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THE PERSPECTIVE

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DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT



EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

Pussy Riot in Lund

Foreign Ministers' Voices

War between Armenia and Azerbaijan?

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Philip Sandberg on Rising Authoritarianism

MEP Fredrick Federley

EU's Deadly Border

Reporting from the Mediterranean

PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

DEMOCRACY HAS to be won by every generation. In this day and age, when autocrats are on the rise across the world, this is perhaps more true than ever. We are observing a democratic backslide, even in established democracies where some contemporary leaders are showing a disregard for democratic procedures.

DEMOCRACY IS A cornerstone of UPF. It is how our association is run. In this spirit, UPF actively works on inclusion and transparency in a number of ways. For example, did you know that you can find all protocols from board meetings on the UPF website? Or that you, as a member, can submit motions with your ideas to board meetings to president@upflund.se?

THESE OPPORTUNITIES, AND the opportunity to attend the annual meeting every autumn, as well as vote in the annual elections every spring, are examples of how you can exercise influence over UPF's role in the promotion of democracy. Perhaps, this is indicative in terms of what we can learn through our active participation in the association.

SIMILAR TO ANY democratic organisation, we have immutable rules by which we must abide. Furthermore, all members - both board members and otherwise - can pass new proposals by means of democratic procedures. Our board is a body of decision-makers chosen by you: the members.

IN ESSENCE, UPF is one big exercise in democracy. This is the main reason why autocratic regimes around the world, in places such as Russia, Indonesia and Hong Kong, so deeply fear student associations such as our own. They are incubators for harnessing skills in democracy and organization, qualities that allows for demanding political rights, and a say over their future.



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UPCOMING UPF EVENTS

THE ANNA LINDH LECTURE

Ms. Dunja Mijatovic - Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

On the occasion of The Anna Lindh Lecture, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic will speak on the subject of the state of human rights in Europe. Dunja Mijatovic was elected Commissioner for Human Rights by the Parliamentary Assembly and took up her position in 2018. A national of Bosnia and Herzegovina, she has been working to promote and protect human rights for the past two decades, thus acquiring extensive knowledge in the field of international monitoring, in particular as regards freedom of expression. She has previously served as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Director of Broadcast of the Communications Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Freedom of Expression and Information in Times of Crisis.



Photo: Gunnar Vrang

20th of January 2020 at 17:00, business attire
Auditorium, Main University Building, Paradisgatan 2

*Event of Lund University, Raoul Wallenberg Institute,
Anna Lindhs Minnes Fond and UPF Lund*

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Visit <http://upflund.se/committees> or contact specific teams (see page 2 of this issue)



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1. IMPEACHMENT?

The U.S. House of Representatives' judiciary committee approved articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, alleging abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. In a next step, the full House is expected to impeach Trump formally, along strict party lines, sending the case to the Republican-controlled Senate for trial. The chances are small that the Senate will vote for the impeachment process to continue. Separately, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear whether the President may be forced to disclose his financial records.

Moritz Neubauer

2. CLIMATE: THE CLOCK IS TICKING

Accompanied by high expectations and global environmental protests, but without many heads of states, this year's UNFCCC climate change conference (COP25) takes place in Madrid to step up ambitions against global warming. Originally located in Chile but moved to Spain due to heavy social unrests, it focuses on domestic and global contributions to climate change.

As such, topics centre around international finance, loss and damage evaluations and carbon markets to reach the 1.5°C - 2°C target in line with the Paris Agreement. Yet, after more than two weeks and an extension, only a non-binding memorandum of willingness was archived.

In front of the demanding eyes of Greta Thunberg and others, the conference thus reveals once more the dichotomy between self-declared climate savers and blockage masters; between EU's green new deal and the resistant block of Australia, Brazil, USA and others, rich industrialized countries and financially dependent ones, climate activists and far-right populists.

With the continuous proceeding of greenhouse gas emissions, the call for action and far-reaching compromises among those antagonists is steadily becoming louder.

It is scientifically established that every year without international and binding agreements, the chances for adequate measures further decrease - with the environmental and social consequences being felt already.

David Fritsch

3. BRITAIN: OVER AND OUT

On 12th December, the British electorate voted - for the first time, decisively - in favour of Brexit.

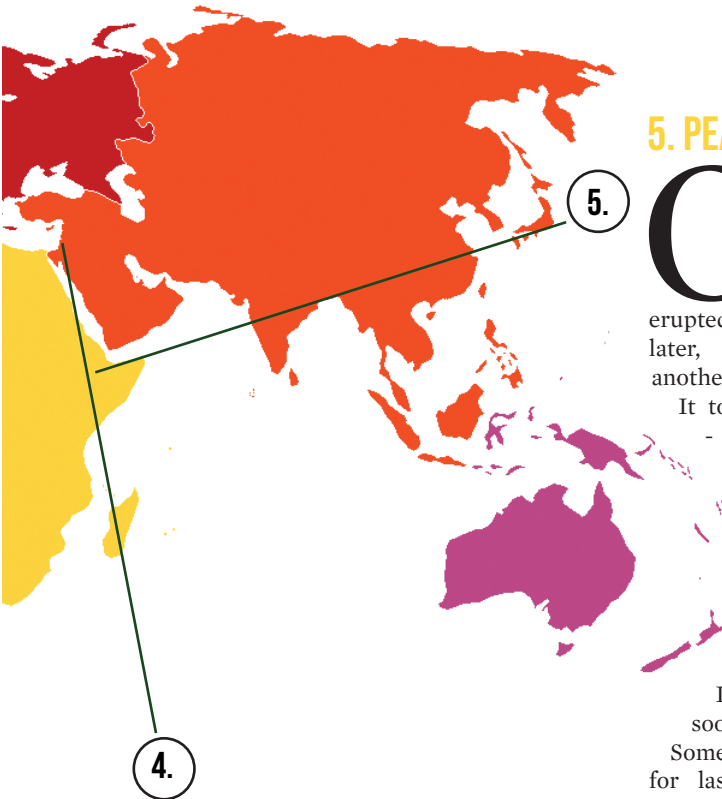
The Conservative Party landslide - and the wipe-out of the opposition Labour Party - means that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union on 31st January 2020. The Conservative Party, led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, won 365 seats - a landslide majority.

The election result has ended the ongoing Brexit uncertainty and means that a UK withdrawal is now politically set in stone.

The Withdrawal Treaty - thrashed out back in October - will soon be passed by the UK Parliament, paving the way for an orderly withdrawal in the New Year.

The next, more complicated stage will be the negotiation of a UK-EU free trade agreement, which should begin in February.

Luke Sandford



4. ISRAEL: ELECTIONS ROUND 3

In Israel, the formation of the government has once again failed. In mid-December, the final deadline expired for MEPs to find a new candidate for prime minister from their ranks.

This automatically triggered new elections within three months, with an agreement between the major parties scheduled for 2 March.

The background for the series of election dates is a political stalemate: neither Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party nor the centrist Blue and White Party led by his main rival, former military chief Benny Gantz, won enough seats in the Knesset for a government majority in the previous two rounds. Both men were tasked with forming a coalition but failed. Gantz and Netanyahu were unable to agree on a "rotating office," i.e., alternating activities as prime ministers.

The situation for Netanyahu is aggravated by serious allegations of corruption. Violence has also resurfaced since November: The Israeli army reacted to rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip with heavy air strikes on Gaza.

Moritz Neubauer

5. PEACE AT THE HORN OF AFRICA?

One of the longest conflicts in Africa may have come to an end for good. In 1961, Eritrean separatists sought independence from Ethiopia and a protracted war of independence erupted. Eritrea declared self-rule thirty years later, effectively ending hostilities, but yet another two-year-long war broke out in 1998.

It took 18 years to sign a peace agreement

- progress that earned Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize. Upon returning to Addis Ababa from the Nobel ceremony in Norway, the PM hinted at meeting with his Eritrean counterpart again soon. "I want to thank Ethiopians and Eritreans.

I want to especially thank President Isaias Afwerki, and I hope we will meet soon," he said at the capital's airport.

Some, however, question the actual frameworks for lasting peace. "It was expected by the international community and by the Eritrean population at large that it would initiate political reforms inside Eritrea, which it has failed to do", Political analyst Goitom Gebreleul said in an interview with Voice of America. He also noted that the border dispute remains unsolved.

Fredrik Fahlman



ANALYSIS: IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS, A COLD WAR MAY SOON TURN HOT

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been at a state of conflict since 1988. While a ceasefire agreement was signed six years later, sporadic clashes have erupted frequently since then. Both countries have lately stepped up their military spending. The Perspective spoke to both countries' Foreign Ministers about how severe the current threat of war is.

SITUATED IN THE CAUCASUS between Turkey and the Caspian Sea, Armenia and Azerbaijan have a troubled past. The two countries declared independence in 1918 after the fall of the Russian Empire. While diplomatic relations were briefly established between Yerevan and Baku, a war broke out between the countries later that year, only ending when both were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1920.

WITH THE EASTERN Bloc beginning to fall apart in the late 1980's, tensions arose in the Caucasus once again. In 1988 the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority Armenian region that was a part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, declared independence from Baku. Azerbaijan acted militarily on the separatists, causing Armenia to intervene - resulting in a war that lasted until 1994.



BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE since become highly militarized. Armenia spends 21 percent of its state budget on defense, while Azerbaijan reserves 11 percent for that purpose. However, Azerbaijan's economy is much larger than that of Armenia - and in total its military spending is three times as large.

BUT TOO MUCH focus should not be put into these numbers, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan told *The Perspective* during his visit to Stockholm.

"IT IS NOT about the money. Nagorno-Karabakh has sufficient capacity to defend itself. Armenia is their only guarantor and we are able to defend both ourselves and our compatriots," Mnatsakanyan said.

AZERBAIJAN, ON THE other hand, sees Armenia as the far more militarized and aggressive party in the conflict.

"AZERBAIJAN CONTINUES TO face military aggression, which has resulted in the occupation of one fifth of our territory and more than one million Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs", Elmar Mammadyarov, Azerbaijan's foreign minister told *The Perspective* in an email.

"REGRETFULLY, THE MILITARY occupation of the Azerbaijani territories by Armenia continues to represent a serious threat to regional and international security and undermines the efforts of my country to utilize its full potential for sustainable development," Mammadyarov said, also stressing that the reason for a higher military

expenditure is due to Azerbaijan's much larger state budget than that of Armenia.

HE ALSO NOTED that since its inception, combat operations have been conducted exclusively inside the territory of Azerbaijan, and that Armenia, according to the Global Militarization Index, is the third most militarized country in the world.

SKIRMISHES BETWEEN THE two nations have been frequent ever since a ceasefire was agreed in 1994, with hundreds of soldiers killed since, and a peace treaty has yet to be signed. Since Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally considered as Azerbaijani territory, Baku has in recent years grown increasingly impatient with the current status quo.

THE PAST DECADE has seen the border conflict increase in scope. Azerbaijan announced in July 2014 that eight of its soldiers had been killed over the course of three days and responded militarily. Russia, maintaining good relations with both countries, issued a statement warning both sides not to escalate the situation further, but to no avail - by the end of the year 27 Armenians and 39 Azerbaijanis had died, and a Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army helicopter gunship had been shot down.

THE FIERCEST CLASHES since the ceasefire came into effect erupted in 2016. The most intense fighting happened in the beginning of April, and while casualty sources vary, both countries put their

“ THE POTENTIAL FOR
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TO BREAK OUT
HAS INCREASED.

- Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner
on National Minorities



own losses at close to a hundred soldiers each. Armenia admits to losing 14 tanks in the battles, while Azerbaijan says they lost one tank, one drone and one helicopter gunship.

THE CLASHES, LATER known as the Four Day War, also saw territorial changes for the first time since 1994, to Azerbaijan's advantage. Their sources say that twenty square kilometers was captured, while Armenia puts the number at eight square kilometers.

WHILE FAR FROM always, skirmishes are often fought between the local paramilitary Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army and Armenia's Interior Police forces on one side, and Azerbaijan's State Border Service on the other - not the military forces of respective country. Foreign Minister Mammadarov sees this as a positive development, able to build reciprocal confidence to reduce violations of ceasefire along the borderline, but makes reservations regarding the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army.

"THIS IS NOT a type of proxy war but an inter-state war situation where Armenia's armed forces are direct participants and the responsible party for the occupation of Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized territories as enshrined in many

international resolutions. It is evident by the well-known fact that the son of Armenian Prime Minister is doing his military service in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan," Mammadarov said.

HIS ARMENIAN COUNTERPART, Foreign Minister Mnatsakanyan, instead emphasized that Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh are separate entities.

"WE ARE THE only security guarantors of Nagorno-Karabakh. There is no way we can create or allow a vacuum for our compatriots, this is about human lives," he said.

MNATSAKANYAN ARGUED THAT due to the Nagorno-Karabakh government being democratically elected and having a firmly-established political unit, Yerevan does not have the mandate to speak on their behalf.

"PEOPLE SAY THAT we can exert pressure on them if we are supporting them. Who would? There is no government in Armenia that will survive five minutes if it breaks this security guarantee. We Armenians are still feeling pressure from the genocide of 1915. If something were to happen to Nagorno-Karabakh, it would be an enormous psychological pressure on all of us. We have seen



annihilation, and it will not happen again,” the foreign minister said.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan announced that his country would buy four Russian-made Su-30 fighter jets. The multirole combat aircraft is scheduled for arrival in the following months, in a deal that is said to be worth 100 million dollars. The country’s Minister of High-Tech Industry Hakob Arshakyan also revealed that Armenia’s military industry budget would increase by 122 percent in 2020.

MAMMADYAROV SEES THIS as a safety concern for the region, and evidence that Armenia aims to cement the status quo through military occupation of Azerbaijan’s territories. He also expressed unease over Armenia’s offensive military trainings inside Nagorno-Karabakh.

“IF WE TAKE a glance at the tactical profile of the weapons that Armenia purchases, we can notice that they are planning to double their prospective firing range beyond the occupied territories and deeper into Azerbaijan’s mainland areas,” he said.

AZERBAIJAN’S ARMS DIVERSIFICATION, on the contrary, seeks to ensure its territorial integrity and is of purely defensive purposes, according to Mammadyarov.

FOR ARMENIA, STEPPING up arms acquisitions and military spending is a safety necessity.

Mnatsakanyan strongly denies that his country has any offensive plans in mind.

“OUR RECENT WEAPON acquisition does not mean that war is more likely - it means that we are making absolutely sure that our capacity to defend is adequate,” he said.

ACCORDING TO MNATSAKANYAN, the uncertainty of war and the potentially massive loss of lives should be enough of a deterrent in itself, and that the alternative to peace is not what anyone would wish for.

“THEY SEEM TO be talking the language of war with quite ease. If war would start, do they even know what will happen the next day, let alone who will win? I do not,” he said, stressing his country’s wish for a diplomatic solution.

BUT SHOULD PUSH come to shove, Mnatsakanyan said Armenia is also prepared for the worst.

“WE ARE ABLE to defend ourselves and we have sufficient capacity to inflict damage on aggressors. Therefore, we insist on peace.”

MILITARY CAPABILITIES		
	ARM	AZE
Population	3,038,217	10,046,516
Military Personnel	44,800	66,950
Reserves	210,000	300,000
Main Battle Tanks	109	439
Armored Carriers	130	568
Combat Aircrafts	15	~75
Artillery	232	598
Ballistic Missiles	16	6
GDP	\$12.5bn	\$45.6bn
Defense Budget	\$506m	\$2.74bn

Source: The Military Balance.



Vladimir Putin with previous President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan and current President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in the Constantine Palace. Photo: Kremlin

MNATSAKANYAN HAS BACKING for his claims. The armed forces of Armenia possesses more than two hundred artillery pieces capable of devastating Azerbaijani border cities. More importantly, the country has an arsenal of ballistic missiles, including eight Soviet-era R-17 Elbrus and four modern Russian-made 9K720 Iskander. Both are capable of striking the Azerbaijani capital Baku - a city of more than two million - and the Iskander especially is known for evading anti-missile systems.

AZERBAIJAN'S MILITARY POSSESS a multitude of missile defense systems, both aging and modern, but they are not known to ever have been test-fired. Should full-scale war erupt between the countries - and Armenia strikes Baku with a combined effort of its Air Force and ballistic missile systems - Azerbaijan can not guarantee the safety of its capital. Regardless of Azerbaijan's superior military strength, this deterrent acts as an enormous advantage for Armenia in avoiding escalated conflict.

DESPITE THE COUNTRIES' differences, Mammadyarov and Mnatsakanyan have held close to a dozen meetings this year under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, and their working group called the Minsk Process. Both Foreign Ministers agree on that the talks are important for de-escalation and that concrete progress is being made, with Mnatsakanyan saying that there has been a visible

reduction of ceasefire violations for more than a year since the talks began.

HIS AZERBAIJANI COUNTERPART agreed, saying that his country is striving for a peaceful coexistence of both Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in Nagorno-Karabakh, while highlighting that the region lies inside Azerbaijani territory. He also underlined, however, that meetings should not be held just for the sake of it.

"WE SHOULD STRIVE to have tangible progress towards a resolution to the conflict," he said.

LAMBERTO ZANNIER, THE OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, sees the role of the Minsk Process as more important than ever, while also expressing concern over the recent military buildup on both sides.

"IT IS A MATTER of finding the right incentives. We had moments that were difficult and we have seen lots of casualties, and while it has not exploded entirely, the situation is certainly very dangerous. The potential for major conflict has increased," he told The Perspective.

To read more articles from The Perspective's interview with Armenia's Foreign Minister, scan this QR-code or visit theperspective.se/magazine



Timeline of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan

1915 - 1917: Between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenians from Anatolia are deported or massacred, due to the Ottomans believing that they were conspiring with the Russian Empire. Today 32 countries recognize the occurrence as a genocide, including the US, Russia, and most of the EU. Turkey and Azerbaijan denies the historical factuality of the event.

1918: Armenia and Azerbaijan declare independence. They later declare war on one another.

1920: The Red Army conquers both countries.

1922: Armenia and Azerbaijan, along with Georgia, are incorporated into the Soviet Union.

1930s: While benefiting from industrial development, Armenia also suffers from Stalin's purges.

1985: Mikhail Gorbachev introduces Glasnost, a policy of increased openness, throughout the Soviet Union.

1988: Encouraged by increased freedom of speech, Armenian's campaign for Nagorno-Karabakh - a region populated mainly by Armenian's but within Azerbaijan's borders - to be united with Armenia. Many Azerbaijanis begin to leave Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenia's leave Azerbaijan. Violence between the two ethnic groups are erupting.

1989: Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh begins.

1990: Armenian nationalists win parliamentary elections and declare self-rule, which is ignored by Moscow.

1991: Both countries declare their independence from the Soviet Union.

1992: Full-fledged war is erupting over Nagorno-Karabakh.

1992-1993: Armenian forces capture more Azerbaijani territory, creating a corridor linking Armenia to Karabakh.

1994: Russia broker a ceasefire between the countries. 30,000 people are killed and more than a million civilians are displaced.

1994: Baku signs an agreement with a consortium of international oil companies, allowing for exploitation of three of its oil fields. It is called the "contract of the century", giving rise to Azerbaijan's economic boom.

1998: Heydar Aliyev, previously head of Azerbaijani KGB and the Azerbaijani Communist Party, is re-elected president. Protests erupt and international observers report irregularities.

2001: The US lifts aid ban on Azerbaijan after the country provides intelligence to Washington in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey agrees on a set of oil and gas pipelines linking Turkey with the Caspian Sea.

2003: Before his death Heydar Aliyev appoints his son, Ilham, as prime minister, followed by an election. Armenia also holds parliamentary elections. Observers say that neither were satisfactory by international standards.

2008: Large-scale clashes, the biggest so far since the ceasefire, break out in Nagorno-Karabakh. Both sides blame each other for initiating the fighting.

2009: Azerbaijani-Armenian meetings regarding Nagorno-Karabakh end. No major progress was made.

2014: Border clashes are becoming increasingly frequent. Azerbaijani forces shoot down an Armenian military helicopter, killing its crew.

2016: Armenia loses 14 tanks in the battles, while an Azerbaijani helicopter is shot down, in the fiercest clashes to date. Azerbaijan captures ground, marking the first territorial changes since 1994.

2019: Both countries are stepping up their arms acquisition.

Source: BBC

HUMAN RIGHTS: FORWARD AND BACK?

Photo: Dunja Mijatovic Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, taken by Gunnar Vrang

Welcome to the Anna Lindh Lecture 2020 by

Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the subject
“The state of human rights in Europe: forward and back?”

When? 20 January 2020 at 17.00

Where? The University Auditorium,
Main University Building, Paradisgatan 2, Lund



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DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT

Today, democracy is under pressure from different sides. Authoritarian regimes are becoming increasingly visible, often restricting freedom of press and expression as a first step.

The Perspective sat down with politicians, activists and researchers.



This Op-Ed does not reflect the views or opinions of UPF Lund.

“AUTHORITARIAN TENDENCIES ARE EMERGING IN ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACIES”

Philip Sandberg, Liberal politician and Mayor of Lund since 2018, shares his views on the current state of international politics - and why liberal democracies are increasingly under threat.

WE LIVE IN a troubled world where the truths that were established after the fall of the Berlin Wall can no longer be taken for granted.

Authoritarian tendencies and populist parties and movements are growing in several established democracies. Trust in the institutions of society is being questioned in many places. At the same time, authoritarian states, like China, are increasing their influence on the world stage, which will characterise the development and emergence of democracy in, amongst other places, Africa. It is more important than ever that the defenders of liberal democracy see this development and take it seriously.

TODAY, ABOUT ONE-THIRD of the world's population live in democracies, one-third live in what are referred to as partly-free countries and one-third live in countries that are not free. For the thirteenth year in a row, the number of democracies in the world is in decline. In sixty-eight countries, freedom of speech and human rights are diminishing, whilst progress has been noted in fifty countries, according to the American research institute Freedom House.

THE LATEST TREND is that authoritarian tendencies are emerging in established democracies. This is especially evident in countries such as Hungary, Poland and Romania, where the independence of legal institutions as well as freedom of the press is under threat.

THE UPHEAVAL in the outside world is countered by closed borders and the opposition is silenced for the sake of “national unity”, as we have seen so many times before.

PARTICULARLY STARTLING is that the world's role model, the United States, is losing ground in democracy measurements. This development began even before Donald Trump became president, but has escalated through constant attacks on media independence, scientific facts and fundamental social institutions.

WHILE WE SEE this negative trend in a number of countries, we must remember that, at the same time, there are countries where the trend is towards increased democratisation - such as Ethiopia, The Gambia and Angola.

AT THE TIME of writing, a number of popular protests are also underway - some peaceful, others violent -, against issues such as corruption, electoral fraud, a lack of democracy and basic community services. In Hong Kong, hundreds of thousands of people have repeatedly protested against restrictions on democratic rights. This is a movement that started through demonstrations against a bill that would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be extradited to mainland China, but which has grown in both strength and scope. In Iran, violent protests are taking place against increased fuel costs. Access to the internet has been severely restricted and the Revolutionary Guard has warned of “resolute action” if protests do not end. In Bolivia, President Evo Morales was forced to resign and then left the country following accusations of electoral fraud. The situation has become even tenser after the Senate’s second vice-president appointed herself interim president.

IN OTHER WORDS, the world situation is uneasy. We see positive and hopeful development in many places, but, at the same time, seriously disturbing trends elsewhere. With the US on retreat from the world stage, a sort of vacuum has emerged where, not least, China acts more and more purposefully. We see this through the diplomatic conflict between Sweden and China as a result of the imprisonment of Chinese citizen Gui Minhai in China and the resultant threats directed at Sweden by the Chinese ambassador. At the same time, digital surveillance and online censorship is expanding at a very rapid pace and the systems required to do this are being exported to other countries. In this way, protests can be prevented from gaining traction and spreading.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION in Sweden is comparatively stable, but we also see a trend here towards a tougher climate debate and increased political polarisation. It is something that bothers me as a Liberal politician, but, at the same time, makes me feel that my mission is more important than ever. Politicians who believe in openness and respect for people’s differences must stand up to this even when it is tough.

EQUALLY, WE HAVE to take people’s concerns for what they perceive to be a development towards a stronger society seriously. Emphasis must be put on societal challenges that truly upset and affect people’s everyday lives and future prospects. It is only when we continue to have the confidence to lead the development of society - and find a way to cope with the forces and authoritarian states that have become increasingly dominant. These forces otherwise risk directing us towards protectionism, suspicion and less individual freedom.

Philip Sandberg
Mayor of Lund





RIOT FROM RUSSIA: PUSSY RIOT IN LUND

Seven years ago, Pussy Riot's church protest, arrest and trial gripped the world. Now, their tour, Straight Outta Vagina, is heading around Europe, spreading their message of defiance, freedom and hope.

The Perspective spoke to band member Mariya Alyokhina about Russia, Vladimir Putin, democracy and her hopes for the future.

Arriving at Mejeriet, an independent cultural venue in Lund, Sweden, on a damp, misty evening. The Perspective is there to meet and interview Pussy Riot, a name which has become synonymous with protest and Russia's human rights record. A poster for their concert Straight Outta Vagina is the greeting, an imposing neon pink and yellow affair with a sketch of a woman wearing the band's signature balaclava, also a striking neon pink. Then, in the venue's performance area, where, straight after the band's soundcheck, The Perspective meets Mariya Alyokhina.

GONE WERE THE balaclava and leggings, instead, Alyokhina is wearing casual black clothing - a far cry from the images of Pussy Riot's protest performance in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour that were broadcast the world over. As is customary for any UPF guest or interviewee, she is presented with past editions of The Perspective. "I want to keep these magazines", she says, her eye drawn to the Women issue. She makes herself comfortable as the interview begins. The first question to her is one in which she is probably well-versed: "Why is the right to protest so important in Russia?" She looks sagely at the cover of the Women issue, a sad

smile on her face, as she answers with, "we don't have democracy in Russia".

SHE GOES BACK to looking at the Women issue as she continues, "Putin has been the so-called president for almost twenty years - so serving for longer than him are maybe Lukasheno [the President of Belarus] and Kim Jong-Il [the second leader of North Korea]. A country is not right when the people cannot choose the power. It doesn't matter if leaders are good or bad people; if they are in power forever, they will become corrupt."

MARIYA LOOKS INTO the distance, her trademark defiance once again expressed on her face as she begins to explain what the summer 2019 democracy protests in Moscow meant to her. The protests began after all independent candidates were rejected from ballot papers for Moscow State Council. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of the Russian capital before the police undertook a violent crackdown against them. "I think there were around 20,000 people protesting, of these, more than 3000...were arrested." Perhaps, in Mariya's mind, the actions of the protesters were akin to her own that day in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.



Either way, it had the same outcome. “More than twenty people ended up in jail, receiving sentences of four or five years, just because they went to the centre of Moscow in want of free elections. There wasn’t any dancing in churches...It was totally peaceful, but the police were brutal.”

BUT MARIYA HAS her own view on why Russians seem to tacitly accept Putin’s government. “In the 1990’s, Russia experienced the total collapse of democracy...but it is almost banned to reflect upon.” She is looking at her hands now. She speaks using her hands, her gestures becoming more animated, more strident as she continues. “After the Second World War, Germany had a time of reflection and identification about the horrors of Nazi Germany. We...did not.” She becomes more impassioned, almost imploring us to understand what she perceives to be the full gravity of the situation in Russia. “Two years ago, 38% of people thought Stalin was the greatest leader in Russian history. Now, it is more than 60%.”

A PANG OF sadness mixes with her defiant expression as she explains exactly why, to her, this is bad. “More than half of Russians think that Stalin, the man who killed millions of people, who crushed my culture, who shot all of my favorite poets, who signed the death penalties of film makers, theatre directors...and millions of ordinary people, was ‘the greatest leader’.” She sounds like what she is, a woman defiant in the face of the Russian government, but she also seems to be a woman who knows that she probably will not win in her fight. Aside from a concise overview of why, to Mariya, Russia is as it is, Mariya also goes on to explain why protesting, not only in Russia, but the world over, is so vital.

THE RUSSIAN FEMINIST punk group are known for their bold protests. Their global prominence and presence peaked when they had an unauthorised public performance at Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in 2012. Pussy Riot performed a punk prayer, expressing their disliking towards



Photo: Fredrik Fahlman (UPF)

President Vladimir Putin while advocating for feminism and LGBT rights, screaming on the top of their lungs, “Mother Mary, please be a feminist”. The sound of the electric guitar amplifies the echo of song which blasts in the great cathedral, “the guitar is a non-orthodox instrument, but we symbolize the gateway to heaven”. Mariya describes the thrill and adrenaline of walking into the church, knowing their futures were at stake for the actions they were about to commit. She conveys,

“REVOLUTION IS NOT A BED OF ROSES. REVOLUTION IS A FIGHT BETWEEN THE FUTURE AND THE PAST.

THE PERSPECTIVE CONTINUES by asking if she thinks that protests for democracy have to be bold, like her own have been. “No, I do not think so. A protest can be any honest gesture which comes from your heart and soul. Whether you are writing an article, taking physical action or simply having a truthful discussion with someone you do not agree with, it is a form of intervention or protest. All of these small steps are vital as they lead to something larger. A revolution is a change within each single person. People take millions of small steps everyday in order to make a change. In contemporary Russia, we are having a discussion on the lack of human rights and safety for individuals which may be subject to domestic violence. Russia is the only country in Europe which does not have a law against domestic violence.”

THEN SHE IS asked if she can elaborate on the subject of human rights and domestic violence in Russia. Mariya nervously chuckles, she sounds uncomfortable as she begins to describe, “In February 2017, a group of activists forced the Russian state to discuss the law on domestic violence. A longstanding domestic violence crisis unleashed when the law downgraded domestic violence from a criminal offence to a misdemeanour for first time offenders. The law has excluded domestic violence from the criminal code so that it was not punishable anymore. For example, if I were on the street and I were to beat you, I would go to prison for between one or two years. If you were my wife, then I would only be given a fine of 70 euros. Now all these brave and outstanding individuals are pushing the state to discuss the law. What we are seeing is a massive attack of the traditionalists, some still believing in norms enforced from the 13th century. We have a frightening number of people who think believe that beating women and children is a part of Russian tradition or heritage. I think that is is vital for individuals to communicate with each other so we can come to a conclusion that the lack of a domestic violence legislation is, in itself, a breach of human rights. Law is not enough if we cannot fight for it and have a culture of dialogue between people who do not know each other.”

SHE DESCRIBES THE lack of dialogue between individuals and we continue by asking her if she sees a lack of communication outside of the Russian context.

“I THINK THERE exists a lack of dialogue in Sweden as well as many other countries in Europe. This was accentuated during the migration crisis and I do not understand why so many European politicians kept silent about this issue, as if they were afraid to talk about ongoing events. I am assuming silence stems from their egoism or fear, because emplacing quotas is not enough. For example, here in Sweden, migrants are living in ghettos while being completely left out of assimilation. This is not right. How an individual integrate if they cannot have a dialogue with neighbors who live in the same city? Then right wing extremists will come and say, “Look at them! They are taking your jobs and raping your women”, along with all the other populist shit, which if you look at statistics, is clearly wrong. So if we ask, why do we have a

rise of populism and extremism? Well, because the current politicians do not put enough energy or time into creating a dialogue between people. Humanity is the most important thing we have, so how can we, in the right mind, expect people to stand on the same ground and have the same values if they don’t even know each other?”

FOR YEARS, AS global politics - most notably in Europe and America - has become increasingly divided and bitter, Mariya has given the same pearl of wisdom again and again. “If Europe will not be united, if it will be seperated, it will be very good for people like Vladimir Putin.” Time and political events appear to have given some credence to her words. She gives us a strong example in the form of the Catalan independence referendum.

SPAIN’S HIGHEST COURT recently sentenced several high-profile Catalan politicians to many years in prison for organising the region’s independence referendum against the wishes of the central government in Madrid. These sentences, combined with the images of the violent crackdown in Catalonia during the referendum, have surprised the world - and tainted Spain’s international image.

MARIYA COMMENTS ON the matter: “I do not think it is fair to put people like these Spanish guys in prison because they organised a referendum. It is horrible.” She takes a sip of her coffee and thinks for a moment. Perhaps this brings memories of her own imprisonment to Mariya, as her face hardens, her tone becomes more ardent as she speaks about the Catalan prisoners.

BUT MARIYA IS adamant that there are lessons to be learned for non-Russians from the events in Catalonia.

SHE SPEAKS AGAIN and her hands talk with her. “The jailing of those Catalan politicians is not about free speech at all. The world is changing and we should understand that even those things we have now, it’s a result of the fight that the generations before us had... People died so that these issues were resolved. It is important to understand that all these freedoms, our human rights, they’re a result of the past.”



Photo: Fredrik Fahlman (UPF)

AS SOON AS she finishes, Mariya's face and her body language return to normal. An impassioned defence, a strong rallying cry, delivered time and again - it has become almost habitual to her. Then, in light of attacks on Russian dissidents abroad, Mariya is asked if she fears for her, or the group's, safety - both abroad and in Russia.

"ONE OF OUR members, Pyotr Verzilov, was poisoned last year and almost died from this horrific incident. He had lost his sight and ability to speak - there is no doubt the poisoning was carried out on purpose. It was done so professionally that no other conclusion is possible. We were in complete shock. Luckily he survived after being flown to Berlin for emergency medical treatment. If we were afraid of our own safety, that would mean that the big guys have won. I do not think we should follow fear - don't give them what they want.

AS THE INTERVIEW continues, she is asked if she is comfortable talking about her imprisonment. "Sorry, but I have to go get ready now. Stay for the concert because my experience in prison is expressed through the music." As she is about to rush backstage, she is asked if she would like

"THEY WANT US TO BE AFRAID, BUT WE ARE NOT.

to have one last cigarette before the show. She heads behind Mejeriet as some photos of her are snapped whilst she smokes, "I'm sorry, I have to go now," she says as she twists her cigarette butt under her heel, and then dashes back inside. The face behind the name is getting ready to perform to another crowd.

THE SPOKESPERSON FOR Vladimir Putin and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs were contacted in order to give a response to Mariya Alyokhina's statements made in this article, but there was no response.

FROM THE EU TO YOU: PANEL DISCUSSION AT LUND UNIVERSITY



A ROCKY ROAD TO THE FUTURE?

Some argue that the EU is at a crossroads - that it must either reform or vanish. The Perspective spoke to Fredrick Federley about his views on how the EU can make itself fit for future.



Host Björn Kjellström with EU parliamentarians Fredrick Federley and Alice Bah Kuhnke. Photo: Emilie Johansson

IN THE LIFE of the European Union and many of its citizens, 2019 was an intense year with new beginnings - for some probably new ends which brought heated political debates, intensifying Brexit talks and nail-biting competition over the top position of the European Commission. Looking at the number of crises and challenges in the past few years, however, the question is: when was the future of the European Union not under pressure?

TO ANSWER THIS very question, The Perspective has interviewed an EU official who is part of the European machinery directly impacting the life of more than 500 million people: Fredrick Federley, member of the Renew Europe (preceded by *Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*) in the European Parliament since 2014 and was re-elected for the 9th parliamentary term.

FREDRICK FEDERLEY, MEMBER of the Swedish Centre Party was interviewed on the event “Talk Show – From the EU to You”, organised by the Association of Foreign Affairs, Europa Direkt Skåne and Lund University and took place on 5th December in

Lund, Sweden. The evening was hosted by Björn Kjellström from the European Parliament and focused on the European Green Deal, Brexit, transparency and direct democracy in the EU.

URSULA VON DER Leyen, the former German Defence Minister and the first female President of the European Commission, was nominated by the European Council after closed door discussions about the person to fill in the EU top job for the next five years. For the 2019 May election of the European Parliament, political groups were campaigning with their top candidates Manfred Weber and Frans Timmermans - according to the previously agreed practice of the European Council nominating the lead candidate of the group with the most seats in the European Parliament. However, heads of state and government abandoned this practice - known as the *Spitzenkandidaten* process - together with it the political balance of European Parliament in assigning the position.

THIS AND THE fact that the *European People's Party*, EPP, and *Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats*, S&D lost their majority indicated



Photo: Emilie Johansson

a shaky support for the president-elect as the Greens and the S&D seemed reluctant to approve her nomination. After securing her position with not more than nine votes in the European Parliament, the Von der Leyen Commission was officially approved on 27 November 2019 by 461 votes to 157 with 89 abstentions. However, regarding the future of the European Union, the concern remains if Ursula von der Leyen will be powerful enough to successfully lead as described by her the “agenda for change”.

NEXT STOP: THE VON DER LEYEN COMMISSION

SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRATED Von der Leyen officially taking office on 1 December 2019 by the promotion of **#VDLCOMMISSION**. Her motto: “A Union that Strives for More”.

THE COMMISSION PRESIDENT’S path to office was questioned by both politicians and analysts. Among them were Fredrick Federley, an MEP who previously was critical towards the way she was appointed, however, recently holds positive views regarding the new President.

FREDRICK FEDERLEY EXPLAINS the change in his approach by highlighting key priorities of the Commission. “On climate, gender equality and many other issues that the parliament, myself and my party all fear, she has really, really been showing her best side. Summing up I would say she is probably the most progressive head of a commission that we have ever had, also including previous Social Democrats”. He adds: “sometimes it might even be so that if you are going to have progressive policies put forward you might need a conservative to put them forward.”

REGARDING POLITICAL POWER balance he says, “talking of conservatives, that is also a problem: they might be the biggest bloc still, but they are smaller than ever and still claim the power position. It does not really reflect the way that the liberal centrists group grew the most, more than the right-wing populists, of which we all thought would grow much more.”

A LONG WAY TO THE TOP (CANDIDATES)?

Criticism of von der Leyen is more likely to target the lack of transparency in her appointment as she was not the first candidate of the EPP for the position. Looking at the prospects regarding the

rules of appointing the president, the question arises: Does the *Spitzenkandidat* process have a future?

FEDERLEY HESITATES FOR a second when answering the question. “To be honest, and I will piss off many of my own group, I think it is the Eurocrats’ idea of creating a democracy that does not really have resilience amongst the population. Alice Bah Kuhnke is the most known among the Swedish MEPs and I am the second, but we are still not known by everyone, so that means we probably have more to do at home first.”

THE CORE IDEA of the *Spitzenkandidat* process is to link citizens more to the political agenda of the European Commission by political groups nominating their candidates for the top position. The reason for this is the attempt to deal with the EU’s democratic deficit. However, as outlined by Federley, this might raise concerns on domestic levels. The same dilemma applies to the idea of creating transnational voting lists with common candidates along with national ones through which the European Parliament election would become more ‘European’.

FEDERLEY EXPRESSES HIS opinion regarding the future prospects of EU democracy based on the idea that voters are well-informed citizens with a strong European sense of belonging. “The debate on transnational lists is really strong in my own group, but I would say it is a fantasy also going against many democratic ideas: if I am on a transitional list and get elected, who will hold me accountable for my decisions and my actions?”

HE POINTS OUT once again that building a so-called “Pan-European democracy” is contested by the strong national context of the election. Regarding the lack of a joint European media, this reformation process would only create a democracy project for the political elite. However, according to Federley, the prospect of a transnational list in the future must not be ruled out completely.

TURNING TOWARDS A MORE DEMOCRATIC EU

DEBATE ON DEMOCRATIC deficit in the EU become a hot topic in the early 2000s and highlighted

the lack of legitimacy of the often ‘technocratic’ labelled European project. Citizens got detached from the complex processes of decision-making which gave ground for growing nationalism in many of the member states.

AT THE END of November, France and Germany put forward an unofficial document that outlines a Conference on the Future of the European Union that would discuss all issues at stake related to the EU’s future in the next two years. Many support the opinion that the solving of problems lies within empowering the European Parliament.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT it, Federley says, “that is one way of doing it”. He adds, “Ursula von der Leyen listened to the demand of the parliament and gave us the right of initiative. The European Parliament has always been discontent about not having the same opportunity as the national parliaments to put forward initiatives and resolutions that could become legislation.” Federley agrees with the approach of Ursula von der Leyen according to which the right of initiative would be given to the Parliament as long as there is a majority behind the resolution. Federley notes that it would not mean that the European Commission should give up its role as “policy entrepreneur”.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE of the European Parliament and putting forward institutional issues within the EU is probably only one part of the solution. Another key topic regards the citizens of the European Union. What could be done to bring citizens closer to the institution that controls most of their lives on a daily basis? Federley thinks “it is not about educational programs to teach about how the legal process is working, but how proposals are actually talked about, these issues have to be brought home.”

FREDRICK FEDERLEY DID not only emphasize the major issues that leaders, professionals and politicians have to address today to define the ways in which we live, work and prosper together in the European Union, but also made this clear that in order to achieve a union that strives for more, we will have to walk that rocky road.

THEIR OWN BACKYARD: HOW SAFE ARE JOURNALISTS IN THE EU?

Freedom of the press is a core pillar of the EU. But one can observe cracks in this fundamental. Warsaw and Budapest are accused of infringing upon it, but those deep rifts are also reaching neighboring countries. Has the overall situation for European journalists changed, and how can we protect them – and democracy?

The picturesque Mediterranean island of Malta was left in shock. In autumn 2017, a car bomb took the life of Daphne Caruana Galizia, an investigative journalist. Two years later, the Maltese businessman Yorgen Fenech, whose company 17 Black was scrutinized by Caruana Galizia, was arrested. At the end of November, Chief of Staff Keith Schembri was being targeted by the investigators, several Maltese ministers resigned, and another resignation announcement by Malta's Prime Minister Joseph Muscat followed.

ONLY HALF A year after the attack on Caruana Galizia, the Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak suffered the same fate: alongside his fiancée, he was shot dead in his home close to Trnava. His attacker's trial began in mid-December. One of the defendants is the businessman Marian Kocner, who is said to have ordered the murder. Various people from politics and the judiciary, who were in contact with Kocner, have resigned.

BOTH VICTIMS WERE investigative journalists. They tackled scandals regarding corruption and tax fraud and were living in constant jeopardy. Their

tragic murders lead us to the following questions: have external threats towards journalists increased in general? Above all, can we provide better protection for journalistic work in the EU? Hungary and Poland are notorious for restricting media. The issue, however, is more widespread.

THE ANNUAL REPORT 2019 by the Partner Organisations to the Council of Europe gives an overview of the current safety of journalists in Europe. According to its authors, including the Association of European Journalists and Reporters without Borders, press freedom is at its most fragile since the fall of the Iron Curtain. The report depicts a disquieting image of the current situation of journalists across the continent - violent crimes and impunity have increased, and legal protections have often been denied. In comparison to 2018, the number of recorded threats, including death threats, has doubled. Moreover, verbal abuse and public stigmatisation of the media is rising.

IN THIS CONTEXT, such cases were not observed only in Turkey or Russia, but also in member states of the EU - aside from Poland and Hungary. Out of all examined countries, Italy had the highest increase



Memorial for Daphne Caruana Galizia in Valletta. Source: Wikimedia Commons

of media freedom alerts in 2018. According to the report, organised crime remains one of the biggest threats to journalists, followed by neo-fascist groups. Additionally, ex-Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has expressed hostility towards the media. Earlier this year he threatened the anti-mafia author Roberto Saviano with the withdrawal of his police protection due to his criticism of the government.

THE INTERNATIONAL NON-PROFIT organization Reporters without Borders has been sharply critical of the threats made by the then-Interior Minister. Still Juliane Matthey, press officer of the organisation, underlines this: “What will become of this threat remains to be seen, as Salvini is no longer in office and his Lega party is no longer involved in the government.”

REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS laments the overall anti-media discourse by populist forces. Not only in Italy, but also in Central and Western Europe, verbal violence and accusations have intensified. A recent example is the German TV-journalist Georg Restle. After criticizing the party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), he received a death threat by letter. According to the TV-channel WDR, the

letter is to be assigned to the “right-wing extremist spectrum”. This is not an individual case.

THE SPOKESPERSON OF the German Journalists Association (DJV), Hendrik Zörner, stresses that animosity towards the media from citizens is increasing: “Look at the marches and demonstrations, such as from Pegida supporters, where one can observe violence against journalists”. The Berlin-based freelance journalist Osia Katsidou doubts that the “media-bashing” by the populist right – despite the rising threats – will change any time soon: “Their political success is directly linked to their rhetoric – regardless of whether they are against journalists, refugees or climate activists.”

THIS PHENOMENON CAN also be observed on a local level. According to Anders Nilsson, editor-in-chief at Örebro’s largest local newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda*, two journalists have experienced physical assault. “We had some incidents where we encouraged our reporters not to be in the middle of the crowd. The same goes for demonstrations, to always keep an eye out.

This is part of our preparation - if we know that the situation is going to be like this, we contact the police beforehand for information on how to minimise the risks”, explains Nilsson.

NEVERTHELESS, THIS WORRYING development is not left unanswered: the new EU Commissioner Vera Jourová expressed concern about verbal attacks on journalists by politicians. At her October hearing, she announced that she plans to provide more protection, as well as financial and legal support.

“THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION has been silent for far too long. After the killings of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Jan Kuciak, but also much earlier, when Hungary massively restricted the freedom of the press”, spokesperson Hendrik Zörner says. However, he considers the EU guideline for the protection of whistleblowers positive. “This is an important foundation for strengthening informant protection”.

BEYOND THE INSTITUTIONAL work of the EU, the non-profit organisation European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, ECPMF, which is co-founded by the European Commission, is working on the implementation of the European Charter on Freedom of the Press in the European Union. Its main target is responding to attacks on press freedom on both a national and international level. Addi-

tionally, it provides support for harassed journalists, national media associations and individuals that defend freedom of speech. For instance, journalists under threat have the possibility to apply for legal support from the ECPMF.

FINALLY, IT MUST be stressed that, especially among the Scandinavian countries, Finland as well as the Netherlands have been the front runners in the Reporters without Borders ranking – both on a European and an international level. “They are characterised by good working conditions for journalists, exemplary freedom of information laws and the widespread absence of threats and attacks against media workers,” explains Matthey from Reporters without Borders.

PERHAPS “THE USUAL suspects” - Poland and Hungary - are not the only bogeymen that the EU should consider. Quite the opposite: a look behind the fallen Iron Curtain reveals an increasingly unstable picture of the current situation of journalists. Populist discourses and widespread mistrust are weakening the supporting columns of European democracy. However, a collapse is likely not imminent. Despite worrying developments, the EU remains one of the most secure environments worldwide. Both EU-institutional and non-profit organisational work provide essential means to fill and fix the cracks in the soil.



Demonstration in Bratislava in memory of Ján Kuciak. Source: Flickr.

Passion and Global Politics: A Conversation Series

How can we understand today's global collective body of anxiety? The fear of the other? War and hostility?

What is the emotive component of critique, protest and mobilization, challenging authoritarian regimes and power relations?

How do politics of passion contribute to strife and conflict? To ethnic and sectarian categorizations? To loyalties and alliances?

How is passion interrelated with politics of displacement? With senses of uncertainty, experiences of persecution, the loss of a national home?

And how may affect simultaneously work toward strengthening people's sense of belonging and public intimacy?

In order to reflect on such questions, and with the hope of generating new ones, The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University is bringing together five prominent international scholars for conversations with Associate Professor Maria Frederika Malmström.



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Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Green crosses on the fields, a long line of tractors on the road to Berlin – farmers all across Germany protest the environmental regulations proposed by the government. What on one hand is considered too high a burden on farmers, on the other is criticized as being insufficient.

FOR YEARS, ENVIRONMENTAL activists and organisations have criticised the lack of regulation on agriculture in light of its impact on the environment, biodiversity, the negligent political stance on animal welfare, and the distribution of EU CAP payments.

AT THE SAME time, for several years, Germany has violated the EU Directive with regard to nitrate concentrations in groundwater, which have been consistently deemed too high. In 2016, the European Commission sued the German government in response. As a result, Germany passed new regulations which, however, were judged insufficient by the EU Commission.

IN RESPONSE, THE German minister of the environment, Svenja Schulze, and the minister of agriculture, Julia Klöckner, have proposed a reform package for agriculture. This includes a restructuring of CAP payments, an animal welfare label for meat products, and a program for insect protection. Another law was passed regarding the use of fertilizer to comply with EU requirements on nitrate.

The reform proposal sparked protests from farmers all across Germany that are directed against specific provisions of the regulation, but also include criticisms of general working conditions and lament the gap between societal expectations and the realities of farming.

THE FARMERS ORGANIZE through the initiative “Land schafft Verbindung” (land creates links), founded on October 1, 2019. It describes itself as a movement of farmers, land users and the rural population with over 30,000 active members. The initiative underlines its independence from associations, organisations and institutions.

THE CORE IDEA is to make the voices of farmers heard. Policies lack practical relevance and applicability and have become too bureaucratic, the protesters claim. In addition, they deplore that laws on agricultural practices are passed without ever consulting those working in agriculture. Thus, they demand a seat at the table such that all stakeholders are involved in decision-making.

WHAT ADDS TO the frustration is the perception that farmers have become everyone’s bogeyman for environmental problems. Instead of cooperating with farmers, society and politics only denounce, demand and sanction, they feel. Yet, the farmers emphasise: “[We] as well stand for the protection of the environment and insects, for clean groundwater and healthy food, for climate-friendly agriculture, and for animal welfare in the stables”.

THE INITIATIVE HAS called for peaceful protests of farmers. In addition, the green crosses campaign started by farmer Willi Kremer-Schilling was intended to raise awareness about the precarious situation of farmers in Germany and the question of inclusion of farmers on environmental and agricultural matters in general. For that purpose, farmers set up a green cross in their fields.

ON THE OTHER side of the debate, environmental organisations argue that the measures proposed by Schulze and Klöckner do not go far enough. “Even though the proposal in its various parts constitutes an important first step, it is mostly just a small one, but, [in fact], too little”, Christian Rehmer, head of the agricultural policy division with Friends of the Earth Germany, tells The Perspective.

FOR INSTANCE, THE animal welfare label is designed as an indication in three tiers of whether the animal, from rearing to slaughter, has been treated better than required by law. It would initially only apply to pork, and later be extended to beef and poultry. In order to comply with EU regulations

on competition, Klöckner plans to make the label voluntary. Rehmer and Friends of the Earth Germany call for a mandatory measure.

WITH REGARD TO the restructuring of CAP payments, the share of money flowing towards environmentally-friendly practices was proposed to increase. However, Greenpeace criticises that it will not be raised to the full amount possible within EU law.

TO TACKLE THE decline in insect populations, the proposal bans the use of insecticides and limits the use of herbicides in specific areas that includes existing nature reserves and also additional areas, such as particular portions of agricultural land. The licensing requirements for new products are also set to be more stringent. According to Rehmer, these measures alone will not be sufficient to protect insects.

NEVERTHELESS, REHMER UNDERSTANDS the frustration and helplessness that farmers feel. “The farmers are in a situation where they have been forced to grow [and] produce cheap commodities for the global market for decades, by politics, by their own associations, or even by science, such that now even the smallest changes on their farms appear extremely painful and impossible to master,” he explains.

BUT, HE ADDS, reforms are necessary and the urgency and increasingly radical nature these take now is also due to years of backlog of reforms,



Photo: bmel



Photo: flickr/ Jörg Farys

which the farmers' association is equally to blame for. Therefore, he finds that the protesting is rightful, although directed at the wrong recipient – in fact, the farmers should primarily protest their own associations for having blocked meaningful legislation for decades.

IN THIS REGARD, some change may be underway. Indeed, “[the farmer’s association] fears that their power and authority diminish massively because the farmers now mobilise independently”, Rehmer remarks. Among the farmers, some voices cautiously criticised their association for not having lived up to their purpose – representing the interests of farmers – in the past years.

STILL, THE LOW price levels threaten the subsistence of many. The recently adopted trade agreement Mercosur seems to cap it all off. Even though unrelated to the reform proposal, it is viewed as yet another factor to increase competition, put pressure on prices and potentially threaten the domestic farmers’ supply of safe, high-quality and certified regional food. This point is also seen critically by Rehmer and other environmental organisations.

IN AN INTERVIEW, Klöckner commented that the agreement gives domestic agriculture privileged access to 260 million consumers. Germany would benefit from increased sales opportunities while access to foreign products would not be fully liberalised – quotas and equally applicable quality standards for imports will be introduced. Thus, according to her, the farmers’ fear is not warranted.

ONE OF THE main quarrels of the farmers is the new regulation on fertilizer use – which is not part of the reform package – in combination with the other restrictions. It identifies so-called red areas in which the groundwater quality is critical and the nitrate concentrations exceed the EU threshold. In those areas, fertilizer use is to be reduced by 20%.

IN THIS REGARD, the farmers express quite a range of views, although most agree that the groundwater should be protected. Yet, many fear that parts of their land will be impossible to cultivate under the new requirements, thus becoming useless and that eventually, crop quality and yields will decrease. Others speak of “under-fertilisation”.

KLÖCKNER RESPONDED THAT even though she understands the worries of some farmers and the necessity of using fertilizer, meeting EU requirements and assuring the quality of groundwater are equally important. “We have proposed measures to the EU Commission which should ensure the best possible balance [...]. The farmers will be supported in the implementation through various offers,” she underlined.

REHMER ADDS THAT Germany, in fact, had no choice but to comply with EU law concerning the new fertilizer regulation. The only scope would be to create funds to support farmers with the implementation.

FURTHERMORE, HE EXPLAINS that the idea of ‘under-fertilisation’ is not plausible. He illustrates the current situation with an example of farmers nourishing their child: “In reality, they give their child twice as much food as it can eat and therefore, half of the food is left on the table and rots.” In other words, if at all, one would have to speak of an over-fertilisation.

YET AGAIN, REHMER also emphasises that the farmers struggle with this measure primarily because too little has been done in the past – had gradual steps been introduced over the last 5 years, the measures would not feel this infeasible now.

AT LARGE, REHMER sees the main deficiency of the reform proposal with the fact that it does not

address the manure production in Germany, or in other words, of stock farming in general. “The objective of Friends of the Earth Germany in this regard is to halve the stock of farm animals by 2050“, explains Rehmer.

THIS IS IMPORTANT not only because of the groundwater and other relevant environmental issues, but also because of its impact on the Baltic Sea. The increases in nitrate concentration resulting from animal farming enters the sea, where it contributes to the expansion of so-called death zones – oxygen-deficient areas which occur, particularly in the Baltic Sea. This in turn has a severe negative impact on marine life.

AS A RESULT it is crucial that support structures, both financial and in terms of guidance and consultation, be created. Rehmer stresses that this applies to farmers, as well as to consumers so that environmentally friendly behaviour is possible and accessible for all. One of the biggest challenges that remains is balancing the necessary radicality of change and its potential threat to the everyday lives of many.

IN THIS REGARD, as the farmers continue to protest, environmental organisations and parts of society demand stricter regulation, and politicians are ever more often considered too removed from the issues and too lenient towards ‘big business’, it remains to be seen whether they will all meet at the same table to find common ground.

Infobox

The EU common agricultural policy (CAP) is a partnership between agriculture and society to support European farmers, the rural economy and agricultural productivity. Alongside other measures, the CAP financial support is divided into two pillars – a direct payment per hectare, relatively independent from the type of cultivation, and payments for the development of rural areas which rewards amongst other things the protection of animal welfare and the environment.

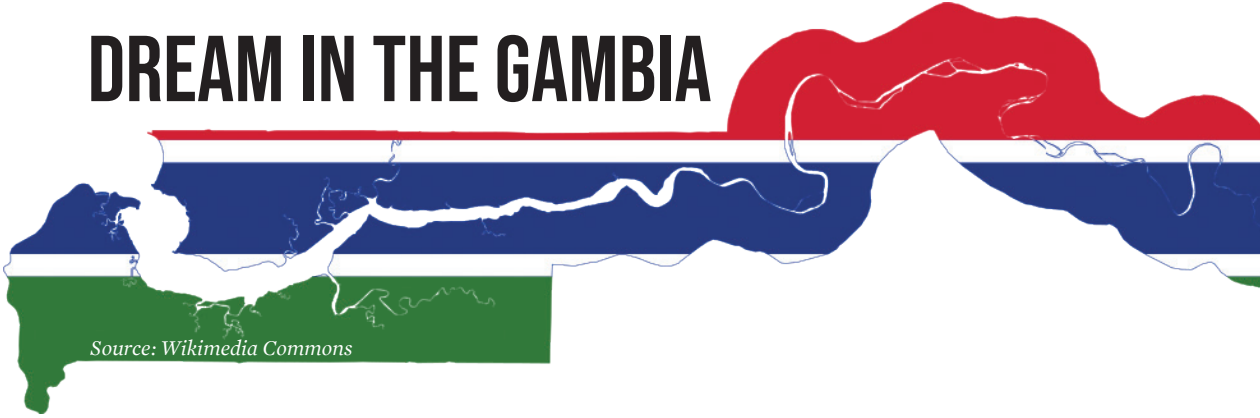
According to EU regulation, up to 15% of total CAP payments can be directed towards the second pillar. Germany so far only uses 4.5%.

With the proposed reform, this share is set to rise to 6% in 2020 which corresponds to 75 million euros. However, it also represents a loss of 4.50 euros per hectare in direct payments.

The EU threshold for nitrate concentration in groundwater is 50 mg / litre.

With regard to the debate on fertiliser use, there is a general basis of calculation for the fertiliser requirements of any crop. This has increased steadily over the past years, by about 10-15%, according to professor Taubert from the University in Kiel (Germany).

THE SHATTERING OF A DEMOCRATIC DREAM IN THE GAMBIA



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Even though a large amount of the offline population in the world can be found in Africa, the continent showcases striking examples of how social media has been used to favour democratic systems. The Perspective explores the Gambian election of 2016 and asks members of Gambian society what they think of their leader today.

IN THE PAST twenty years, social media has grown to be incorporated into the lives of billions of people. It has gained increased ground when it comes to letting its users observe political developments in the world. This fast development has resulted in opportunities to get hold of information from the other side of the world in a matter of seconds. Today, over half of the world's population are active internet users.

A LARGE AMOUNT of the world's offline population is found in Africa. Here, there are several examples of how social media has been used as a tool to fight dictatorships. Two examples are Tunisia and The Gambia. During the Arab Spring, Tunisia experienced a "Twitter revolution". In The Gambia, social media was used to overthrow the dictator Yahya Jammeh.

THE PERSPECTIVE SPOKE to Sheriffo Sonko, executive member for three years of Jotna The Gambia. The Civil society group Three years Jotna works as a pressure group to ensure that Adama Barrow keeps his promise of being a transitional president and resigning after three years as promised. They

want to hold new elections in which Barrow doesn't participate and instead hands over power to the winner of the election. Sonko expresses his views of how The Gambia has changed since Barrow gained power:

— "The political space has opened up a lot, in that people have been free to express their opinions. Though the government has been trying to restrict these freedoms our people are fighting to hang on to these rights, as we do not want to return to dictatorship. Besides the improvements of our freedoms, not much has been improved with regards to the people or youth's access to opportunities for jobs, better education, healthcare, and more. The great majority of the Gambians are still poor and there is no end in sight on that front."

NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE held every fifth year in The Gambia. Although the process has been similar to the process of a democratic system the results have generally favoured the current chair. Since The Gambia gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1965, the country has been ruled by two dictators: Dawda Jawara and Yahya Jammeh. Jawara ruled the country from 1965 until

1994 when he was overthrown by Jammeh. From then on Jammeh ruled The Gambia with an iron fist.

DURING JAMMEH'S TIME as president, he established several regulations to make it difficult to overthrow him. For example, he established a maximum age limit for presidential candidates of the age of 65 in the year 2011. At that time, the leader of the opposition party United Democratic Party (UDP), Ousainou Darboe, had already passed the age limit, making it impossible for him to get elected. Also, Jammeh raised the cost of candidating significantly which further complicated the situation for other candidates.

THE GAMBIA IS one of Africa's geographically smallest countries and has a population of 2 million people. During Jammeh's rule, tens of thousands of Gambians reportedly left The Gambia to live abroad. Around 90,000 Gambians are estimated to live abroad today.

THE ROAD TOWARDS a democratic society has been long for the Gambian people. In 2016, new hope struck when Gambians living in The Gambia and parts of the Gambian diaspora joined forces and supported Adama Barrow, a democratic candidate from the UDP. Before entering the political arena, Barrow was primarily a businessman who had worked in real estate in London.

THE MOBILISATION OF people supporting Barrow was mainly done through social media, especially through Facebook and WhatsApp groups, but also through the website GoFundMe.com. Through these platforms, the Gambians living in The Gambia and diaspora groups could connect and express opinions to collectively overthrow the autocratic regime. Barrows' campaigners used the social media groups to spread information about roadblocks, gatherings and other relevant messages to the people. GoFundMe.com was used to raise money, mainly from the Gambian diaspora, to contribute financially to the campaign. In total, the Diaspora Election Command Center raised \$100,000 US.

THE PERSPECTIVE SPOKE to Ebrima Camara, Assistant secretary for the Gambian Texas

Association (GTA). GTA is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious organization of Gambians and people of Gambian descent living in Texas. GTA did not officially support a presidential candidate in the 2016 election but Camara tells The Perspective:

—"Several community members hosted shows on online radios e.g. The Audacity Show to spread information that could not be spread through the only media channel in The Gambia, Gambia Radio and Transmission Services (GRTS). Many others expressed our views on our social media encouraging our family members at risk. Posting pictures with #NewGambia shirts and gear, hosting facebook lives and utilizing all the available technological resources to lead, motivate, educate, embolden and inspire family and friends back home who had the ballots in their hands. WhatsApp was a great platform to share information as it is what most Gambians use to communicate with and from the diaspora. Some also contributed to fundraisers created to support the coalition. It is safe to say that every individual in the community from the President to our estranged members was against the incumbent Yahya".

THE MOBILISATION OF the Gambian people in favour of the UDP was so widespread that Jammeh strategically shut down the internet and telecommunications in The Gambia. This move was made to try to prevent the opposition party's influence spread.

THE ELECTION RESULTS from 1st December 2016 were groundbreaking. Barrow had received a majority of the votes and won with 43,3% over sitting president Jammeh's 39,6%. The message was clear. The Gambian people wanted a democratic leader. At first, Jammeh recognised his defeat and stated that he would hand over the presidency to Barrow. However, Jammeh changed his mind and was, during a period, unwilling to leave. After great international pressure, especially from Senegal and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), he was forced to do so. Barrow was then able to take his place as president.

BARROW'S VICTORY SEEMED to be the start of a democratic society in the Gambia. Since Barrow's term has begun, thousands of Gambians from the diaspora around the world have returned to The Gambia with hopes of building their lives there.



Adamo Barrow, President of The Gambia. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

IN 2016, REPORTERS Without Borders ranked The Gambia as number 145 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index. Jammeh had oppressed the press by all means. Murders, imprisonments and abductions were not uncommon. In 2017, when Barrow had become president, The Gambia climbed up two steps and was ranked in place 143. In 2019, three years after the election, The Gambia has now risen to place 92.

CHANGE SEEMS TO pervade The Gambia. But is this the outcome the Gambian people wanted? Barrow campaigned for the presidency because he would only be a transitional president and hold the chair for three years. Three years have now passed since the Gambian people went to the polling stations in December 2016, but Barrow shows no signs of handing over the presidency. Instead, he aims to fulfil his term and to be a candidate again in 2021.

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT is happening in The Gambia, The Perspective spoke to Sheriffo Sonko, executive member for three years of Jotna the Gambia. The Civil society group Three years Jotna works as a pressure group to ensure that Barrow keeps his promise of being a transitional president and resigning after three years as promised. They want to hold new elections in which Barrow doesn't participate and instead hands over power to the

winner of the election. Sheriffo Sonko says:

— “Of recent, we have seen a reluctance in our President to honour this pledge, and like many failed African leaders, he also wants to perpetuate his presidency, at the detriment of the nation. For this reason, as patriotic citizens, our civil society grouping is formed to pressure the President to remain faithful to his promise.”

SHERIFFO SONKO SUPPORTED and voted for Barrow in the 2016 elections as the flag bearer of the Coalition of the oppositional parties. He tells The Perspective:

— “I attended their political rallies, voted for them and also contributed to their campaign financially. I further assisted them in distributing their campaign posters and T-Shirts, etcetera.”

EVEN THOUGH SONKO supported Barrow back in 2016, he is not pleased with how the president has acted. He states that President Barrow disappointed the voters when it comes to corruption and governance among other things. He says that Barrow:

— “Has disappointed a lot of Gambians by his pandering to the remnants of the previous dictatorial regime of Yahya Jammeh.”

ON THE QUESTION, if Barrow has lived up to his

promises Sonko answers:

— “The simple answer is no! He is reneging on all of them. Thus, forcing citizens like ourselves to strive to hold accountable to his promises, especially with his promise to stay in power for only 3 years.”

TODAY, THE GAMBIA faces a lot of challenges. Three years Jotna is presenting Barrow with a petition on the 16th of December in which he is required to resign on January 19th 2020 which hopefully takes the country on a more democratic path. Sonko explains that a lot of people rely on the Gambian government which currently is very weak. He wants The Gambia to take another direction and states that:

— “We need social reforms in The Gambia, which will see the state taking a central role in the provision of public transport, housing, etcetera. At the moment our government is not heading towards that direction, unfortunately! In fact, at present, we are unclear as to where our government is taking us.”

THE PERSPECTIVE ALSO spoke to Ebrima Camara, Assistant secretary for the Gambian Texas Association (GTA). GTA is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious organization of Gambians and people of Gambian descent living in the State of Texas. GTA did not officially support a presidential candidate in the 2016 election but Camara tells us that even so:

— “It is safe to say that every individual in the community from the President to our estranged members was against the incumbent Yahya.”

Camara continues to speak about the engagement of the GTA community members:

— “Several community members hosted shows on online radios e.g. The Audacity Show to spread information that could not be spread through the only media channel in The Gambia, Gambia Radio and Transmission Services (GRTS). Many others expressed our views on our social media encouraging our family members at risk. Posting pictures with #NewGambia shirts and gear, hosting facebook lives and utilizing all the available technological resources to lead, motivate, educate, embolden and inspire family and friends back home who had the ballots in their hands. WhatsApp was a great platform to share information as it is what most Gambians use to communicate with and from the diaspora. Some also contributed to fundraisers created to support the coalition.”

“WE ARE UNCLEAR AS TO WHERE OUR GOVERNMENT IS TAKING US.”

— *Sheriffo Sonko*

AS SHERIFFO SONKO, Camara agrees that Barrow has not lived up to what he promised. On the question of if he thinks that Adama Barrow has lived up to his promises Camara says:

— “No. The most important promise from our collective objective to remove the despot was that he, Adama, or whoever it may be that took the mantle would adhere to their coalition’s agreement that the President be a “transitional President”. This was a common understanding amongst themselves (politicians) and the people.”

CAMARA THINKS THAT The Gambia has a lot of potentials when it comes to development. He explains:

— “Considering our vast natural resources eg water bodies and human capacity The Gambia should be easy to develop. However, we need development in almost every sector. Health, agriculture, sports, arts, education, infrastructure, economy etcetera. Firstly and most importantly we need to organize. We need good executive leadership with a vision and tailored plan for the country. Knowledgeable, patriotic, experienced and incorruptible team to execute.”

ADAMA BARROW HAD the hopes of the Gambian people when he took his place in the Presidential Palace in Banjul. The dream of democracy was not fulfilled this time. But the hope is still alive, both among Gambians in The Gambia and diaspora groups such as the GTA. A change of regime did not change it all, even if the Gambian people have been experiencing more liberties during Barrow’s term than under Jammeh.

THE FACT THAT the social media mobilisation process in The Gambia was able to include individuals from all over the world who did not know each other but merely shared national identity is revolutionary and is something that shouldn’t be taken for granted.

SAR WARS

IT'S THE 28.10.2019, my girlfriend, Julie, sends me a picture of fifteen people in a rubber boat on the sea. The people on the dinghy are looking up towards the camera. A young boy lifts both of his hands as he waves to the reconnaissance airplane Moonbird, from which Julie and three other crew members are observing them and sending the boat's position to the International Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (IMRCC) in Rome.

IT THE SAME time, I am sitting in the mess - the living room - of the Sea-Watch 3, one of the last remaining civil rescue ships operating in the central Mediterranean Sea. The crew, consisting of five medical doctors, three engineers, two officers, two fast boat drivers, a photographer, an electrician and eight more members, is ready to rescue. But the ship has been impounded since June while people in the Central Mediterranean need our help. After the Moonbird, with Julie, has landed, I wanted to know what had happened to the people on the boat.

WHEN PEOPLE IN distress are spotted, the first step is to contact the IMRCC. Even though, in this case, the rubber boat is moving quickly and seems sturdy. It only takes a large wave to burst a tube or an engine failure to leave the families stranded. Every rubber boat on the open seas is, by definition, a distress case. IMRCC decides which rescue ship will be in charge of conducting a rescue mission.



ON OCTOBER 28, as in most cases, they inform the so-called Libyan Coast Guard about the rubber boat's position. At the same time, Moonbird is searching for nearby commercial vessels: with thunderstorms closing in, the boat might not survive the night. Just beyond the horizon, the plane spots the Vos Aphrodite, an offshore supply vessel.

THEY CIRCLE AROUND the ship, repeatedly calling the captain and bridge. It must have sounded like this: "Vos Aphrodite, Vos Aphrodite, Vos Aphrodite, this is Moonbird, Moonbird. There is a distress case 10 nautical miles away. It is a grey rubber boat with fifteen people aboard. According to international maritime law, you, as the closest ship, are required to help these people in distress."

THE RADIO CRACKLES – but there is no answer. For commercial ships, taking in refugees



Photo: Sea-Watch/ Fabian Melber

means being denied entry to a port of safety. And for offshore oil companies, every hour of delay accounts for losses in the millions. While Moonbird tries to contact the ship again, the land crew has been reaching out to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, which is heavily funded and trained by the European Union to intercept people trying to cross the Central Mediterranean. After several unsuccessful calls, Sea Watch's Air Liaison Officer finally gets through to the Libyan Maritime Coordination Centre. Their response: the weather is bad, and their ships will not go out today. Usually, the specific role of the coast guard is to go out when no other ship can. This is why activists have labelled them the "so-called" Libyan Coast Guard.

IN THE AIRPLANE, the mood is sombre. They have to leave the people in distress and return before the fuel tank is empty. There remain three civil rescue ships operative in the Central Mediterranean

Sea. The Ocean Viking, run by SOS Méditerranée and Doctors without Borders, and the Alan Kurdi of the German organisation Sea-Eye are both in standoffs at entrances to Italian ports, waiting to disembark the people rescued on their recent missions. The Open Arms, of the Spanish organisation Proactiva, is heading to Lampedusa, more than 24 hours of sailing distance away. On their way back to the airport, Moonbird flies over the Open Arms, which has already been contacted by Sea-Watch. That afternoon, the captain and the crew decide to turn the ship around and to sail back into the search and rescue zone.

THE NEXT DAY, at dusk, Moonbird flies out again, searching for that same rubber boat. They cover the entire area the boat could have reached during the night. After hours of flying, on the last leg of their flight pattern, the crew spot the rubber boat again and send its position to the Open Arms. Fifteen people were saved from drowning that day.

FOR 2019, THE International Organisation of Migration recorded 743 deaths on the central Mediterranean route alone. According to these statistics, the central area of the Mediterranean Sea is the deadliest border in the world. Most of the time, however, when civil rescue ships arrive at a distress case, the Libyans have been there before. Their ships are sponsored by Italy and run twice as fast. Often, Search and Rescue (SAR) NGOs find empty rubber boats, the people taken back into Libyan camps where they will be tortured, extorted, raped and enslaved to generate revenue for militias. This race to save people from being taken back to Libya is what Search and Rescue activists cynically refer to as “SAR wars”.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION?

IN 2014, ITALY put an end to its own SAR programme, Mare Nostrum, due to the lack of financial support from European member states. To replace it, they equipped Libyan militias, the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, with patrol vessels. As long as the boats haven't reached Italian or Maltese search and rescue waters, the MRCC can send out the LCG to hunt and pull back migrants to Libya. This despite the non-refoulement principle of international law, which forbids anyone to return migrants to a country where they are likely to face harm. Libya is not a safe country.



Photo: Sea-Watch/ Fabian Melber

CIVIL RESCUE ORGANISATIONS were established to fill the void that Mare Nostrum left. In 2016 and 2017, the Libyans would interfere in rescues, sometimes boarding the civil rescue ships. Europe struggled to find a solution to allocate people that went beyond the Dublin Treaty and, to protect itself

from people arriving in Italy, criminalised sea rescues. In 2017, ten members of the rescue ship *Iuventa* were accused of human trafficking. The ship was confiscated and the activists face up to 20 years of jailtime in Italy. After a media outcry, authorities used more sly tactics: The *Aquarius* was seized during the winter of 2018 because authorities found out they had not correctly separated their waste. The civil fleet has been reduced from thirteen ships to a mere four that are currently operative.

THE SEA-WATCH 3 is one of the ships that remains seized. On the day when I received Julie's message, we were supposed to sail. The ship was legally free again. Instead, the authorities had directives from the Ministry of Interior to not let the vessel leave port.

EUROPE IS BUILDING its own border wall in the sea. On November 13, the EU decided to make the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) their best financed agency. By 2027, they are planning to stock up their standing force from 750 to 10,000 border guards. Frontex operates drones that allow for the monitoring and reporting of positions of migrant boats to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard for pull-backs to Libya.

IN 2020, SEA-WATCH expects their current ship to be unseized. The German protestant church will buy another ship for Sea-Watch, and the civil rescue fleet will keep sailing into the Mediterranean Sea on the lookout for people in distress. But, on a wider level, a solution can only be achieved from an EU-wide agreement on how to allocate asylum seekers to all member states.

Until then, the SAR wars will continue.

Further information on Sea-Watch and the civil SAR missions.



CENSORSHIP AT CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

Western media outlets often cover human right issues in China, but domestic voices are rarely heard. Micaela Carhed, Head of UPF's Lecture Committee, spent a semester at Fudan University in Shanghai - and got the chance to hear what Chinese students think of their country's censorship program.

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT started developing internet filtering technologies in 1996 and has mainly used it as a means of upholding community values. At the same time, the one-party regime uses the technology to censor any information critical of their hold on power.

ACCORDING TO RESEARCHER Li Shao, writing in the Journal for East Asian Studies, the censors are quite tolerant of criticism, as long as criticism towards the government does not increase the potential for protest. Previous research about the perception of democracy in China has been undertaken where the "Western style of democracy" has been discussed, with some scholars claiming that Chinese citizens seem satisfied with the current political regime, as long as it provides material benefits and maintains a stable social environment.

IT IS DIFFICULT to find people in China willing to talk about censorship, but the answers from the ones that are vary slightly.

"I DO NOT think that the government should have the right to hide information from us," one student at Fudan University in Shanghai said, while another considered China to be an indirect democracy, in the sense that Chinese citizens can vote for the local government, which, in turn, votes for the president.

"WE DO NOT care about who is going to be the president. The country will always move forward economically no matter what - and that is what is most important," the student said, whilst also raising the issue that the local government is more undemocratic in the sense that they think more about their own interest in their villages.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT censorship, the answers were mixed. One student said that he does not think that censorship influences Chinese people in their daily lives - while another student disagreed with strict censorship in China, and argues that it promotes distrust in people. He claims that the government thinks that if there were to be no censorship in place, people would be influenced by "bad"

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CHINA IS WORSE UNDER XI JINPING.

- Chinese student at Fudan University, remarking that some music has been banned since Preident Xi took office.

information. However, he argues that censorship is necessary to some extent.

“SOME IMPORTANT THINGS must be influenced, but not everything”, he argued.

“WE HAVE OUR own search engine, Baidu, and if we want to go to other webpages, most of us are using VPNs”, another student at the campus said.

ALL PEOPLE AT Fudan University who were willing to talk to The Perspective disagreed with China’s censorship and used VPN on a regular basis. However, some of them still understand the purpose of it and can not really imagine their life without it. One student first learned about censorship in high school. It was when she was watching a movie and

her friends told her that some parts were cut out of the movie, of which she had not been aware beforehand. Today, she is able to get secret access to movies through friends abroad sharing them to her.

ACCORDING TO THE students of Fudan University that were willing to share their views on democracy and censorship, liberty and democracy is all based on the safety and development of the economy, as well as the living standards of the people. The economy of China has improved a lot in recent years and that is, for Chinese people, a good sign that the government is doing something important. It is a sign that they are doing the right thing for the country.

ANOTHER STUDENT ARGUED that China is making democratic progress, but that it has deteriorated lately.

“CHINA IS WORSE under Xi Jinping. Recently an artist could not upload one of his songs, as it was subjective to politics”, she said, while also mentioning that sensitive content are being removed from WeChat and Weibo.

FOR THE STUDENTS at the campus, it is, apparently, more important to have a roof over your head and food on your table. As long as they live a happy life, where they feel free to do what they want, that is democracy for them, rather than if they were to be allowed to directly vote for their government. To them, the most important thing is to live a life with good living standards and, even though China is blocking certain information, a lot is still accessible.





Photo: Nomad Tales, Flickr

EAST TIMOR

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

On 30th August 1999, the population of East Timor voted in a historic referendum: to choose whether they wanted greater autonomy within Indonesia, or independence. After 24 years of brutal Indonesian rule, 78% chose independence and the newly free territory adopted the official name The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. 20 years on, the small island nation is looking to expand its international presence both economically and politically.

For over 270 years, East Timor had been a distant colony of the Portuguese Empire. However, when Portuguese forces withdrew in 1975, they left a power vacuum, with rival factions fighting for control. In November, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) declared East Timor an independent nation with Dili as its capital. Just nine days later, Indonesian forces invaded and occupied the territory.

UNDER PRESIDENT SUHARTO, Indonesia brutally cracked down on the East Timorese, with resistance groups such as Fretilin's military wing, Fintinil, waging a guerrilla war against the occupiers. In 1991, the Santa Cruz Massacre, where over 250 pro-independence demonstrators were killed while attending a funeral, brought the world's attention back to East Timor. Following the

massacre and the 1992 capture and imprisonment of prominent Fintinil fighter Xanana Gusmão, support for East Timorese independence grew; and in 1996, the Catholic Bishop Carlos Belo and exiled de facto Foreign Minister José Ramos-Horta were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to peacefully end the occupation.

HOWEVER, REAL CHANGE occurred in 1998, when protests in Indonesia led to the resignation of the long-ruling President Suharto. Incoming President JB Habibie sought to end the crisis in East Timor, freeing prisoners such as Gusmão and allowing a referendum for greater autonomy. Under international pressure, the referendum turned into a choice between autonomy and independence. Due to violence from Indonesian militias, UN peacekeepers entered East Timor; and after the referendum, remained to ensure the new country's initial years would be peaceful and



President Francisco Guterres recently welcomed Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, although relations have long been complicated between the two nations. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

stable. UN administration lasted until 2002, when Gusmão was elected as the first President of the newly renamed Timor-Leste.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, a moving video emerged of Xanana Gusmão visiting the dying Habibie in hospital, with Habibie embracing Gusmão. For his role in allowing East Timorese independence to happen, Habibie will be fondly remembered by many East Timorese.

EVEN NOW THOUGH, Timor-Leste is struggling to recover from the Indonesian occupation, and remains an underdeveloped and impoverished nation. For example, despite a rapid rise in living standards, the World Bank found that in 2014, 42% of the population remained in poverty; and in 2017, the country's Human Capital Index stood at just 43%, compared to an average of 61% for the region. Significantly, there have been problems in expanding and diversifying Timor-Leste's economy. An estimated 70% of the population are still engaged in subsistence farming.

ADDITIONALLY, TOURISM is only in the early stages of development, and is unlikely to revolutionise the East Timorese economy any time soon. Timor-Leste's economic growth will likely be fuelled mostly by resources, as it possesses large oil deposits at sea, and has recently sought to develop its mining industry.

A KEY ISSUE for many of Timor-Leste's woes is infrastructure: little investment was made during the Indonesian occupation, much of what existed was destroyed by Indonesian militias following the referendum, and the poor nation simply does not have the funds to build the infrastructure it needs. As a result, projects backed by organisations such as the World Bank will be vital in opening up opportunities by better connecting the nation, both internally and to the outside world.

AS AN INDEPENDENT state, Timor-Leste has also sought to find its place on the world stage. Naturally, this has largely involved solving relations with their closest neighbours. As both the former occupier and only country to share a land border with Timor-Leste, Indonesia is an important neighbour for Timor-Leste. However, trust between the two nations is still strained. In October this year, Indonesian President Joko Widodo appointed his former political rival Prabowo Subianto as Minister for Defense in his new cabinet. Prabowo is a divisive figure, as he has been accused of human rights violations during his time as a military commander overseeing the occupation of East Timor in the 1990s. For the East Timorese, seeing such a man appointed to a major office by their supposed ally is worrying, and shows signs that Indonesia may not have truly repented for the occupation.

TIMOR-LESTE HAS also suffered continuous bad relations with their southern neighbour, Australia. Poor relations predate East Timorese independence, as in 1978, Australia became the first country to recognise the Indonesian occupation of East Timor as legitimate, despite the United Nations condemning the occupation. Recently declassified documents show that Australia was motivated to do so by a desire to acquire gas and oil rights along the maritime border between Australia and East Timor. This desire has continued to shape Australia's relations with post-independence Timor-Leste as well. In 2002, Australia controversially pushed for a border that granted Australia a much larger share than Timor-Leste of the oil fields under the border. It was not until 2018 that an agreement was reached, establishing a fair border between the two nations.

THE TWO COUNTRIES have also pledged to jointly develop the large wealth of oil and gas that lies on the border, although negotiations regarding how to develop the field are still ongoing. However, human rights campaigners have calculated that since 2002, Australia has already unfairly extracted over \$5 billion in revenue that would have belonged to Timor-Leste, and the Australian government is under increasing pressure to return the money to its far-poorer neighbour.

TIMOR-LESTE'S BIGGEST international goal right now though is a seat at the table at ASEAN, as it remains the only Southeast Asian nation that is not a member of the Association. Since 2002, Timor-Leste has been an observer of ASEAN, and in 2005 was admitted into the ASEAN Regional Forum, but full membership has continued to elude them. This seems consequential to the East Timorese, as ASEAN has enabled greater coordination within the region and raised the profile of Southeast Asia on the wider international stage. Membership would also grant Timor-Leste access to additional trade deals, a voice in discussions on regional projects, and funds to aid development.

TIMOR-LESTE APPEARS to have friends in its corner as well, having received backing from other states. Recently Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen expressed his support for ASEAN leaders to admit Timor-Leste. Earlier this year, the East Timorese Foreign Minister also claimed to have

received assurance from Brunei that it would also support Timor-Leste's bid to become ASEAN's 11th member. Timor-Leste claims to have fulfilled all minimum requirements to become an ASEAN member, including opening embassies in all member states; and as such, had been hoping to hear a result during the 2019 ASEAN summit, which ended on 4th November. However, until ASEAN members can come to a firm and unanimous decision on the matter, it is unclear when or if Timor-Leste might join the fold.

20 YEARS ON from their historic referendum, the struggle for independence remains vivid in the memories of the East Timorese. However, they are also aware that as citizens of one of the youngest countries in the world, they also face a very different kind of struggle to catch up economically and begin to assert itself on the regional and global stage. Hopefully in another 20 years, things will be looking even brighter.



Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Photo: Jonathan Van Smit. (Flickr)

CYBERBALKANIZATION & DEMOCRACY

The internet, being one of the most influential and valuable tools available to voters, has immense power to sway political outcomes. The threat of cyber balkanisation, controlling the flow of information in and out of a country, undermines the ability of voters to make decisions based on unfiltered information undermining the strength and legitimacy of democracies around the world.

Cyberbalkanization and its potential long lasting impact on opinion polarization risks undermining democracy. Cyberbalkanization is characterized by a nation state stopping internet traffic from leaving or entering their jurisdiction and is usually done by ring fencing an entire country code. This pervasive data manipulation enables control over the flow of information in an effort to influence populations and their political decisions which ultimately allows governments to indirectly control political outcomes. This is a major threat to the long-term health and legitimacy of democracy as information control over time affects voters values, beliefs and perceptions of the world to fit a government's particular ideal.

THE INCREASING INFLUENCE and importance of the internet in how it spreads information and awareness as well as how it connects people through online communities has created strong dependence on unrestricted internet access. While this dependence has increased efficiency it has also increased vulnerability to cyberattacks, which thereby increases the power the internet has to affect everyday life, opinions, beliefs and values through the information



that is accessible. This power can quickly become a political weapon, especially as younger generations such as millennials and generation Z are sensitive to changes to the internet as they have grown up using the internet for information and communication. According to a survey done by Statista, 44% of people aged between 18-25 spend more than 7 hours online each week. Younger generations are constantly bombarded with a steady flow of new information and have active online lives where they explore who they are and learn what it is they stand for and believe in. This is why cyberbalkanization and

“INTERNET CENSORSHIP IS A THREAT TO THE LONGEVITY AND LEGITIMACY OF DEMOCRACY

it fundamentally changes the way voters, especially younger voters, see and understand the world.

CHINA'S GREAT FIREWALL is one example of cyberbalkanization where the Chinese government has tight control over the flow of information and the population. The Great Firewall is pervasive and controlling, its purpose is to control the information the people in China have access to in an effort to combat civil unrest and create a homogenous society with similar values and political ideologies. As discussed by James Griffiths in *The Great Firewall of China: How to build and control an alternative version of the internet*, the Great Firewall has been successful in preventing social groups from organising and solidarity networks from forming, and as such, minimizing the risk of threats to the communist party's authority. This has made it possible for the government to ignore and even cover up certain facts and truths by simply deleting certain information such as Tiananmen Square in 1988, the Muslim 'education' camps and the protests in Hong Kong.

RIISING TENSIONS BETWEEN Hong Kong and China as a result of ongoing protests is another example where the Chinese government manipulates data to spread disinformation, nationalistic and anti-western sentiment through their state owned media platforms in an effort to delegitimize protesters and their cause. The spread of disinformation is an attempt to create an alternate version of what is happening in Hong Kong. Steven Lee Myers and Paul Mozur from *The New York Times*, note how the Chinese government belittle Hong Kong protesters and remove online efforts to contextualize the situation or express sympathy for the protesters. Describing them as a small violent gang of protesters who are unsupported by local residents and provoked by foreign agents who are calling for Hong Kong's independence.

SIMILAR TO CHINA'S Great Firewall, Russia passed a law permitting the creation of separate Russian internet, 'The digital iron curtain' also called 'RuNet' which gives the Russian state, Putin, full control over the flow of information in and out of Russia. Although the 'Digital iron curtain' hasn't been implemented yet, it sends a message to the Russian population and the rest of the world that the Russian government can and someday will control the information available in Russia. The digital iron curtain is not only a tool to control the flow of information in and out of Russia, but is also, as discussed by Zac Dorffman, *Forbes*, a defence mechanism Russia can use to defend the state from threats to its stability, security and integrity. Russia claims that these major threats come from foreign cyber attacks on power grids and transportation networks, however, the threats covertly involve combating civil unrest and political campaigning.

INTERNET CENSORSHIP is more common than one may think. It is a prevalent issue in for example North Korea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Iran and India just to name a few. Although their tactics may be similar, governments reasoning behind balkanisation and internet censorship vary from imposing traditional values, reinforcing political stability to ensuring national security. However, the effect of any type of internet censorship is the same, it undermines democracy and the freedom of choice from its voters.

AT THE BEGINNING of November, 2019 the Iranian government shutdown the internet for five days in an effort to quash demonstrations by making it more difficult for protesters to organize

themselves. Similarly the Indian government specifically shutdown the internet in Kashmir to suppress potential protests and prevent rumors from spreading via social media apps such as WhatsApp. The Indian government shut off the internet in Kashmir for 100 days starting on the 5th of August, and when the internet was turned back on, it came with 6 conditions that only allow for a very basic use of the internet rendering it almost useless.

CYBERBALKANIZATION AND INTERNET censorship aim to homogenize and streamline political opinions, populations values and beliefs into something more radical, which overtime fundamentally change voters behaviours. Cyberbalkanization simultaneously builds an artificial echo chamber that reinforces radical beliefs. This is what happened during the 2016 US election where Russian meddling spread political adverts and disinformation, which increased polarization, political conflict and mistrust in governing bodies. This meddling was also particularly targeted at swing voters and ultimately affected the outcome of the presidential race. Russian intelligence used data manipulation to increase polarization through mistrust and anger. This has a long lasting impact as it has the potential to change or even

re-shape entire cultures. While restricted access to information does have direct effects, the most damaging effects are felt in the long-run when voters behaviours have been reshaped by the state. This undermines the core of democracy, the voters. It manipulates voters in such a way that the decisions they make are no longer their own decisions but what the government wants them to believe.

WHILE THE INTERNET is a tool that provides people with information from many different perspectives, the increasing importance and dependence on the internet and online resources makes us more vulnerable to cyber threats such as cyberbalkanization. Developments within cybersecurity and technology makes it increasingly easy for powerful actors, such as governments, to control and manipulate the flow of information and use this information to ensure the success of their political agendas. This threatens the building blocks of democracy by slowly eroding voters right to choose as information manipulations and censorship creates false alternate realities upon which voters base their decisions. This basks the question on how far governments and leaders are willing to go before individuals political rights and civil liberties are threatened?

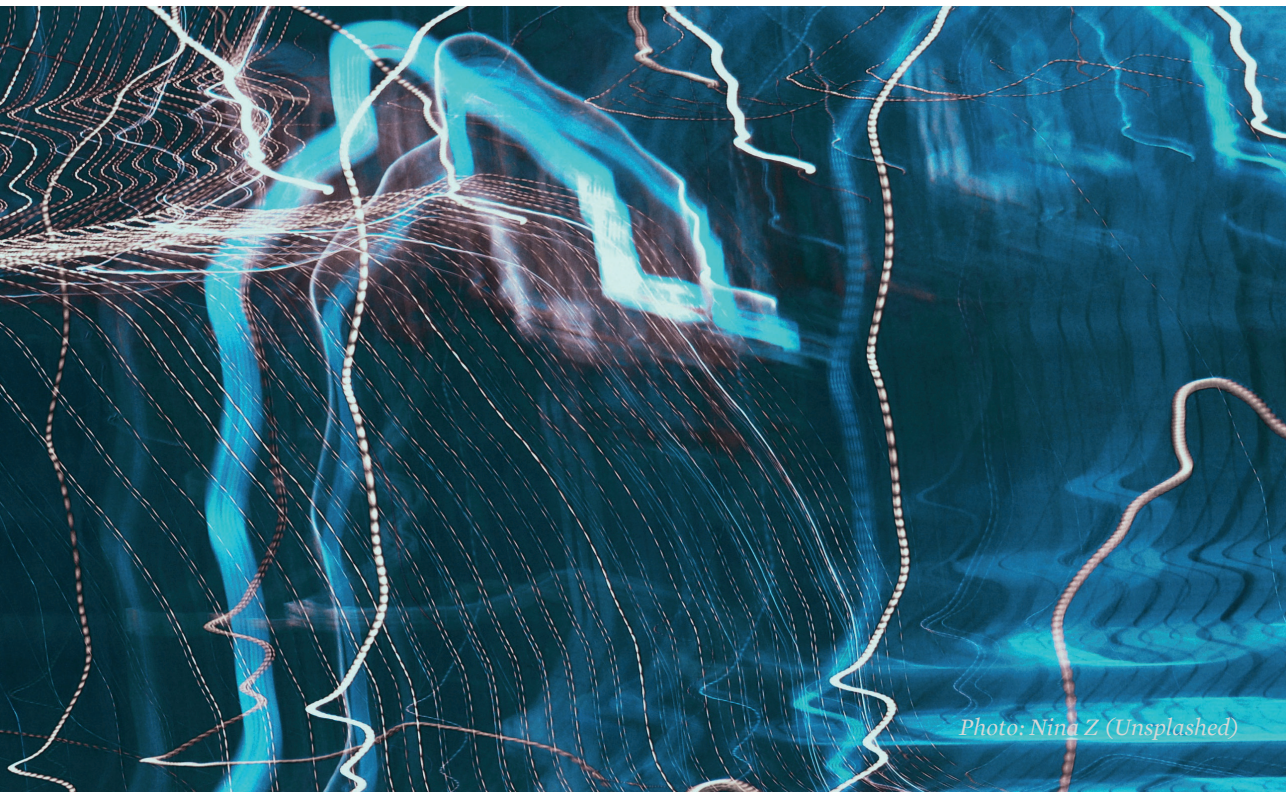


Photo: Nina Z (Unsplash)

#CANCELLED



EXPRESSION OF DEMOCRACY OR A TOOL FOR CENSORSHIP?

Cancel culture is an internet phenomenon where problematic figures from mainstream media get banished from the public debate because of their controversial opinions or actions. The basic idea behind it is that not everyone deserves a platform which gave rise to the term deplatforming, as a synonym to cancel culture. In practice "cancelling" consists in boycotting somebody through social media and by doing that taking away their power or cultural capital. #Cancelled. If you are on Twitter or Instagram you have definitely seen this.

CELEBRITIES LIKE **WOODY** Allen, Kevin Spacey or R. Kelly are examples of people being cancelled because of accusations of sexual assaults and harassments. These are examples where cancel culture works at its best. You can't get away with murder anymore. Not even if you are a rich man. But cancel culture doesn't only happen in the show business. Journalists, academics, politicians and opinion writers have also been cancelled and not for sexual misbehavior but for their opinions. More precisely for opinions that are seen as conservative, offensive or in more in general "bad". Cancel culture is especially popular among the young "woke" left populated by Millennials and GenZers.

AT THE SAME time, Donald Trump's way of using Twitter to dismiss everyone that he disapproves of can be seen as a form of cancel culture as well. The phenomenon is particularly big in the United

States, where there also is a big public debate about it. So big, former President of the United States Barack Obama addressed it in a panel discussion at the Obama Foundation Summit in the end of October. "That is not activism" he said "That's not bringing about change". And he didn't just refer to cancel culture, but to online activism in general. A very "Boomer view" the journalist Ernest Owens wrote in the New York Times. A fellow millennial. Owens theory is that Cancel Culture and hashtags like #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter or #CancelR. Kelly are just new tools that young people today use in the same fights boomers were engaged in. They aren't so different from boycotts, barricades and picket signs.

"THE RESPONSE to my op-ed for The Times was very robust and polarizing" Owens said. "On one hand, I had fellow millennials praise my fair critique of Obama's misguided frustration with cancel culture and then I had Boomers and Gen Xers who

were rather defensive altogether. I think there is still a public debate on cancel culture given the nature of if it really exists, what should be called into cancellation, and what are the implications of acknowledging such a culture exists overall.”

FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE “cancelling” can be seen as a democratic tool which shows public engagement and discontent. Something Washington Post columnist Aaron Freedman agrees with. In his article entitled “Critics of ‘cancel culture’ really just hate democracy” this is precisely his point.

“I GOT A mixed response to the article” Aaron comments. “Most people responded favorably, but a vocal minority of right-wingers were really infuriated by it, as expected. Ben Shapiro even did a segment of his show criticizing it, though I haven’t listened to it.”

FOR THOSE LESS interested in American pop-culture, Ben Shapiro is a conservative political commentator and columnist. A millennial by chance that could just as well been a Gen Xer. He also hosts a show, The Ben Shapiro Show, a daily political podcast. Here he talks about cancel culture as the “mobilization of fake Twitter armies” who want to ruin people’s lives and businesses “simply because you don’t like what they have to say”. “Cancel Culture” he says in the show “is not about saying, ‘You know what, I don’t like what Louis CK did so I’m not going to the show anymore, and maybe other people shouldn’t go to this show.’ It’s about saying if you go to Louis CK’s show, this makes you a bad person.”

IF YOU ARE, in your work, dependent on an audience cancel culture can be devastating. Artists, journalist, and academics can lose their livelihood over controversies. An interesting case is the white artist Dana Schutz’s painting “Open casket”, portraying the mutilated body of a 14-year-old African American boy Emmett Till. Till’s mother had insisted on an open casket to demonstrate the extent of the injuries that befell her son. Schutz’s painting is drawn from photographs of this. However she was accused of racial insensitivity and profiting of black death spectacle. Many called for the destruction of the painting, and Schutz have decided it will never be sold. This case is morally complicated enough to have been brought into classrooms on the philosophy of art. It poses hard questions about self censoring and what is aloud to exist.

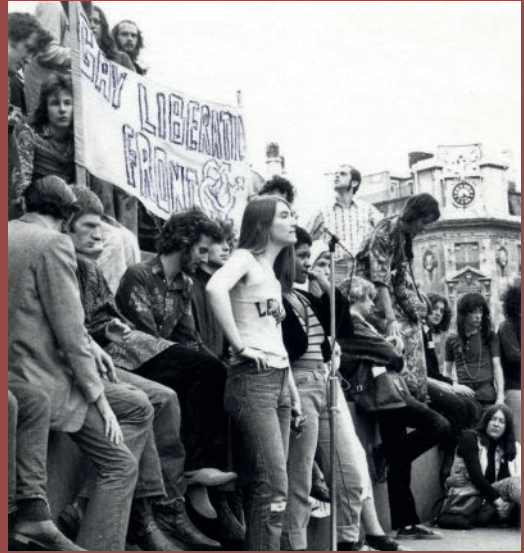


Photo: Wikimedia Commons

A BIG REPERCUSSION of cancel culture is when companies decide that it is financially imprudent to support a person after public backlash about his individual actions. Like Netflix did with Louis C.K., a famous comedian who was accused of serial sexual harassments. Although as an American friend of mine pointed out, Louis C.K. is still rich and famous and continuous to do his shows all over the US.

THE DISPUTE ABOUT cancel culture is although not that new, as Aaron Friedman told me. “The debate over ‘political correctness’ has been happening for years. But social media has certainly given the debate more intensity”.

SO HERE WE are. Boomers versus millennials. Gen Xers versus Gen Zers. Four generations with different views on social media, democracy and what is to be considered democratic. Cancel culture can indeed be perceived as censorship. However, it is also a politically polarized issue as we see conservatives agreeing with the older generations which feel scrutinized by millennials sharp glaze.

WHAT WE ARE seeing today is a moral earthquake between generations. It is certainly not the first time this occurs and it won’t be the last. At the end of the day cancel culture comes from a search for change. Although the ultimate way to reach that is political organization, and that has be intergenerational.

ARE POLITICIANS TARGETING YOUR “DATA-DOUBLE”?

As Twitter bans all forms of political advertisement and Facebook takes the opposite stand, regulators struggle to make sense of the complex issue of targeted ads and their impact on the democratic process.

WITH THE 2019 U.K. general election underway and the 2020 U.S. election just around the corner, the shadows of the Cambridge Analytica scandal and of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections have reemerged. Political advertisement through social media is once again under the spotlight for its potential disruptive effects on the democratic process. Part of the debate has revolved around micro-targeting, which enables advertisers to deliver ads, including potentially misleading ones, to specific groups. Pressure is on tech companies to take appropriate measures to avoid past mistakes. For the first time, those concerns have been voiced by a social media giant

itself: in an unexpected move, Twitter’s CEO Jack Patrick Dorsey has announced a decision to stop all political advertising on Twitter. Facebook has instead refused to even fact-check political ads, and insisted on increased advertisement transparency as an efficient strategy to tackle misinformation.

ACCORDING TO THE Wall Street Journal, however, Facebook has also been discussing restricting micro-targeted political ads - specifically by raising the minimum number of people who can be singled out from a hundred to a few thousands. For its part, Google has announced that it will no longer allow political advertisers to target voters based on their political affiliation and interests.



BUT ARE THESE policies enough to protect democratic processes from digital political advertisement? And does democracy need to be protected from it in the first place?

ACCORDING TO POLITICAL and advocacy advertising consultant Joe Fuld, digital ads are not problematic *per se*: “From what we saw in the last U.S. election, it’s clear that the root of the problem was not legitimate ads, but fake news. Google and Twitter, with their policies, are not really dealing with the core issue.” All those policies do, claims Fuld, is aggravate an already uneven playfield: “In the context of increasing media consolidation, an ad ban creates more difficulties for legitimate candidates with less resources, advocacy groups and NGOs. These policies are only going to make the political discourse worse.”

HOWEVER, IN FULD’S opinion, Twitter’s announcement is not particularly worrying: “Twitter is such a small part of the problem. No one was using it for political advertisement in the first place. Google’s policy is a bigger issue. If Facebook made that kind of change, it would be even more troublesome.”

AS STATED BY Amber Macintyre, researcher at Tactical Tech, a Berlin-based NGO that investigates the impact of digital technologies on society, one of the problematic aspects of these regulations is that they are reactive: “All these platforms are responding to negative press by adopting quick fixes”. A broader debate is needed.

BROADENING THE PICTURE

A WIDER CONVERSATION must include the topic of intermediate actors such as political campaign firms and consultants, whose importance has been overlooked. As Macintyre explains, “There has been much talk about the Cambridge Analytica scandal, but it is important to realize that Cambridge Analytica was just one of the companies that make up a larger political influence industry. In our research, we found at least 250 such companies, but I am sure there are hundreds more.”

THESE ACTORS USE a wide variety of tools, not just digital ads, to target and influence voters. They base their targeting on personal data they acquire through various sources. These sources include, just to list a few examples, voter registration records, supporter databases, or information acquired through “social listening”, that is finding

out what a potential voter is interested in through how they interact with social media posts.

ANOTHER VALUABLE SOURCE is consumer data, such as information about financial transactions or any loyalty cards a person might have. This type of information is bought from data brokers - large companies that possess in-depth data about millions of people. According to Macintyre, the use of these sources causes even the most mundane actions to become political ones: which supermarket you do your shopping at says something political about you.

WHAT IS THE BIG ISSUE?

WITH THIS MATERIAL in hand, political actors are able to craft different messages to appeal to different groups. According to Elliot Jones, researcher at Demos, a British think-tank, these micro-targeted messages are not inherently dangerous for democracy: they might even be beneficial, in the sense that they allow people to be reached by information on topics they care about. They also don’t have such a worrying role in the spread of fake news since, as Jones explains, misinformation in the United Kingdom spreads mainly organically. However, problems arise when a political actor uses targeted ads to spread conflicting messages: it creates a breach of trust.

IN MACINTYRE’S OPINION, even more worrying is how this *modus operandi* shapes and limits the conversations that people around the world are having: “Quantitative metrics are substituting political discussions. This leaves not much room for nuance, which is so important in the democratic discourse.” She argues that politicians are now able to identify and target those who might vote for them, and leave out of the conversation those who they think would not cast a vote in their favor. This really limits the extent of the knowledge some groups of people have of certain political parties.

POLITICAL ACTORS ARE making decisions about which messages potential voters should receive based not on who they are, but on what political consultants think their personal data says about them. “Instead of talking to you, they’re talking to a ‘data double’ of you, which becomes their constituent”, Macintyre says. The notion that ads simply provide citizens with relevant information is, according to her, an easy justification to dismiss the most important question: at what cost?



IS GREATER TRANSPARENCY THE SOLUTION?

LEGISLATORS HAVE NOT yet been able to regulate this complex and rapidly changing phenomenon. One of the possible solutions that is often discussed is increasing the transparency of political ads. This is the option that Facebook, among other actors, such as Snapchat or Google, has decided to adopt: all political ads are freely accessible in the Ad Library, an archive which includes information about who paid for the adverts and the targeting, reach and amount spent.

ACCORDING TO ELLIOT Jones, however, “Facebook’s Ad Library is better than anyone else’s, but still quite bad. The Application Programming Interface through which you access the data is buggy, and the data is less granular than it should be”. But the main problem - Jones argues - is that Facebook is left free to decide which ads should be classified as political, and which information to show. Ultimately, it is impossible to completely trust Facebook’s transparency. According to Jones, a solution might be regulating what data the governments expect ads libraries to provide. Additionally, all political actors should be required to disclose information about digital adverts to an electoral commission, thereby creating a central repository.

MACINTYRE, WHILE AGREEING that Facebook’s Library is a step in the right direction, points to a different problem: “Those who are going to look at the library will be mainly researchers and journalist. Their analysis will take months, whereas as human beings, we start making decisions the moment we are presented with information. The library does not really help with the real-time sharing of information.”

SHE AGREES WITH Jones that the decision on what information is disclosed shouldn’t be left to the platforms: “Tactical Tech suggests that it’s time to make more long-term, strategic decisions about regulations. The process should involve legislators, citizens, businesses and even future stakeholders.”

BUT IN THE meantime, Macintyre adds, there are actions that individuals who want to detoxify from targeted political advertisement can take: “The complexity of the phenomenon makes people feel overwhelmed. But citizens can take a number of steps, such as keeping location data in check, having a look at ads libraries, using incognito browsing modes or changing settings on social media.”



THE PENDING AI-POCALYPSE AND END OF A WORK PARADIGM

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is progressively making its way out of its confines of coding into the social world. What does this mean for long-held ideas about issues such as work? With its transformative potential, I argue there is a need for a new normative and creative direction on how we view work, especially in the face of growing inequality. Universal Basic Income might here steer us in a much-needed direction.

THE FUTURE OF AI is unpredictable and riddled with uncertainty. As this technology becomes more deeply embedded into contemporary society it is important that we actively seek to understand and reflect on the role we want AI to serve in our lives and democratic system. Maria Hedlund, university lecturer at Lund University, very much stresses this issue. In raising this point, she echoes the arguments raised by Nick Bostrom in his book 'Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies'. The book makes a strong case for the fact that we cannot know for sure whether the development and rise of AI will happen slowly or grow quickly and exponentially, and exactly how dominant this new form of artificial life might become on planet earth.

WHAT WE DO know is that the topic very much has to be studied and to some extent controlled as we might come to a point where the issue slips out of our hands. It is partly due to this reason that the Graduate School at Lund University will launch an electable course named 'AI and Society' the coming spring of 2020. According to Hedlund, AI will soon be present in almost every aspect of society, and this is not a question only for engineers, programmers and the people with the technological understandings of AI. This will have an impact on everything from infrastructure and transportation to politics and our everyday life.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES have a role in bringing understanding to how we can facilitate and integrate tech into society, and how to do this in accordance with democratic values. "Ahead of major paradigmatic shifts, we must actively make decisions and take a stance by way of democratic principles. It is the citizens who will have to live with the effects of the decisions taken, not just the technical experts. This is, however, a challenge as we live in a globalised world where local decisions might become irrelevant." One can again only speculate about the future implications of AI but, as Hedlund states, we must be active and attentive in facilitating this process and so decide for whom and for what we should have this technology.

AI IS, OF course, not integrated into a vacuum but will interact with existing social factors present in a given system. States and other international actors have long since started to see the potential

“ IT IS THE CITIZENS WHO WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE DECISIONS TAKEN, NOT JUST THE TECHNICAL EXPERTS.

- Maria Hedlund, lecturer at Lund University

benefits of AI in furthering their competitive edge. Big international corporations, especially those of Silicon Valley, are already benefiting immensely from this technological advancement. In this race for profit and power, via the advancement of AI, many people risk having their jobs and way of life exposed.

IN THIS SENSE, we are at a fork in the road. AI is not only part of what some would call the fourth industrial revolution, it is also an incentive to rethink how we view work in of itself. Given the omnipresence of the subject of AI, many areas of society will, and are being, rethought. Work is one of these. There is a widespread paranoia that many people's work will become obsolete in this new wave of cognitive automatisisation and, to much extent, this fear is justified.

THE VALUE WE attach to work is, not only tied to the fact that it is the main way to put food on the table, but it is also a catalyst of personal worth in the modern world. The virtue of work, mainly in the European and North American context, can much be traced back to the Lutheran protestant work ethics, when work and the individual's contribution to society were seen as an act of devotion. Work is today so tied to the perceived character of a person that this change, for many, presents an existential threat in the widest sense.

WORK IS SACRED, but also subject to change. Historically, work has, for a long time, been considered to be of a productive, transformative nature in both Adam Smith's and Karl Marx's views.

DEPENDING ON HOW you view it, the idea of selling your time and skills to provide added value to a certain good or service is both old and new. Wage labour as comparatively similar to how we organise work today can be said to stem from the first industrial revolution. Before that, there was little separation between work and life, identity was here so intertwined with work that people were known by the names of their trades, such as Baker and Smith.

IT TOOK a long time and much effort from unions and social movements before better working conditions were put in place following the industrial revolution. Sometime later, in the 1940s, the eight-hour workday and the five-day working week began to spread as the norm. This is also the time when women entered the workforce, although only temporarily in order to relieve wartime labour shortages. Rights and labour laws continued to advance, as did the technological advancements coupled with globalization, and by the dawn of the 2000s, many jobs could be performed almost everywhere and by anyone. With this shift came a greater emphasis on flexibility and the separation between work and life introduced during the industrial revolution now seemed to decline.

THE MAIN POINT to extract from this very brief and selective historical overview is that shifts in technology are always coupled with changes in norms and policy. There is always an active dialectical interaction between these factors in history. The social benefits we today take for granted are the result of strong efforts from past generations - and what seemed controversial at one time is now widely taken for granted. Today's idea of work occupies such a central position in our democratic systems that it is hardly ever questioned. If there is one thing both the left and right agrees on, it's on that idea of work is the most central activity for every citizen.

THE QUESTIONS POSED for this potential dawn of yet another industrial and digital revolution is the role of human agency. When, or if, jobs are replaced by robots who can do more for less, who gets the difference? Without active intervention, won't all wealth just concentrate into the giant corporations who own the robots and the patents on the AI? It may seem fair in this sense that the corporations who profit from this automatisisation also share a responsibility in transitioning into the next work

paradigm. One suggestion posed by Bill Gates is to tax the labour replaced by robots, another is to tax data – sometimes referred to as the new oil.

HERE, THE IDEA of Universal Basic Income, or UBI, could potentially provide a stepping stone into this great future. UBI has been around for a while but has lately experienced a revitalization in debate. The idea, in a broad sense, refers to the concept of giving everyone an income sufficient to meet basic needs, with zero conditions on that income (I won't go too much into the technicalities of the term, for those interested I recommend Guy Standing's book on the topic).

WHAT UBI CAN mainly contribute to the changing character of the labour market is both leverage and freedom for the worker. A new system of social protection is needed to provide mobility and security to facilitate this change in a just and equal manner. The rise of AI is very much a question of inequality and the regressive effects on the distribution of income as powerful companies and their owners capture the major share of gains. Imagine, instead, removing the fear of making ends meet and not having to take a job simply because you need a source of income.

AS WITH AI, UBI is more than its content and perhaps may at least serve as a guiding idea to an opening up of a much-needed debate on how we view and value work. What people would make of this passive income would, of course, vary. Some would perhaps choose to work less, others would, perhaps, take the time to invest in themselves to further their career. I'd, however, like to believe that people inherently don't like to be idle and that, perhaps, UBI could also provide a space from which society can change in an organic way. If you were not bound to work most of your time, what would you choose to do with that time?

ROBOTS CAN EITHER become our competitors in a diminishing labour market, only benefitting the richest, or serve in relieving us of work. Jobs will naturally continue to appear, so perhaps nothing will change in the end. It is, however, my aim with this article to stress the point that clinging to conventional ideas about how and why work should be conducted might soon be a luxury of the past. Whether we like it or not, AI will, most probably, change the way we work. What we make of this window of change should be up to humans, not machines.

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