament building, where members of Szabad Egyetem didn't leave, starting the weeklong action of #occupykossuth. Through rain and snow, and questionable laws surrounding sleeping in public, the group occupied Budapest's parliament square for seven days, hosting an 'open university'. Classes were conducted from 9-5 daily, in both English and Hungarian, based on gender and sexualities studies amongst other disciplines. CEU lecturers were joined by guest lecturers from MTA, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Amnesty International. At the end of the week, CEU admitted the reality of its forced move to Vienna.

THE 8TH OF December marked the group's first clashes with the police. Marching alongside Hungarian workers' unions, activists encountered a roadblock at the border of Kossuth square. In retaliation, the students broke through, all sat down and conducted a general assembly, alongside the unions. The next week, Orbán's Overtime Act, known recently as the Slave Law, was introduced.

THE END OF December was stained with riots, following the physical eviction of opposition party members from the public-service broadcasting or-



Photo: Szabadegytem_official Instagram

ganization headquarters, for insisting they broadcast a list of the demands of the protestors. The MPs responded, "They threw us out the door, but we'll go back in through the windows." It has been difficult to realise that an EU and NATO member country is dismissing academic freedom despite the European Commission condemning Orban in April 2017, for not complying with the EU charter of fundamental rights.

WHILST FIDESZ' BAN on Gender Studies only affects two Universities (CEU and Eötvös Loránd University, ELTE), they have also left Science Academy MTA with extensive financial cuts. In January, 70 staff members at ELTE were forced into early retirement and the curriculum at Corvinus will be privatised next year.

THE BAN, HOWEVER, follows a blatant far right dismissal of fluidity within gender and sexuality. A spokesman for the prime minister has been quoted saying "the government's standpoint is that people are born either male or female, and we do not consider it acceptable for us to talk about socially constructed genders rather than biological sexes." Such a narrow-minded perspective highlights the danger of increasing government control over academia, and thus the necessity for a fight for academic freedom.

I SPOKE WITH Judit Wirth, a representative from Hungarian Women against violence charity NANE, est. 1994 aiming to combat violence against women and children, on how Orbán's regime had affected gender-based violence from her perspective. Wirth expressed that a "gendered analysis of how the world works is a very basic exercise of any organisation that is dealing with violence against women as a human rights violation." She highlighted the risks of Orbán's banning of gender education, as "You have to be able to use this analysis (in women's violence work) to make sense of how sex becomes a gendered expectation and gendered oppression."

SINCE ORBÁN'S FIRST election in 2010, the NGO has lost access to collaboration with public authorities. They have been cut off from state funding towards violence that instead goes to benefits and church groups. They are still running their hotline and training for psychologists and public education programmes but without support from the state. Wirth has seen a decrease in the authorisation of restraining orders due to increased governmental control of the police and courts, and a change to a default joint custody plan after divorce. This

shows a lack of concern for safety surrounding domestic violence cases. Despite a system that seems to support abusers, NANE is managing to "still say what they want to say". The threat to their work surrounding gender shows the great importance of the work conducted by Szabad Egytem.


THOUGH DECEMBER 2018 exhibited determined mobilised action, it has become increasingly hard for the students to rally support. Such obvious opposition is unusual in Hungary, people seem to be losing interest.

HOWEVER, ON THE 9th of February this year, Rogers and eleven others conducted a peaceful counter-protest at a neo-Nazi march, and "were attacked by three black-clad men. They kicked and punched us and stole our pride and Szabad Egytem flags." (Szabad Egytem Instagram page) As their plight gets harder, the group grows stronger. Their post also read, "We have one message: We refuse to be intimidated and we will be back in the streets on Tuesday fighting for an open, tolerant Hungary." Solidarity to our fellow students and their genuine commitment to fighting for a common global cause. ●



Photo: Unsplash/ Daniel Barbarics

SWAPPING SUITCASES



Growing up is a fate we are all cursed with unless you are close friends with Peter Pan.

When we are born, one can imagine that we are born with an empty suitcase. A suitcase which our parents, friends, society, schools, etc., fills with values, world views, ideologies, morals, and so on. As the famous sociologist Erving Goffman argues, it is the society that creates the self, which is translated through the suitcase metaphor. Having a conscious mind of who you are, what your roles in society are, and what is expected of you from those roles, is what it means to be human.

BUT WHAT ROLES are there within society, and do we get to choose which roles we get? Traditionally, the roles you get to choose from, or will be assigned to, are mainly within your social class. Classes are traditionally economic classes, e.g. working class and upper class, which defines what line of profession you work in, your level of education, your capital, and to some extent your social behaviour.

WHICH SOCIAL CLASS one is born into is something nobody can control. Kindly fill up your suitcase with the ideals, values, roles, and worldview of the class that you grow up within. Traditionally, you stay within your birth class for most of your life. However, in society today, and especially in societies where higher education is free, changing one's class is no longer something unique. Nevertheless, how does it affect one's perception of the self when changing classes, or belonging to more than one? How does that affect the way one acts in different situations? What, then, becomes of the real self? What do we do when our suitcase no longer matches the people in our surrounding?

CHANGING SOCIAL CLASSES today is often referred to as "social mobility"; a movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people, between social strata in society. It changes the social status relative to one's current social location. I sat down with a friend who belongs to several different social classes to get a better understanding of his specific journey, but also of social mobility, as well as of the suitcase theory, more generally.

HE EXPLAINED THAT he was born in a rural part of society, to a working-class family, and now, as an adult, lives in a new country and is studying at a university. We discussed his background and the

social movement he has made. He emphasised that although he might have had it harder than others in some ways, he has always been pushed to get a higher education and to strive for more in life than what he was born with. His suitcase was filled with ideas and values from his home country, which he began to question when his family moved to a different country and he started to realise that everyone does not have the same upbringing. Later, at university, this led to him sometimes feeling out of place. This would, for instance, occur during political conversations. He realised, by the way his friends were speaking, that politics was something they were used to talking about and understood that it was probably something they had spoken about at the dinner table when growing up, something he had never done. Despite occasionally feeling out of place on occasion, he described the many advantages that social mobility, and belonging to several social classes, can bring.

For example, belonging to several classes gives a broader understanding of other people and where they come from. It becomes easier to understand and relate to many different people in various situations. This is something that someone belonging to only one social class might misunderstand or find more difficult to relate to.

BUT HOW DOES this affect the way we act? We adapt. We adapt to the situation we are currently finding ourselves in. It makes no sense namedropping different scholars when nobody in your surrounding has heard of them. You talk about the things you have in common instead of focusing on the things that make us you different. But most of all, remember to be humble. "Being humble, I think is the key word in this discussion", he said. It is important to note that changing conversations and how you act is not because one class is better than the other. It is simply just different. You can have so many in-depth and interesting conversations with someone, regardless of their level of education, income, or social stand. Belonging to more than one class does not mean that you are in any way betraying your heritage. It is what makes you stronger. You have often had to work harder to get to where you want to be; but that is something to be proud of, as long as you remember who you are. You are both an academic and someone from the working-class. And more often than not, there is room for academic conversations among the working-class, and vice versa. ●



MORAL AMBIGUITY: THE CASE OF THE GLOBAL GAG RULE

Since the 1980s, American presidents have been playing politics with women's reproductive health in aid recipient countries. Because of the deep division between the different sides of the American abortion debate, policymakers have failed to agree upon a sustainable health aid policy.



Few political disputes seem as heavily polarized as that of reproductive health and access to abortions. In the United States, the two contrasting sides of the debate are the pro-choice and pro-life movements, which contradict each other greatly in terms of their legal, moral and religious standpoint on abortion. In this political landscape, it has proven difficult to create reproductive health and abortion policies that are sustainable and widely accepted between party lines.

THE AMPLITUDE OF this debate became very apparent when Donald Trump announced his decision to reinstate and expand the so-called global gag rule as one of his first orders of business, just two days after the widely recognized women's march in Washington D.C. His actions were seen as a move to further target abortions across the globe, and have stirred debate concerning a deterioration of the space for women's reproductive rights and self determination. The global gag rule is a policy that prohibits American aid dollars from going to any health organization that performs, advocates for or offers information about abortions. The policy is motivated by the conviction that taxpayer money should not be used for abortion-related services.

THE WORKINGS OF the global gag rule, or what is formally known as the Mexico City policy, are probably best illustrated as a form of foreign aid policy ping-pong game. So here we go: The policy was first enacted by President Ronald Reagan in 1984 and has since then been reinstated by George H. W. Bush, repealed by Bill Clinton, reinstated by George W. Bush, repealed by Barack Obama and now reinstated by Donald Trump again.

ARE YOU FINDING it hard to keep up? Then imagine running a reproductive health clinic or a non-governmental organization dependant on funding from USAID. To sum up, some health care providers and NGOs in developing countries have been forced to adjust to the funding and defunding of their services depending on if there is a Republican or Democratic president in charge since the mid-80's. The instability of the policy has created a lot of uncertainty for health care providers in aid-dependent nations.

IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, general health care is often integrated with abortion services. Therefore, the policy has implications for other patients besides women seeking safe abortions. It can also affect accessibility to contraceptives and antibiotics for treatment of STDs, support for LGBTQ-citizens



and treatment for malaria and HIV. Since the global gag rule is conditioned to prevent healthcare providers from performing, counselling and informing about abortions if they want to maintain funding, they are left with an impossible choice. They can either withstand the financial pressure of ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare without funding or comply with the terms of the global gag rule. The cuts in funding imposed by Republican presidents are therefore seen as an instrument to silence health providers from talking about abortion with their patients – thus the reason for the symbolic name

“

WHEN A SOCIETY TREATS ONE TYPE OF HEALTHCARE DIFFERENTLY THAN EVERYONE ELSE, THAT'S WHEN WE GET TO WHERE WE ARE, WHICH IS THE BIGGEST HEALTHCARE CRISIS OF OUR TIME.



“the global gag rule”.

DONALD TRUMP'S EXPANSION of the Mexico City policy can be viewed as a political gain for the president in several ways. During a press conference about the re-enactment of the global gag rule, Trump's former press secretary Sean Spicer explained that the policy is both an expression of the president's clear pro-life position, and that it respects taxpayer dollars by restricting funds spent overseas. To be fair, appealing to pro-life advocates and showing fiscal restraint hasn't exactly been a poor choice of strategy for Republican candidates trying to win over the electorate. It seems that the role of the Mexico City Policy and the abortion debate can be seen as a part of a larger narrative in domestic politics.

IRONICALLY, A POLICY with the purpose of protecting the lives of the unborn and minimizing abortions might have done just the opposite. According to a study conducted at Stanford University in 2011, women living in countries most affected by the ban had 2.6 times the odds of having an abortion compared to those in countries not affected by the Mexico City Policy. Since the doctor's hands are tied, they are left unable to counsel a woman on the full range of options available to her, referring her to a specialist or even giving her a pamphlet. Uganda, Madagascar, and Zambia are some of the countries where the ban has generated significant cutbacks and disruptions in reproductive health counselling and contraception. Without these health care services, a rise in unexpected pregnancies, unsafe abortions and the spread of HIV does not come as a surprise.

DOES THIS MEAN the future looks dismal for the perseverance of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights? In an interview with The Guardian, the president of Planned Parenthood, Dr. Leana Wen, stated: “There is no question we are in a state of emergency for women's health. When a society treats one type of healthcare differently than everyone else, that's when we get to where we are, which is the biggest healthcare crisis of our time.”

THE DEBATE SURROUNDING abortion forces us to think about challenging ethical issues regarding the meaning of human life and personhood, and the moral status of the fetus. In light of the scientific contributions about the global gag rule, we can draw the conclusion that it is not only a case of bad foreign aid policy but even a dangerous one, regardless of our individual moral and legal standpoint on abortion. ●

THE INTRICACY AND IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The Intersectionality concept acknowledges the important fact that the oppression faced by people is shaped by many interacting aspects of identity. Still, the concept is largely ignored in international gender and development work. This needs to change.

Coined by Black feminist, Kimberlé Crenshaw, in 1989, the Intersectionality concept can be understood through a metaphor of a woman standing at a road junction with cars representing oppression approaching her from multiple directions. Crenshaw originated the concept from the observation that gender and race are often treated as two mutually exclusive categories, thus ignoring the interaction of the two which results in the erasure of black women and their experiences of oppression.

HOWEVER, THE CONCEPT has travelled. Nowadays, it highlights most aspects of identity that can increase the oppression faced by an individual or a group. Apart from gender and race, such sources can, amongst many, be ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, ability, citizenship, and so on. Due to acknowledging differences, the concept has, since its creation, increasingly gained ground. Mainly, but not exclusively, within feminist academia.

INTERSECTIONALITY, THEN, IS important to incorporate into analyses of gender-oriented work since it produces deeper and more accurate understandings of certain situations. Unfortunately, whilst influential in academia and theory, its contribution to the practice of gender and development has been limited.

IN FACT, MOST development organisations tend to focus only on one, or potentially two, aspects of people's identities in their work. Furthermore, they also often use a binary division of gender into the two categories of 'men' and 'women'. This binary division is encouraged by the 'gender mainstreaming' approach, which has been widely incorporated into most development work since the mid-1990s. Gender mainstreaming highlights the relationship between women and men, arguing that gender equality is the responsibility of both genders. However, it fails to acknowledge differences between and within the categories. Each

gender is then treated as a one-dimensional group. This leads to gendered stereotypes. It leads to generalisations. It leads to assumptions. Ultimately, it leads to the overlooking of intersecting factors.

ODDLY ENOUGH, INTERSECTIONALITY is argued to be a part of the gender mainstreaming framework. This leaves us with a contradiction. How can an approach that focuses on men and women as two binary and one-dimensional categories also sufficiently adhere to multiple factors of oppression and the complex nature of people's identities? The short answer is: it can't.

WE CAN SEE this contradiction in various gender and development work. For example, in India, there are multiple differences between women that shape their situation in society and the oppression they face. Caste, class, religion, marital status, and family position are some examples. Thus, development strategies on gender that focus only on relations between men and women are inadequate. Actually, middle-class women's perspectives and experiences still largely dominate the national-level women's movement. On the other hand, Dalit (the lower caste previously known as 'untouchables') women's involvement in the women's movement are still limited. Since the voices of Dalit women are muted, development projects risk not reflecting those women's needs in their work. It can, therefore, be asked whether women from all castes are really considered in development projects focusing on gender equality. Sadly, much evidence points to the opposite.

YET ANOTHER SHORTCOMING of using gender mainstreaming is that many gender and development projects fail to address the needs of women with disabilities. This is, for instance, obvious in relation to microfinance and savings programmes. Women with disabilities are often denied loans by micro-lenders, and banks, due to being seen as risky choices. Consequently, the women eligible for microcredits are selectively picked whilst

women facing other - or additional - kinds of oppression other than just poverty are rejected. Hence, they become further marginalised. The fact that gendered power relations affect not only relationships between women and men, but also relationships between and amongst women, is again ignored.

FINALLY, MOST MAINSTREAMING looks the same irrespective of the country, which means that local contexts are often disregarded. The framework, then, may seem functional when first proposed. However, when applied practically, in various places in the world, it may not give sufficient results due to not being able to adapt to local circumstances. As such, Intersectionality would be a more desirable approach since it provides the tools for identifying differences between individ-

uals and groups of people, and complexities, that shape the situation in a specific place.

ULTIMATELY, INTERSECTIONALITY'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of differences and complexity of identities shows us the importance of using it. If we don't, we risk conducting simplistic and inaccurate analyses in practical gender and development work. We will make harmful stereotypes, generalisations, and assumptions about people's lives. We risk helping only a certain type of people, while others are overlooked. Without adhering to differences, we can't hope to fully understand gendered issues, and thus, can't hope to sufficiently solve them.

YES, INTERSECTIONALITY IS intricate. It's difficult and complex to use. Still, that doesn't make it any less important for us to try. ●

| *Kimberlé Crenshaw, founder of the Intersectionality theory*



SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS IN AFRICA



LOST IN TRANSLATION: AMBAZONIA

Witnesses in English speaking regions of Cameroon testifies about brutal military interventions on civilians as armed Anglophones secessionist movements are calling for independence.

Cameroon has been a country largely spared from violence after independence in 1960 and Anglophones and Francophones have not clashed intensively before, but the current crisis in Cameroon has to lead to a country on the brink of civil war.

WHEN CAMEROON WAS colonized, France and Britain forced their culture and language on the colonized areas. Language is firmly tied to culture and belonging. The current situation proves an example of how language could be the centre of attention in a violent national crisis.

CAMEROON IS LIKE many other African countries linguistically diverse. The country has around 200 local languages but French and English are the two official languages. 80% of the population speaks French and 20% of the population speak English. When Anglophone territories in Cameroon became independent they merged with the independent Francophone Cameroon region forming the new state of The Federal Republic of Cameroon. Since then Cameroon has moved away from federalism and centralized the power to the central Francophone regions leaving English speaking Cameroonians feeling cheated away from power. The French majority have for long dominated the political elite in Cameroon and one indicator of this is newly re-elected francophone president Paul Biya sitting in office since 1982 making it his seventh term in office. Further, Biya carried out the removal of a star, on the Cameroonian flag, symbolizing the federal Anglophone areas, and his official speeches are often dubbed to English since his English skills are poor. French people refusing to learn English is often joked about and might shine through in the Cameroonian case.

THE ARMED CONFLICT between the government and secessionist Anglophones started in 2016 when Anglophone activists took to the streets to peacefully protest against French-speaking judges and teachers being assigned in English speaking courts and schools by the government. Activists claimed that the government consciously tried to force Anglophones to assimilate into society by marginalizing the English-speaking minority group. Government forces interfered aggressively to the protests by arresting activist leaders and killing some protestors.

THE CONFLICT RAPIDLY spiralled out of control and Amnesty International has acknowledged crimes from both security forces and armed separatists saying that unlawful killing and destruction of private property is carried out from both sides. The current armed conflict has according to the UN displaced around 500,000 people in the country.

THERE HAS BEEN peaceful advocacy for independence for long but the government's intervention lead to pro-independence activist turning to violence. Anglophone separatist wanting to form the new nation Federal Republic of Ambazonia is now gaining traction. Anglophones pushing for Ambazonia perceives the decolonization of the region, attaching the area to Francophone Cameroon, as an illegal transfer of authority which has led to oppression from the central government.

COLONIZERS IMPLEMENTING THEIR languages to later join regions of different language and culture seemingly hasn't been a successful recipe for Cameroon. Ironically the way forward for Cameroon is probably a diplomatic dialogue between the secessionist movement and the central government, the question is just what language to use ●

PANDORA'S BOX: SOMALILAND

Somaliland a de facto independent state, in the north of Somalia, is calling for sovereign recognition from the global community, but without success.

Somaliland became an independent state on June 26th 1960, when the British protectorate ceased. The sovereign state of Somaliland, recognised by 35 countries, lasted for about a good week due to broad political support to union the state with the southern neighbours Somalia, creating the nation of Somalia, something that in hindsight wasn't what Somalilanders would have wanted.

THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN Somaliland and Somalia became obvious when general Siad Barre came into power following a military coup in 1969. Somaliland mostly consists of members of different branches within the Isaaq clan, while Somalia is more varied when it comes to tribal belonging. Siad Barre favoured his own Darod clan while in power. Somalilanders felt oppressed by Barre's tribal favouritism leading the Somaliland movements wanting to separate from central Somali rule. A civil war between Somaliland secessionist rebel group, confusingly enough named Somali National Movement (SNM), and the central Somalia government in Mogadishu broke out in the late 1980s. In 1991, after the fall of Siad Barre, SNM declared their independence from Somalia and expressed their intention to form the sovereign state of Somaliland.

THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS that make the case of Somaliland interesting. They have a functioning state apparatus with a stable political landscape tied to a poorer and more unstable one. It is also completely isolated and independent from Somalia. Unlike many other secessionist movements in Africa, Somaliland doesn't want to redraw colonial borders but rather reintroduce the borders between the colonial powers Britain and Italy.

WHEN OBSERVING SOMALILAND, everything indicates that it is a sovereign state with their own political and legal system, currency, identity, and flag but other states are rejecting to recognize Somaliland's sovereignty. The argument brought forward against Somaliland's recognition is the fear of others looking at Somaliland as an example. According to The African Union, recognising Somaliland would be to open Pandora's box, inviting other separatist movements to follow in their footsteps, something that could lead to conflicts in the region. Somalilanders will to become independent is overshadowed by the argument to not to stir further conflict in the region.

SOMALILAND'S STRUGGLE FOR complete recognition has continually fallen on deaf ears within the global community who instead are prioritizing stabilizing central Somalia. Some Somalilanders are humorously lifting the thought that Somaliland's endeavour for independence won't be taken seriously until a "real" crisis erupts due to the secessionist movement. In an interview with The Guardian, Edna Adnan, the most famous Somaliland advocate for Somaliland's recognition said "At 78, I don't want to face the possibility that everything I've been taught about democracy and human rights is wrong. Maybe I should just go join the Taliban."

SOMALILAND HAS CONSULATES abroad, diplomatic relations with the UN, EU, and other sovereign states but is more of a limbo state than a sovereign state. ●



THE UNIVERSITY AS A BATTLEGROUND

Student activists in the United States are increasingly the focus of polarizing media that is quick to capitalize on controversy, with 'Identity politics' often framed as an attack on freedom of speech.

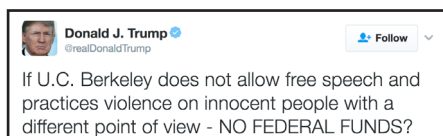


Photo: Wikimedia



Photo: Wikimedia

In February 2017 on the university campus of Berkeley California the conservative provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos was set to give a speech which was met by initially peaceful protests. According to reports, members of the far left group Antifa arrived clad in black and wielding roman candles began setting fires and destroying property. Due to safety concerns, officials cancelled the event to the resulting in criticism from free speech advocates, with President Trump himself threatening in a tweet to remove funding from the university for their decision. What followed was a period of months marked by demonstrations between student activists, Trump supporters, and Antifa, now referred to as ‘The Berkeley Protests.’



GALVANIZED BY THE rising tide of nationalism and white supremacy movements in the United States, an increasing number of students are organizing around activism on university campuses. This activism focuses on a wide variety of social justice issues, from minority and LGBTQ rights to combating hate speech and racism, often categorized under the umbrella term ‘identity politics.’ Conservative outlets tend to portray activists as authoritarian in their emphasis on identity politics, and as a danger to freedom of speech. Jordan Peterson, a Canadian psychologist who has come to prominence as a leading voice in the controversy

reflects these views, alleging that left-wing professors are actively encouraging the behaviour of extremists. The stakes continue to rise in an increasingly polarized political environment that results in sometimes violent clashes.

THE TERM ‘IDENTITY POLITICS’ itself is something rather nebulous, generally wielded in a negative context, and is not the sole property of liberal students. Emphasizing conservative or nationalistic identity is an increasing trend, which Trump utilizes to great effect. In the most extreme cases, white identity politics has manifested in gatherings such as Unite the Right, with organizer and white supremacist Richard Spencer conducting speeches at multiple universities in the U.S., despite protests. The group ‘Identity Evropa,’ which builds its ideology upon asserting the white identity, actively distributes pamphlets across U.S. universities with slogans such as “keep your diversity” and “protect your heritage.”

DESPITE THIS, “IDENTITY POLITICS” is a label almost exclusively reserved for liberal student activists. With a new veneer of legitimacy provided by the likes of Jordan Peterson and other outspoken critics of student activism, the right has increasingly honed their attacks on higher education as a whole. Recently, the Chronicle of Higher Education released the article *How the Right Learned to Loathe Higher Academia* detailing the drive to undermine universities as subversive and anti-American. This dialogue saturates U.S. media. For instance, the Sinclair broadcasting agency, a media empire that owns a significant share of public broadcasting outlets, has been drawing criti-



Photo: Wikimedia

cism from the Washington Post and The New York Times for politically biased segments. In one such segment, a Sinclair executive directly addresses “snowflake” students in a stern speech advising them that college is not a “babysitter service.” In his speech at Queen’s University, Toronto, Jordan Peterson sums up the fears many have, ominously referring to the aggressive student protesters surrounding his event as “the barbarians pounding at the gates.”

UNIVERSITIES ARE FACING in explosively public ways the persistent tensions around identity politics, and suppression of the freedom of expression is a legitimate concern. Navigating the controversy is no easy task, and administrations often face harsh criticism from conservative media with an axe to grind or a student body frustrated with what they see as a lack of action on the part of the university to protect its most vulnerable students. It’s not always the obvious provocateurs that are caught in the crosshairs of student protests, and conservative media outlets are quick to seize on what they see as unjust suppression of rights.

ONE SUCH HIGHLY publicized event took place at Evergreen College, Washington, which Fox News described as a “social justice meltdown.” Against the backdrop of rising racial tensions in the city, professor Bret Weinstein refused to take part in a ‘Day of Absence,’ a voluntary event which suggested that white students not attend the university for a day as a comment on race relations. Weinstein heavily criticized the event in an email circulated to faculty. In the fall out that followed, which

included protests and threats against him, he resigned and secured a hefty settlement from the university. While Weinstein is revered as a champion of free speech, Naima Lowe, another professor of Evergreen, was forced to resign after facing a wave of hatred and death threats for her support of student demonstrations. Her story has received minimal attention. The event acts as a case study illustrating the understated complexity of the issues, and more importantly just how efficient conservative media is at weaponizing controversy.

THERE IS NOTHING novel about student activism, or a media that demonizes it. Take the Berkeley Protests of the 1960s, with the Vietnam War serving as an impetus, where protests were met with mass arrests and Ronald Reagan describing the institution as “a haven for communist sympathizers.” The event represented the voice of a disaffected generation, and perhaps ‘Identity Politics’ is this generations Vietnam. Despite the toxic and overblown polemic proliferated by self-interested parties regarding higher education, a recent study surveying student’s views on freedom of speech found that many support an open environment for expression, but are balancing those views with an increasing emphasis of inclusion and diversity. It’s important to remember that student’s concerns take place in an environment where the number of hate groups has risen 30% in recent years according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. Protecting freedom of speech must not undermine the legitimate concerns of students demanding that our institutions address what by all accounts seems to be a rising tide of hate in the United States. ●

IDENTITY OF POLITICS

There's a famous Bertrand Russell quote that I love. It says: "The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts."

I often think of that saying, it somehow reflects today's society. The polarization, high pitch Trump, Brexit, hatred on Twitter. In Sweden, the last couple of months have been quite painful from the Russell perspective, regarding the government formation. I'm right, you're wrong.

THIS AUTUMN, I entered Høj Røsten, an independent political school for "innovative social changes and political talents with the purpose to revitalize the representative democracy through raised participation within party politics." I was excited to be thrown into this context, it is always fun to meet interesting and equally-minded people. We had visiting lecturers with broad political experience and I got the chance to FaceTime with a former Swedish prime minister candidate to talk about politics and ideology. It was all very inspiring.

BUT THIS WAS not really right for me. After a while, I had to ask myself: do I really want to become a politician? Many of the exercises required involvement in a political party (quite remarkable for an innovative project to force its participants into the old, existing systems!). I refused to do so. To me, party politics of today seemed like the opposite of Bertrand Russell's wise words.

TO GO FURTHER: is it not time to create a more reasonable debate climate? What shall we do to face our opponent's best arguments, not the worst? How do we re-shape the identity of politics?

POLITICS HAS BECOME a career among others where you choose first to be a politician, then which party you want to join. Maybe this is the explanation? When politics are being populated with careerists rather than those who actually want to create change, then there is no space for doubt – it is all about keeping your job and climbing in the hierarchy. If the means become a goal in themselves, you will not reason yourself forward.

I LEFT THE SCHOOL. I am still interested in entering politics, in the future. Today's identity of politics is nothing for me. Recently, I spoke to a friend who entered a party with a positive, open mind, but soon realized everyone was preaching that the party ideology was the solution to everything. From her point of view, there was no will to see things from different perspectives.

POLITICS SHOULD BE about wanting to change society, not about career or who's right and who's wrong. We must enter politics with an intellectual approach, prepared to reconsider old truths. That is how we fight polarization, by bringing back doubt into politics. ●



Photo: Unsplash/ Jaroslav Devia



Photo by Joseph Chan on Unsplash

Study Asia in Lund!

For the fall of 2019 the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies offers a number of interesting freestanding courses in addition to our Masters Programme in Asian Studies.

FREESTANDING COURSES

BA level

The International Relations of East Asia - From the Pacific War to the Rise of China (7,5 hp)

MA level

Asia's Role in the Global Economy (7,5 hp)

Human Rights in Asia (7,5 hp)

Development Theories and Issues (7,5 hp)

Digital Asia: Cultural, Social and Political Transformations (7,5 hp)

Social Justice and Equality in Asia (7,5 hp)

Asia in Global and Regional Politics (7,5 hp)

MASTERS PROGRAMME

Masters Programme in Asian Studies (120 hp)

Application deadline: 15 April, 2019

Read more on our web site:

www.ace.lu.se



LUND UNIVERSITY

Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies