

# LEVIATHAN

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A painting depicting a woman with blonde hair, wearing a white dress, standing on a rocky shore. She is holding a long blue spear, poised to strike a golden cow. The background shows a blue sea and a rocky coastline under a bright sky. The text 'SLAYING THE SACRED COW' is overlaid in red, serif font.

## SLAYING THE SACRED COW

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# LEVIATHAN

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**Editor's Note:** *Leviathan* is kindly supported by the Edinburgh University Politics Society, the Department of Politics and International Relations, and the Latin American Development and Cultural Appreciation Society. The opinions and views expressed in *Leviathan* are those of their authors alone. Comment and questions are warmly welcomed, contact us at [leviathan@eupolsoc.org.uk](mailto:leviathan@eupolsoc.org.uk).

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## Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second installment of *Leviathan*. This release retains the broadness of our first issue whilst exploring a new theme, the sacred cow. In the simplest terms a sacred cow is a subject seen by stakeholders as beyond criticism. Some topics covered in the following pages may not seem like sacred cows, yet, identifying a sacred cow is a subjective undertaking, in which the “sacredness” of a matter is in the eyes of the beholder. Thus, while some recognize Ronald Reagan as an ideological figure beyond reproach, his “sacredness” is questioned by others. In exploring the potentially undeserved reverence given to political institutions and individuals, we aim to generate a critical and normative approach to many politically relevant issues.

This release could not have come about without generous support from the Politics Society and its sponsors, the Department of Politics and International Relations and the Latin American Development and Cultural Appreciation Society. However, while money may make the world go round, the most important contribution comes from *Leviathan*’s writers, and our hardworking staff, whose efforts have been instrumental. As always we urge readers to critically analyze the articles to follow by offering your opinions, concerns and comments. Letters to the editor may be sent to [leviathan@eupolsoc.org.uk](mailto:leviathan@eupolsoc.org.uk) .

Thank you for your time and enjoy the read!

Ryan Jacobs  
*Leviathan* Editor-in-Chief

*Leviathan*’s success is in no small part a result of the hard work and dedication of the editorial team. Special thanks goes to Ryan Jacobs, *Leviathan* Editor-in-Chief, who did much of the initial spade work and laboured tirelessly to get the journal up and running. It seems like it was only yesterday that I was pushing for the Politics Society to launch its own journal, when I ran for Politics Society President. Since then the idea has grown and taken shape, thanks to Ryan’s hard work, and to the encouragement and help received from Professor Mark Aspinwall, head of the Department of Politics and International Relations.

With its second release, I trust that *Leviathan* will continue as the Society’s publication for many years to come and that it will go from strength to strength.

Jonathan Couto  
President, Edinburgh University Politics Society

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# The Egyptian revolution and

*Dr. Ewan Stein*, lecturer in Middle Eastern politics examines the Egyptian

The remarkable wave of revolution currently sweeping the Middle East has, at a stroke, destroyed much received wisdom about a region normally associated with intractable religious conflict, extremism, cowed populations, and imperviousness to democracy. Just as the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya have united Middle Eastern societies against tyranny, Western observers across the political spectrum continue to cheer the events as they unfold. That is, until the question of Arab, particularly Egyptian, foreign policy towards Israel is raised. Then the enthusiasm for revolution becomes more guarded and contingent, and erstwhile supporters of change call for ‘stability’, ‘continuity’ and ‘moderation’. But if the events in Egypt can indeed be termed a revolution, history tells us that there will be international ramifications. So should Israel worry?

The answer is both yes and no. Change will happen, and it may not please all Israelis or all of Israel’s supporters. But at least three windows of opportunity for positive transformation have opened just a chink. Through the first window the ‘Arab Spring’ spreads to Israel-Palestine, sparking a popular and peaceful movement for change. Through the second, American policy towards the Middle East becomes more genuinely ‘balanced’, as the stigmatisation of Arabs and Muslims, upon which its pro-Israel orientation has for so long rested, comes to an end. Through the third window, the Camp David security regime, which has distorted and hobbled the foreign policies of

Arab states since 1979, is replaced with a more robust, honest, and ultimately stable, security framework.

## *Revolution in Israel-Palestine?*

It is an old dream of the Arab and Israeli left that Muslims, Christians and Jews will one day rise up, unite and overthrow the oppressive Zionist, imperialist and reactionary regimes of the Middle East. For more than 60 years the dream has seemed to be just that to all but the most stubborn of intellectuals. But as this new revolutionary chapter opens such cynicism is shaken. Now it seems farfetched to expect that the earthquakes in the region will leave Israel unscathed. The Israeli establishment has as much reason as any other in the Middle East to fear that the people it has dominated as subjects for decades will rise up in rebellion. Palestinian citizens of Israel (or ‘Israeli Arabs’) continue to face institutionalised discrimination in a variety of domains. Mizrahim (‘Oriental’ Jews) complain of a two-tier system within Israeli Jewish society, and, most obviously, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza have endured various forms of military occupation since 1967.

The occupied Palestinians have tried popular revolt twice. The first ‘intifada’, which began in 1987, ended with the Oslo Accords and the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in

1993. It was the complete failure of these mechanisms to address Palestinian aspirations for dignity, justice and statehood that led to the second ‘al-Aqsa’ intifada of 2000. After the death of Yasir Arafat in 2004, and the election of Hamas into government two years later, this intifada also petered out, and resistance to occupation deteriorated into internecine Palestinian conflict.

The PA was, at least in part, intended to absorb Palestinian grievances on Israel’s behalf. Israel and its allies favoured it for the same reason that they supported regimes like that of Mubarak. They were made up of ‘strongmen’, many of whom shared the same political formation in the postcolonial,

**“At least three windows of opportunity for positive transformation have opened just a chink.”**

nationalist, and unabashedly authoritarian, Middle East of the 1950s and 1960s. The PA conducted itself with the same corruption,

brutality and lack of accountability as its sister regimes elsewhere in the Arab world. And now, as time is called on Hosni Mubarak, Ben Ali, and—we must hope—other autocrats in the region, the position of Abu Mazen and his associates in the PA has become tenuous. If the PA falls, the road will again be open for civil resistance to Israeli occupation, and the model this time will be Tahrir Square.

Of course, the Israeli government is a far cry from the regimes of the Arab strongmen. And if the uprising is limited to

the West Bank and Gaza it may well be crushed or diverted, as has happened in the past. As an occupying power of long-standing, Israel has developed many strategies to deal with a recalcitrant population. A devastatingly effective Zionist ideology at home, sustained through education and the media, has created an enabling bunker mentality for Israeli Jews who continue to approach Arabs and Muslims with fear and suspicion.

But now there may be a glimmer of hope. Just as Arab chauvinism and autocracy evolved in opposition to Zionism, so too did Zionism feed off the excesses of Islamism, Pan-Arabism, and, from 1967, Palestinian nationalism. The decline of provincial rallying cries across the region could have a massive impact. Zionism as an ideology has nothing to say in response to those bearing universalist messages of dignity, freedom, democracy and social justice. The Egyptian example has also shown that sectarian animosities melt in the face of universal values and demands. As the baton of Middle Eastern revolution passes to a new generation, in a public sphere of unimagined openness, old ideas and empty ideologies will also fade. If the oppressed, the marginalised and the silenced living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean find common cause on this basis, the Israeli establishment will confront a totally new kind of intifada.

## *Challenging Israeli exceptionalism*

This may seem like wishful thinking, but the potential for

# Israel: the sum of all fears?

revolution's implications for the Arab-Israeli peace process

such local dynamics to take hold and produce change will increase if there are simultaneous developments on the regional and international levels. Endemic tyranny in the Arab world has enabled the refrain that Israel is the 'only democracy' in the Middle East. Such a claim has helped Israelis and Israel's supporters in the West, especially the United States, to justify the immense amount of aid it receives and the blind eye turned to the atrocities it commits. This, combined with the assumption that equally undemocratic and illiberal Islamist oppositions are waiting around the corner, has supported the racist assumption that Arabs are not ready for democracy.

Panicking about Islamists has—since 1979, and more so since 2001—been seen as almost required to attract America's attention. Even the deranged Gaddafi realises this as he babbles about al-Qa'ida being behind the uprising in Libya. Mubarak himself routinely insisted that the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest and best organised opposition force, was nothing but a front for terrorism in the region. And now the prospect of the Brotherhood taking power provokes comparisons with Iran. The return to Egypt of the renowned Brotherhood-aligned cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi prompted shrill comparisons in some quarters with the return of another Shi'i cleric to his homeland three decades earlier.

One need not subscribe to conspiracy theories to see that the combination of despotic rule and Islamist opposition has worked to the advantage of the maximalist trend in Israel that abhors granting any 'conces-

sions' to its Palestinian and Arab adversaries and depends on fear to maintain public consent. This trend has managed to win over broad sections of the American political class. Many Americans instinctively support Israel as a kindred spirit. They see the Jewish state as a pioneering outpost of liberal democracy in a wilderness of irrational violence, bigotry and backwardness. Yes, Israel has been brutal and firm with its Arab neighbours, but it has had to be.

But now Israel's exceptional status is threatened and, at a stroke, a large part of the stated rationale for America's skewed policy has disappeared. US foreign policy towards Israel will not change overnight, but the Arab Spring has irrevocably altered the parameters of political discourse about the region, inside and out.

## *The end of the cold peace*

The trump card of those that fear the outcome of the revolution in Egypt is the conviction that Egypt might 'fall' into the hands of Islamists who would cancel the all-important Peace Treaty. It is usually left unspecified what such an abrogation would entail, but the argument often seems to be that Egypt would 'relapse' into a state of war with Israel. This is misleading on at least two counts. The first is that it erroneously asserts that Islamists want war with Israel. The second is that it assumes that the Peace Treaty's primary purpose and function was to end the war.

The Muslim Brotherhood has not in the past called for the Egyptian state to declare war on Israel. It has consistently

preferred the struggle against Zionism to remain societal and largely symbolic, arguably to magnify its own role as a social movement. At most, the Brotherhood has called on the regime to allow volunteers into Palestine to join the resistance. The Brotherhood has long accepted that state and society have divergent, and complementary roles to play in the struggle against Zionism. And the state's role is, among other things, to provide a protective umbrella under which the Islamic movement can flourish. Even if we choose to ignore the Brotherhood's largely reassuring statements on this issue, it seems inconceivable that the group would reverse this longstanding pragmatism if—and this is also unlikely—it ascends to executive power in the new Egypt.

Finally, we must ask: what does 'upholding' the peace treaty really mean? Much discussion of the treaty actually relates to something achieved via the Sinai Disengagement Agreement of 1975: Egypt's renunciation of war as a tool of foreign policy towards Israel. What happened with the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978, and then the Peace Treaty in 1979, was that Egypt opted for a massive package of military and economic aid from the United States that would

ensure not that Egypt abstain from war but that it stoically tolerate, and if necessary help facilitate, Israel's maximalist policies toward the Palestinians. Thus did the Treaty weather the massacres at Sabra and Shatilla in 1982, the atrocities

in Jenin in 2000, and the blockade and bombardment of Gaza in 2008.

When opposition forces have called for tearing up the treaty it has been to free Egypt from complicity

with such abominations, not to open the door to war. As such, the opportunity to abandon the Camp David framework should be embraced as an opportunity, not a threat.

These three windows of opportunity may not remain open for long. There are certainly those with an interest in business as usual and even now the best case scenario seems some way off. But the unthinkable has already happened in Egypt. As the politics of fear gives way to the politics of sanity across the Middle East, the intractable, and apparently exceptional, conflict between Israelis and Palestinians may also finally be allowed to end.

**“If the oppressed, the marginalised and the silenced living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean find common cause on this basis, the Israeli establishment will confront a totally new kind of intifada.”**

# The ghost of

*Pablo Prella on Chávez's domestic and foreign policy and the extent*

From Bahrain to Tunisia, recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa have shocked the world. With unrivaled courage, our generation is taking a stand for democracy, justice, freedom and equality, after decades of oppression by authoritarian regimes. About two hundred years ago, Latin America was undergoing a similar process of change; nation states emerged as people fought for independence from colonial powers.

At the head of this movement was Simón Bolívar. He preached liberty and democracy in much the same way that our generation currently does. In a struggle that spanned for nearly twenty years, Bolívar helped Gran Colombia<sup>1</sup>, Bolivia and Peru gain independence from Spanish colonial rule.

Bolívar envisioned a Latin America united through regional cooperation. By 1826, he had been elected president of Gran Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. Yet the sheer size of Gran Colombia hampered the opportunity for regional cooperation.

Therefore, in a desperate move that was met with widespread opposition, Bolívar compromised his own democratic principles and proclaimed himself dictator of Gran Colombia.

Finally, after two years of unrest Bolívar resigned the presidency and succumbed to Tuberculosis, dying in current-day Colombia. His legacy remains as one of the strongest and most controversial forces in Latin American politics. In fact it has given rise to a pugnacious regional movement - Bolivarianism - which, through the glorification of Bolívar's ideals, has managed to attain a degree of immunity from criticism.

Nevertheless, this article will reveal why Bolivarianism is not only loosely based on Bolívar's ideals, but also corrupted by leftist agendas and unfulfilled promises.

In 1992, a young Hugo Chávez and the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement led a failed coup against the Venezuelan government that claimed nearly 20 lives. Since 1958 Venezuela had enjoyed a period of undisturbed yet precarious democratic government. However, the main ruling parties had a reputation for corruption and frivolous spending<sup>2</sup>.

As a result of a second attempt to overthrow the government, Chávez was sent to a military jail for two years. But in 1998, after a swift transition from soldier to populist leader, he became the democratically elected President of Venezuela.

Since he assumed the Presidency, Chávez has dedicated his life to his country. In an interview with the BBC, he told reporter Stephen Sackur that he had left his family in order to serve the Venezuelan people<sup>3</sup>.

"I'm here because a hurricane brought me, I am the son of a revolution"<sup>4</sup> asserted Chávez. Speaking about how he has been tasked with "rebuilding [Venezuela] in democracy", he emphasized that his "pacific democratic revolution" would effectively take a lifetime<sup>5</sup>. But what is this revolution all about?

Deeply rooted in an esoteric interpretation of Bolívar's political ideals lies the answer to this question. In line with Bolívar's belief that "only a Venezuela united with New Granada [Colombia] could form a nation that would inspire in others the proper consideration due to her"<sup>6</sup>, Chávez set off



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to accomplish where Bolívar had failed.

As soon as he assumed the Presidency, he changed the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Furthermore, according to a government document, his goals include "the 'consolidation' of a left-wing alliance that encompasses Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia, and the strengthening of 'alternative movements in Central America and Mexico' to distance them from Yankee 'domination'"<sup>7</sup>. Thus, in a modern perversion of Bolívar's struggle, Chávez has fostered a rhetoric of anti-imperialism.

Former Cuban leader Fidel Castro was the first to join Chávez's revolution. Soon after, Presidents Daniel Ortega

of Nicaragua, Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa of Ecuador followed suit. Chávez's political reach however stretches far beyond the region, with leaders from North Korea, Russia, Iran and even Libya supporting his regime.

With all of these countries sharing anti-US rhetoric, such political allegiances come as no surprise. Like Venezuela, many also benefit from vast oil reserves, enabling them to take a stronger stance against the United States.

Nevertheless, not all Latin American countries share Venezuela's natural wealth. This has granted Chávez the opportunity to provide aid and funding at better terms than those offered by institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank;

# a revolution

*to which he remains faithful to the ideals of Simón Bolívar*

further consolidating his position within the region whilst undermining the 'imperialist' hegemony.

Moreover, in an effort to counteract the trend of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with both the US and Europe, Chávez established the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA)<sup>8</sup> trading bloc.

Chávez's domestic policies have also been heavily influenced by Simón Bolívar's ideals.

Bound by the principles of undisputed sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency, Venezuelan domestic politics epitomizes Chávez's idea of democratic socialism - which is crucial to his revolution.

Indeed, as Chávez mentioned at the 2005 World Social Forum, "[democratic socialism] puts humans, and not machines or the state, ahead of everything"<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, in his writings: Bolívar invoked a series of

socialist ideas that Chávez has been keen to implement. Yet Chávez has arguably gone even further than Bolívar in his quest for equality.

In addition to establishing a wide range of social programs he has also nationalized an unprecedented number of companies, institutions, and even infrastructure - from communications channels to a funicular railway that mobilizes Venezuelans into the center of Caracas.

Central to Chavez's socialism is the nationalisation of the country's most profitable industry: oil. *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)* is effectively managed by Chavez's current Minister of Energy and Oil, Rafael Ramírez. Moreover, in 2009 *América Economía*, a Latin American index, ranked PDVSA third out of the region's top 500 companies based on annual turnover<sup>10</sup>.

Thus Venezuela's lucrative oil company has proven to be an invaluable asset to Chavez's

revolution. In fact, a substantial proportion of the profits generated by the company are used to fund the majority of his social welfare programs<sup>11</sup>.

Yet Chávez's Bolivarian revolution is far from complete. Due to the heavy reliance on oil, the global financial crisis has had a severe impact on the Venezuelan economy - making it the only country in the region with negative GDP growth in 2009 and 2010<sup>12</sup>. However, despite the recession Chávez claims that no social welfare programs have been stopped.

Nonetheless, Venezuela's future remains uncertain in the hands of Chávez. As he strolls through national and international arenas with an utmost disregard for conventions and an unparalleled lack of tact, the world is all too aware of his actions.

"Chávez has crossed the line on too many occasions recently, and he's run into a rough patch, not just at home but also in the region", says Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue Group<sup>13</sup>.

However, in 2009 he won a referendum that lifts term limits on elected officials. This was followed by a majority win for his party in the National Assembly in 2010, although, for the first time since he assumed the Presidency in 1999, the opposition managed to win about 40% of seats.

What is certain is that Chávez's idiosyncratic ways will continue to amuse us as long as he remains a public figure; whether he's asking the Queen to return the Falkland Islands to Argentina, or outfitting his latest toy - the Williams Formula 1 team - in Venezuelan flags.

But if the legitimacy of what he refers to as the Bolivarian revolution is brought to question, the answer is not so clear. As Juan Manuel Santos said before assuming the Colombian Presidency: "Yes, [Chávez] was elected, but so were Hitler, Mussolini, and other demagogues who turned into tyrants"<sup>14</sup>.

The next presidential elections are set to take place in December 2012, and, earlier this year, Chávez assured his supporters that he will win, asserting: "it is written"<sup>15</sup>. Hence, it appears that Hugo Chávez is not only "the son of Bolívar"<sup>16</sup>, a "demagogue"<sup>17</sup>, a "tyrant"<sup>18</sup>, and a "clown"<sup>19</sup>, but also an infallible clairvoyant.

<sup>8</sup> Gran Colombia was made up of current day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama.

<sup>2</sup> BBC. (2011) *Profile: Hugo Chavez*. 26 January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/65gvjwv>

<sup>3</sup> Sackur, S. (2010) *Hardtalk: Interview with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez*. 14 June. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/8732857.stm>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Contreras, J. (2008) *The Ghost of Simón Bolívar*. *Newsweek*, 5th January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/67jn6tz>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> ALBA members states include some of the poorest countries in the region: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba, Bolivia, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

<sup>9</sup> Sojo, C. A. (2005) *Venezuela's Chavez Closes World Social Forum with Call to Transcend Capitalism*. *Venezuela Analysis*, 30 January. Available at: <http://venezuelanalysis.com/news/907>

<sup>10</sup> *América Economía*. (2011) *Las 500 Mayores Empresas de América Latina*. Available at: <http://rankings.americaeconomia.com/2010/500/ranking-500-america-latina.php>

<sup>11</sup> Sackur, S. (2010) *Hardtalk: Interview with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez*. 14 June. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/65gvjwv>

<sup>12</sup> According to the World Bank's World Development Indicators

<sup>13</sup> Contreras, J. (2008) *The Ghost of Simón Bolívar*. *Newsweek*, 5th January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/67jn6tz>

<sup>14</sup> Sackur, S. (2010) *Hardtalk Interview with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos*. BBC, December 2010

<sup>15</sup> 'Profile: Hugo Chavez', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10086210>, February 2011

<sup>16</sup> BBC. (2010) *How Simon Bolivar's legacy reverberates in Venezuela*. 18th April.

<sup>17</sup> 'Hardtalk' Interview with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, BBC. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6agbuel>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Tobin, P. (2010) *Spanish Official Called Venezuela's Chavez 'Clown'*, *El Pais Says*. Bloomberg, 10 December. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6yq7a8z>



Mariana Iotenko



# Cut the NHS

*Stuart Clark argues that fairness requires that the NHS share the burden of government cuts*

Cuts. Tory Cuts. Two words which provoked unprecedented anger in many a university campus last year. We fought against them, but were let down by some unprincipled MPs who decided that ballots were as worthless as the papers they had signed pledging to oppose tuition fee rises. What surprised me most during the battle over tuition fees in England was that the focus was placed on the cost to the individual student rather than on the reason behind the rises: the unacceptable cuts to the Higher Education budget. The money available to Britain's universities to fund teaching is to be cut from £7.1bn to £4.2bn<sup>1</sup> by 2014. This cut falls on top of further cuts to research budgets, a disproportionate cut to an area vital for Britain's future economic growth. Cuts may be synonymous with the Conservatives and again they plan to cripple our public sector, however, the sacrosanct NHS (National Health Service) appears in for some preferential treatment.

The government should try to ensure that the cuts are made in the fairest possible way, and this leads us to perhaps the biggest taboo in British politics: reducing the NHS budget. If you allow yourself to think back to the heady days of April and May 2010, when the Liberal Democrats were popular and you had only heard of David Milliband, you may remember all the fuss was about a trifling £6bn of efficiency savings. The argument according to David Cameron was that every household had to make economies, so why not government. On April 15th 2010 during the live election debate, David Cameron said, "£6 billion is one out of every £100 the government spends. What small business in this recession, what big business hasn't had to make that sort of decision? Many people are making a much bigger

decision."<sup>2</sup> Well, lets apply the Prime Minister's argument to that most sacred of British cows, the National Health Service.

We all love our NHS, but in the past the Conservatives have been accused of being rather less keen on this costly symbol of the welfare state. Daniel Hannan, a Conservative MEP, sparked controversy by publicly denouncing the principles of universal healthcare on American television claiming he "wouldn't wish it on anybody"<sup>3</sup>. Mr Cameron went out of

his way to condemn this outburst, and since becoming PM, the NHS budget is set to rise from £104bn to £114bn by 2014.<sup>4</sup> Happy news, was it not for the

myriad of cuts falling on the rest of Britain's public services. Now if we set the target of saving £1 from every hundred in the NHS budget, that is over £1bn of cuts that need not fall elsewhere and around £25bn saved over the next four years.<sup>5</sup> Push this to an achievable yet still considerably privileged 5% cut and that constitutes £5.2bn savings in each of the next four years, on top of the money saved by not increasing the budget. These are huge sums which would not have to be cut from other departments such as education. For example, a reorganisation estimated to cost between £2bn and £3bn is being forced upon GPs against their wishes. If those sums sound familiar, check again how much the higher education budget is being cut by.<sup>6</sup>

The increase of the NHS budget which has been mapped out by the government follows years of sustained government investment with new hospitals and

specialist cancer units benefiting people throughout the country. However, the health budget should not be subject to perpetual growth. Cuts now, which come against years of record investment, would encourage the NHS to look to preventative care instead of focusing constantly on bigger and better treatment. A focus on prevention would not only save money on costly treatments but help reduce the burden upon the NHS and tackle the declining health of our children

**"Our health service, which benefits us greatly as a society, should share the burden and help ameliorate our collective pain."**

which may shape health care for years to come.<sup>7</sup> The NHS should not be seen as a safety net ready to foot the bill for society's excess; a focus on preventing illness could reduce the frontline costs of the NHS, making genuine savings.

Now I know there is an alternative to cutting public services and I take no pleasure in advocating cuts to our NHS, but I feel that if these cuts are going to happen they should happen as fairly as possible. If the coalition truly does have the nation's interests at heart, rather than making ideological cuts it feels it can justify in light of the economic climate, it should be cutting less in more places. Instead it focuses the brunt of the cuts in areas such as education, vital for future growth, and welfare benefits, whose claimants will suffer the most. If you cut the universities budget you are going to see a fall in the amount of doctors, surgeons, dentists and nurses trained for our NHS, forcing hospitals to plug the gaps with less well trained foreign alternatives.<sup>8</sup> Though it may go against the natural instinct of the progressives in our country, a

relatively small cut to the NHS makes the situation fairer on the rest of our public sectors. Our schools and universities get more teachers, our poorest and most disadvantaged receive a better standard of living and our soldiers receive the best equipment we can give them. The NHS is the crown jewel of our welfare system offering health care for all, free at the point of need, and as an institution is seen as a great symbol of Britain. There is no doubt that cuts to NHS budget would prove deeply unpopular and this is perhaps why they will not fall on our health service. However, now is the time for it to prove itself anew by bearing a fairer share of the public sector pain, to ease the burden on the worst hit areas. For the foreseeable future our country is set to be heavily influenced by cuts to public spending. It seems that our health service, which benefits us greatly as a society, should share the burden and help ameliorate our collective pain.

<sup>1</sup> Prince, R. (2010) Higher education - universities with arts courses bear the brunt. *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 November. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopping/politics/8111054/Higher-education-universities-with-arts-courses-bear-the-brunt.html>

<sup>2</sup> BBC. (2010) *First prime ministerial debate transcript*. April 15. Available at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16\\_04\\_10\\_first-debate.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_04_10_first-debate.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Glendinning, L. and Summers, D. (2009) Cameron rebukes Tory MEP who rubbishes NHS in America. *The Guardian*, 14 August. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2009/aug/14/health-nhs>

<sup>4</sup> The Pharma Letter. (2010) *UK Coalition government Spending Review protects science and health research budgets*. 21 October. Available at: <http://www.thepharmalatter.com/file/99253/uk-coalition-government>

<sup>5</sup> Taking into account the fact the planned increase will not happen and was going to be made at a constant rate.

<sup>6</sup> Circle Health. (2010) *Experts predict costs of reorganising NHS could reach 3bn*. 16 July Available at: <http://circlehealth.co.uk/news/2010-july/experts-predict-cost-of-reorganising-nhs-could-reach-%C2%A33bn>

<sup>7</sup> Chand, K. (2009) To save NHS money, we have to stop making ourselves ill. *The Guardian*, 3 September. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/joe-public/2009/sep/03/diet-fitness-lifestyle-health-incentives>

<sup>8</sup> Smith, R. (2010) Patients are not protected against foreign doctors GMC warns. *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 January. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/7037084/Patients-are-not-protected-against-foreign-doctors-GMC-warns.html>



# Is the NHS sacred?

*Alex Paul says that the NHS is an institution not worthy of the epithet sacred cow*

One of the most defining institutions of post-war Britain must be the National Health Service (NHS). Simply in terms of numbers alone it is by far and away the country's largest employer; in fact, it is the third largest employer in the world, after China's People's Liberation Army and the Indian State Railways. It exemplifies the political and social mood of the British public, and her politicians, after World War II: it was founded as part of the British welfare state system devised by the great liberal Sir William Beveridge to, to tackle, as he wrote, "the five giants on the road to reconstruction (of the United Kingdom after WWII)... (including) Disease<sup>1</sup>."

But as this institution approaches its seventh decade, has it assumed the position of a sacred cow in British social life? All the major political parties agree on its continued existence. Those who speak out against it, like the Conservative MEP Daniel Hannan, are largely ridiculed, both by the media and their own party. It would seem that shutting down the NHS is an option that no one dares to suggest. However, despite this, the NHS, and reform of said institution, is not a sacred cow. Whilst all parties may agree that reform is necessary, and also may appear to agree on the desired outcome of reform, passionate debate occurs over the method of reform. But the important point is that passionate debate exists. All sides vocally express criticism of the NHS. How, then, can anyone accuse it of being an institution unreasonably held to be immune to criticism? The NHS, immune to criticism? The government wishes.

To demonstrate an example of this: the current coalition government is proposing what many have labelled radical reform of the NHS. These reforms are proposing to reintroduce a



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scheme first brought in under Thatcher, the idea of an internal market within the NHS, where fund-holders (GPs) are able to 'buy' services for their patients from different hospitals, with the overall aim of forcing hospitals to improve their level of service provision. Critics argue that this is privatisation by a different name, that GPs would buy the majority of their services from private healthcare providers, thus creating a system where public money funds private companies and their shareholders. Nevertheless, the important point here is the declared positions of the Health Secretary and his opposite number. This is what they said: "(we need) to meet the real challenges of the health service and they include moving more services out of hospitals and closer within patients' reach"<sup>2</sup> and "(the) purpose of our plans: more patient-centred care, better results for patients"<sup>3</sup>. Positions so remarkably similar they could even come from the same speech. (In fact, the former was the Shadow Health Secretary, John Healey, whereas the latter was the Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.

However, the NHS by no means fits the definition of a sacred cow. The principles behind its existence (according to the NHS itself, these are: that it meets everyone's needs; that it is free at point of delivery; and

treatment is based on need, not ability to pay<sup>4</sup>) may be unchallenged, but rightly so. These principles are not ideological principles, they are principles instead grounded in a national sense of equity, liberty and fairness – that no individual, however parlous their existence, whether financial or physical, should be denied at least some protection and care by the state. These are not sacred cow principles; for no one can argue that they wish to see a return to haphazard coverage and vagaries of standards across the country.

Where the sacred cow of the NHS lies, perhaps, is in its future, and how best to manage and provide healthcare for all at a price the state can reasonably afford. The word 'reform' is a sensitive phrase where public services, and especially the NHS, are concerned. The old battle lines are hastily marked out in the sand: on the one side, egged on by the ogres of big business and 'the private sector', you have demonic Tories, out to tear down the very bulwarks of the system to allow their cronies to sweep through and annihilate all those poor citizens cowering within in the name of "profit"; whereas, perched on the bulwarks themselves, you have the confounded Socialists, who worship at the altar of state subsidies, eager to defend the walls of the system,

but only with borrowed weapons of course. Or, at least, this is how the two sides like to portray each other when it comes to the public service reform debate.

Sweeping aside the bluster, the basic point is that NHS reform is the proverbial hot potato, debated endlessly and constantly by Parliament and government. The last 10 years has seen at least 8 'healthcare' Acts passed by Westminster alone. If the devolved assemblies are included in this figure, there is, on average, at least one Act passed every year relating to the running of the NHS. Reform is not a sacred cow issue, a word to be whispered and bandied around as if the mere concept is revolutionary, but an issue grasped and dealt with by the government annually. The NHS is one of the most widely debated, criticised, praised and discussed institutions in British political life and is most definitely not a sacred cow.

<sup>1</sup>Beveridge, W. (1942) Social and Allied Services. *The Beveridge Report*, His Majesty's Stationery Office, November. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/68wtatq>

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence, E et al. (2011) There's a risk in NHS reform, says Lansley. *The Independent*, 30 January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/66l9v6t>

<sup>3</sup>Beckford, M. (2011) Patient care at risk under NHS reforms, experts warn. *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6fou9uu>

<sup>4</sup>National Health Service. (N.D.) *NHS core principles*. Available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/nhscoreprinciples.aspx>



# America's love affair with Kennedy

*Lee Kujava on the false glorification of John F. Kennedy*

A recent Gallup poll listed John F. Kennedy (JFK) as the most popular US president in the past half century, with an astonishing 85% approval rating<sup>1</sup>. At first glance, it is not surprising why he remains so popular; he was handsome, well dressed, a great orator and, most importantly, had a beautiful family. He was the first celebrity president. JFK's image exuded all of the qualities that the public seemingly wanted in their president: personable, relatable and experienced; people felt comfortable with him. His assassination in 1963 froze this perfect image in the minds of Americans. JFK's death and image have dictated his legacy and made criticism of the actual job he did in office unthinkable.

Ask Americans what policies they attribute to JFK and you cannot help but feel sorry for the presidents that actually instituted the programmes, or have taken the criticism for decisions, set in motion by JFK. NASA? Many believe that JFK started NASA because he proposed the 'man to the moon' idea (a sexier goal than Eisenhower's fiscally-practical desire to get a satellite into orbit and a man into space), but few credit Eisenhower for the actual creation of the US space program<sup>2</sup>. Civil Rights? JFK did a lot of talking but did not take much action; it was Lyndon Johnson who signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964<sup>3</sup>. How about the Vietnam War? True, President Johnson sent troops to Vietnam but JFK's central role in the overthrow and murder of South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem, and the sheer number of advisors (16,500) he sent to South Vietnam by 1963, could definitely be characterized as 'the writing on the wall' for the eventual progres-

sion towards open conflict<sup>4</sup>.

As much as JFK's supporters want to believe that, had he not been assassinated, he would have passed the Civil Rights Act, cynics believe that he also would have brought America into conflict in Vietnam<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the 'what-if?' game can work both ways.

Retrospectively, JFK is rightfully praised for his handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, but this success frequently overshadows the absolute failure of the Bay of Pigs - where all of the US-trained Cuban guerrillas were killed in their failed attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro<sup>6</sup>. Arguably JFK's greatest domestic success, giving massive tax breaks to Americans of all social classes, would make any presentday bleeding-heart liberal cringe<sup>7</sup>. Attributing all of these policies to JFK does not make him a bad president, but it does offer a better representation of his true successes/failures in office. The big question is: why does JFK get praise for false successes (NASA, Civil Rights) and a free pass for failures (Vietnam War, Bay of Pigs)?

JFK's death made him a martyr. Historian Rick Perlstein once remarked that 'martyrs are powerful things', reminding us that there are no memorials to Dwight D. Eisenhower, another incredibly popular president<sup>8</sup>. Cut short and seemingly unfulfilled<sup>9</sup>, JFK's legacy has been frozen in time; thus the good and bad visual attributes that people want to remember outshine the policy failures that the public conveniently forgets. People remember JFK's smooth, non-perspiring persona outshining Nixon in the 1960 televised presidential debates<sup>10</sup>. They remember his legendary speeches with

memorable phrases like 'Ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country'<sup>11</sup> and 'Ich bin ein Berliner'<sup>12</sup>. And, sadly, the public remember the horrific images of his assassination in 1963. Each year we honour a man who died for his country by only remembering the good associated with him. No one wants to talk about JFK's policy failures or rampant affairs with Hollywood starlets and suspected German spies<sup>13</sup> (that tarnish his family-man image), but just the issues, words and images that made us like him. Therefore, it is no surprise that JFK's poll numbers have increased since his death. At 58% before his death, JFK's 27 point increase far exceeds anyone else, and *all* presidents in the last half century - even Nixon - saw an increase in their retrospective approval ratings<sup>14</sup>. The big difference is that no one else died while in office.

In the end, all we need is perspective; the perspective to put aside our feelings for JFK and objectively look at his true record in office. Though he talked a big game, dressed nice and exuded confidence, JFK's actual political accomplishments were minimal and should liken him to any number of marginal presidents in history. His death and image should not dictate his legacy. Lincoln's positive legacy is not only tied closely to his death but also to his actions in office (fighting the Civil War, abolishing slavery)<sup>15</sup>. Harding's death in office (albeit not an assassination) did not deflect criticism of his scandal ridden and corrupt administration<sup>16</sup>. Maybe the big difference for JFK's story is his image. He was arguably the first modern style president. Not everyone is handsome, a

good speaker, has a great family, or exudes confidence, but it is this model of a man (or hopefully in the future a woman) that makes many people feel comfortable and at ease. Several post-JFK presidents have followed the same model: Bill Clinton playing the saxophone and eating at McDonald's, and President Obama's struggle to eat healthily, quit smoking and play basketball, make them both likeable and relatable men. It does not hurt that they are both great speakers and handsome individuals.

In the eyes Americans, is a president's image more important than their record? This author is not cynical enough to believe the above statement just yet - but definitely in the case of JFK; his death and persona have imprinted a lasting image in the minds of most Americans that forgets and skews his actual accomplishments in office. As much as we should honour JFK's legacy, we need to not only remember what he said, but most importantly what he actually did. Even though history looks kindly on all presidents, it still seems to and will continue to love JFK the most. JFK is one of America's most sacred cows.

<sup>1, 13, 14</sup> Saad, L. (2010) *Kennedy Still Highest-Rates Modern President, Nixon Lowest*. Gallup. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/4gn897t>

<sup>2, 6, 12</sup> Elder, L. (1999) John Kennedy Jr.:

America's Prince? *Capitalism Magazine*, July 23. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6y4jgez>

<sup>3, 4</sup> Hersch, S. (1997) *The Dark Side of Camelot*. London: Little, Brown and Company (412-13)

<sup>5</sup> Craughwell, T. and Phelps, M. (2008) *Failures of the Presidents: JFK's Bay of Pigs Disasters*. Available at: <http://hnn.us/articles/55759.html>

<sup>7, 8, 10</sup> MSNBC. (2011) *50 Years Later, Why is America Still in Love with JFK?* BLTWAY Blog, January 19. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5sxo6ve>

<sup>9</sup> Pitney, J. (2010) The 1960 Debates: Did JFK Win on Visuals? *Nixon Foundation*, September 24. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6cvy30v>

<sup>11</sup> Kennedy, J. (1963) *I am a Berliner*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/b8vhgf>

<sup>15</sup> Miller Center UV. (n.d.). *Abraham Lincoln: Impact and Legacy*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6x7lt58>

<sup>16</sup> Miller Center UV. (n.d.). *Warren Gamaliel Harding: Impact and Legacy*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6yz6twg>

# The American exception

*Katerina Kobylka* takes a bite out of an American sacred cow

American exceptionalism dates back to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1800s, when the concept of America was still fresh and largely undefined. Many cite John Winthrop as a precursor, referring to his 'City Upon a Hill' sermon, in which he iterated a high-opinion of himself and his Puritan followers.<sup>1</sup> The tradition of self-aggrandizement has continued to the present day, with the added benefit of 'proof' in form of historical sources.

This unsavory tradition has come to occupy an unassailable place in the minds of the average American.<sup>2</sup> Successful political candidates appeal to this mindset, in fact they promulgate it. In the recent round of congressional elections, Marco Rubio (R-Fla) stood out as the most Unites States-centric candidate of all, perhaps rivaled only by Sarah Palin who is as yet not officially a candidate for the presidency. Rubio's campaign ads were peppered with declarations of America being 'the single greatest nation on earth, a place without equal in the history of all mankind',<sup>3</sup> capable of bringing any sensible cosmopolitan's blood to a boil.

Exceptionalism has been reignited in debate recently with a discussion of President Obama's views on the subject. For the conservative right it has become the new 'flag lapel pin', a reference to the 'most-contested' issue of the 2008 Presidential campaign: is Obama a patriot if he doesn't wear a flag lapel pin?<sup>4</sup> But Obama has jumped on board the American Exceptionalism Express, and he is the first president in recent memory to do so.<sup>5</sup> The fact that non-believers, and even less vocal believers, are branded as unpatriotic is



Joshua Valanzuolo

'exceptionally' upsetting.

Rubio and his 'exceptional' peers, including Sarah Palin, base their assertions (if they even bother grounding them in fact at all) on a mixture of the political and economic history of the United States.<sup>6</sup> Of course, citing history is now the only recourse for grounding positive American Exceptionalism on some facsimile of fact. The America of today is exceptional. Exceptionally floundering, that is. Compared to other advanced economies, the U.S. ranks among the 'worst of the worst' in rates of income inequality, food insecurity, prison population, and student performance, and among the 'worst' in unemployment rate and life expectancy.<sup>7</sup>

When Rubio attacked the passage of the recent health care bill, he stated that 'it is nothing short of a path to ruin, one that threatens to diminish us as a nation and a people; one that makes America not exceptional, not unique, but more like the rest of the world'.<sup>8</sup> From where I am standing, that would be an improvement at this point, especially in light of the Republican efforts to curtail public unions' collective bargaining rights in several states.

There is another thought to be considered in this debate however – that of the definition of exceptionalism. Stanley Fish recently pointed out that 'exceptionalism can mean either that America is different in some important respect or

that, in its difference, America is superior'.<sup>9</sup> The problem with the political use of the term (besides its distasteful self-flattery) is its blatant, unquestioning reassertion of a bygone illusion. Back in the 1800s, America was exceptional: it was new.

<sup>1,6,9</sup> Fish, S. (2011) Exceptionalism, Faith and Freedom: Palin's America. *New York Times*, January 17. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/4qqye9g>.

<sup>2</sup> Steinhauer, P. (2010) Poll: Does Obama think US is Exceptional? *CNN*, December 22. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6xcprfv>.

<sup>3,8</sup> Youtube. (2010) *Rubio for Senate TV Ad: A Generational Debate*. October 25. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/247vuvv>

<sup>4</sup> Parker, K. (2011) Obama and that 'Exceptional' thing. *Washington Post*, January 30. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6a8c7tc>

<sup>5</sup> Schlesinger, R. (2011) Obama has mentioned American Exceptionalism more than Bush. *US News and World Report*, January 31. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6lyw5a9>

<sup>7</sup> Blow, C. M. Empire at the End of Decadence. *New York Times*, February 18. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/4b7r4le>



# Is sovereignty

*Hannah Toope on the growing need for a reconceptualisation of sovereignty*

Last October, the Conservative Party reiterated its commitment to “reaffirm once more the sovereignty of our ancient parliament” within the European Union.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese government has of late taken criticism of its stance on Taiwan and Tibet to be an affront on its sovereignty, which, according to President Hu Jintao, is an issue that “[touches] upon the national sentiments of 1.3 billion Chinese”.<sup>2</sup> Ireland’s recent ceding of a great deal of its economic sovereignty, as a consequence of a major EU bail-out, has left the national government in chaos – it has left people asking whether it was for this that people died in the 1916 Easter uprising.<sup>3</sup>

Sovereignty is a principle cited in countless extremely varied instances. The term appears in: disputes over land, complaints against violations of territorial integrity, assertions of independence in economic policy, and pleas for political and military non-interference. With such a broad range of applications in – more often than not – internationally contentious matters, the concept often ends up being confused or intermingled with questions of national identity. As such, it is one of the few grounds on which sceptical 21st-century voters condescend to rally around their leaders. Few seem to question, however, whether sovereignty is actually as good and as useful a principle as it is taken to be. They should. In the past, sovereignty has been used as an excuse for passiveness in the face of oppression. As shown in the case of some objections to political integration in the EU, it now serves

to obscure deeper structural failings. In the future, it could seriously get in the way of solving the world’s most significant problems.

At first glance, ‘sovereignty’ is indeed an attractive ideal. For a state to be recognised as a free agent – an independent actor, immune from outside interference to legislate within its borders according to its long-held traditions and deep-seated values – one can understand its appeal. There is no doubt that there are distinct benefits to small-scale, independent government.

A ‘world government’ could not logistically account for the extremely varied needs of the world’s irreconcilably diverse populations. Sovereign states – defined as states which, at a minimum, have defined borders and populations, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states<sup>4</sup> – are the most sensible way to fashion a world order.

The problem is one of definition. The criteria employed above to define a sovereign state only barely cover questions of internal organisation in states, and say little about sovereign rights and responsibilities at home and abroad. Such insufficient definitions have caused trouble in the past. States’ rights to sovereignty and territorial integrity are deeply enshrined, for example in the UN Charter, in relatively absolute terms.<sup>5</sup> Intervention

in one state by another, even on humanitarian grounds, was made legally dubious in the early post-war period when the Charter was drafted. Canadian politician and scholar Michael Ignatieff points out that when the UN Charter was drafted in 1945, although not all of the horrors of the Holocaust had yet been revealed, Poland and

**“Few seem to question, however, whether sovereignty is actually as good and useful a principle as it is taken to be. They should.”**

Russia and, The Blitz were extremely familiar to the world leaders of the day. Thus, he finds that “it was Hitler the warmonger, not Hitler the architect of European extermination, who preoccupied the drafters,” and who set the political tone for decades to come.<sup>6</sup> Intervention abroad, the violation of state sovereignty, was made taboo, especially with the rise of dogmas of cultural relativism and fears about intervening states being perceived as neo-colonial.

However, in the 1990s, the world reconsidered the merits of unqualified sovereignty as it tried to come to terms with the atrocities committed in Rwanda, the unravelling of Yugoslavia and more. At the time, appeals to sovereignty were often used as an excuse for non-intervention by governments perpetrating or condoning violence, and were largely taken at face value by third-party states not intent on expending valuable resources abroad. Nevertheless, with the shock of genocide, a new academic

consensus slowly emerged among scholars in politics and international law around the concept of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’.<sup>7</sup> This view holds that while sovereign states have a great degree of discretion in the conduct of their own affairs, there are certain things – primarily the sanctity of life<sup>8</sup> – which lie beyond their jurisdiction. Sovereignty, by this reasoning, has limits and should not be held above the lives of vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, this definition is not one that has been uniformly adopted. Previous appeals to ‘non-intervention’ based on sovereignty could double as useful excuses for states wary of engaging in perilous conflict situations on behalf of foreigners in distant lands. People need nevertheless see that sovereignty is not an inalienable right, but rather an extremely evasive concept that can end up tragically backfiring.

Even beyond life-or-death circumstances, unstudied appeals to sovereignty can do as much harm as good. This is particularly observable in the European Union, where many national governments tend towards empowering the European Council, the intergovernmental body made up of direct representatives from national governments, rather than the more integrated, pan-European and bureaucratic Commission.<sup>9</sup> They often do so in response to mainstream pressures from citizens who are concerned with increasing economic and political integration, as well as the perceived consequential loss of domestic sovereignty to the EU. This purported phenomenon is also sensationalised

# beyond reproach?

*and the reprioritisation of sovereignty's role in the international system*



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by the mass-media and fringe groups such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and the French Front National party.

Certain states and their citizens seem to believe that, in maintaining direct national government involvement in European policy-making through the Council of Ministers, they will maintain a stronger hand in integration and thereby preserve more of their 'national sovereignty'. They will hence better uphold their national interests and values in the face of the ever-expanding bureaucratic monstrosity that is the EU. Neil MacCormick identifies the irony in this attitude, pointing out that this frantic scramble to preserve a sense of national sovereignty by ensuring that the Council (often involving the active participation of such notable delegates as Prime Ministers and Presidents) often blatantly contravenes funda-

mental democratic principles at home. He particularly dwells upon the example of the President of France, who in fact significantly oversteps his French constitutional role relating to the division of powers by promoting national interests in the Council and participating in the legislative process at the EU level.<sup>10</sup> Sovereignty at the expense of the legacy of a great revolution is perhaps not what Eurosceptic nationalists should set their sights on.

The final, and perhaps most crucial, point to consider is the very nature of the major challenges that face governments in our times: globalisation,

floundering world-wide economic and financial systems, smuggling, tax evasion, human trafficking, terrorism, global warming, et cetera. These are not problems that states can solve on their own. While states

**“While states can be islands geographically, it is no longer possible for them to be so socially, politically and economically.”**

can be islands geographically, it is no longer possible for them to be so socially, politically, and economically. So it happens that international negotiation (which implies compromise as well as winners and losers), and potentially the yielding of certain powers and sovereign privileges to supranational bodies, may be necessary in the short-run in order to secure future (sovereign) stability.

Small-scale bureaucratic management is necessary in the administering of certain domestic affairs; however, the realities of the modern world do not allow for bigotry cloaked in that falsely inspiring and seemingly all-encompassing concept that is 'sovereignty'. For all of our sakes, governments and their citizens must stop appealing to this concept without understanding all that it entails. They must swallow their pride and co-operate with each other, even if it means not being able to call all of the shots all of the time. Unconsidered appeals to sovereignty have done enough harm as it is.

<sup>1</sup> Hague, W. (2010) Sovereignty Clause will enshrine key principle. *Conservatives*, 6 October. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6xwq7sh>

<sup>2</sup> BBC. (2011) Hu says China not seeking arms race or domination. 21 January. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5uyqgl>

<sup>3</sup> Harrison, S. (2010) Ireland: A year of financial turmoil. *BBC News Europe*, 31 December. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5v7epbn>

<sup>4</sup> 7th International Conference of American States. *Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States 1933*, Article 1. In: DJ Harris. *Cases and Materials on International Law*, 6th Edition. London: Sweet and Maxwell, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. (1945) *Charter of the United Nations*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/intro.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> Ignatieff, Michael. "Human Rights, Sovereignty and Intervention". In: Nicholas Owen (ed.). *Human Rights, Human Wrongs: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Bellamy, A. J. (2008) *The Responsibility to Protect and the Problem of Military Intervention*. *International Affairs*, Vol. 84(4)

<sup>8</sup> Macklem, P. (2008) *Humanitarian Intervention and the Distribution of Sovereignty in International Law*. *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 22(4)

<sup>9</sup> MacCormick, N. (2008) *Constitutionalism and Democracy in the EU*. In: Elizabeth Bomberg et al (eds). *The European Union: How Does it Work?* 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

# Big agriculture's

*Zac Carr on Western agricultural subsidies and*

Since the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, the global economic system has largely been governed by neo-liberal principles of trade. The tearing down of trade barriers and the encouragement of free-trade policies has, especially for the industrial powers that authored the rules, been a major component of both domestic and foreign economic policy. However, one of the biggest deviations from the Western free-trade ideology is in the area of agriculture, in which Africa, often regarded as the world's poorest continent, finds its biggest source of economic activity. Paradoxically, Western multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the IMF and many Western bilateral donors attach neo-liberal economic conditions to aid and loans to African states. Yet, Africa is hard-pressed to be competitive in vital foreign markets like the United States and the EU because of illiberal farm subsidies. Both academics and politicians alike find this situation difficult to justify. Indeed even Tony Blair noted at the G8 summit on Africa that international trade terms were, "unacceptable... politically antiquated, economically illiterate, environmentally destructive and ethically indefensible. They must go."<sup>1</sup> Subsidies continue to persist though, due to both the power and influence of the agricultural lobbies and the minimal financial impact on Western taxpayers.

The common acceptance of neo-liberal trade policies coincided with the end of the Second World War. At that time it was acknowledged that trade barriers partially caused the



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Great Depression, that preceded the war and the events of this time also influenced the creation of agricultural subsidies. In the US, the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression led to the installation of subsidies in Roosevelt's New Deal. In Europe, the experience of two world wars caused people to believe that a reliable domestic food source was key to national survival<sup>2</sup>. Fast-forward to today and farm subsidies are still a vibrant part of domestic economic policies in both the EU and US.

At roughly the same time, beginning in the 1950's on through the 1970's, African colonies began achieving independence from their colonizers. By the end of the 1970's world commodity prices had hit the floor, largely because of the oil shocks. Consequently, many

African nations found themselves in a severe debt crisis. In the 1980's the demise of the Soviet Union and eventual end of the Cold War meant that African states had no choice but to turn to the West for financial assistance, specifically to institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. These institutions implemented Structural Adjustment Programs (S.A.P.'s), which entailed a liberalizing of economic policies, rolling back the state, cutting the civil service, devaluing currency and similar measures. A main

objective of the S.A.P.'s was to achieve export led growth<sup>3</sup>. By lowering currency values and reducing state interference, African exports could be more competitive abroad and bring much-needed foreign exchange

into the continent, thus spurring development.

It is rather ironic then that Western countries required African states to liberalize

trade policies and end state subsidies while they were busy maintaining their own agricultural subsidies back home. It seems fairly straightforward

**“Africa is hard-pressed to be competitive in vital foreign markets like the United States and the EU because of illiberal farm subsidies.”**

# sacred cow

## *their deleterious effects on trade with Africa*

that if development was to be achieved through export led growth, and the biggest exports of non-oil producing African states are agricultural, than fair international trade terms and access to crucial Western agricultural markets in regards to the agricultural sector, would be necessary for these policies to succeed. However, subsidies did not end, but rather continued to grow and African economies continued to stagnate.

Of course, it is ignorant and unfair to blame all or even most of Africa's economic problems on Western farm subsidies or any other policy for that matter. Subsidies do however have a negative impact on the ability of African farmers to sell their goods on the global market. One particularly informative example is the cotton industry. In Western Africa, cotton accounts for 77% of exports in Benin, 18% in Mali and 57% in Burkina Faso<sup>4</sup>. Together, these countries are the world's second largest exporters of cotton, behind only the US. Due to the S.A.P.'s these countries have all liberalized their cotton sector and ended subsidies. In contrast, the US has not only continued subsidies, it has increased them. The amount of subsidies, combined with the fact that America is by far the leading exporter of cotton, means that the US is, "the single biggest force driving down world prices."<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that US cotton subsidies cost Burkina Faso 12% of export earnings in 2002<sup>6</sup>.

How exactly do these subsidies work? In essence, US cotton subsidies are vital for the US farmer's ability to remain competitive on the global

market. In comparison to an average cost of 68 to 80 cents per pound to produce cotton in the US, it only costs 21 cents per pound in Burkina Faso<sup>7</sup>. Essentially these subsidies offset US farmers' competitive disadvantage caused by more expensive production costs, thus allowing them to sell their cotton cheaper than the world average, despite it costing much more to produce.

Subsidizing has several negative effects. It pushes down world prices, makes US cotton disproportionately competitive and allows US producers to dominate the US cotton market. For African farmers this means that they receive less money for their cotton, and they cannot access the US market, one of the most profitable in the world. In addition, for US consumers, they end up paying more in taxes than they save on prices.

Since these practices benefit only a select group of people, why do they persist? It has much to do with the power and influence of this select group of people. For example, in the lead up to the 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act, which increased cotton subsidies up to 80%, the National Cotton Council (NCC) spent over \$60 million on marketing<sup>8</sup>. In June 2003, NCC chairman Bobby Green told Congress that the notion that US policies drive down global prices was "simply ludicrous" and "based on seriously flawed econom-

ics."<sup>9</sup> Due to the power of this group and the minuteness of the negative effect on the average taxpayer, subsidies continued even after the WTO ruled them illegal.

The story is similar for the world sugar industry, except that in this case the EU is the main culprit. Besides subsidizing domestic production, the EU also subsidizes exports.

**"It also seems morally suspect for Western countries to force African states to liberalize their agricultural sectors."**

It purchases sugar from EU farmers according to a yearly quota, which is greater than that needed for domestic consumption and sells the excess in foreign markets, like Africa. Doing so lowers prices in those markets<sup>10</sup>. In this case, subsidies not only lower the world price of sugar, but in domestic African markets as well. This puts African farmers at a disadvantage in their own home markets in addition to global markets.

As shown by the examples above, the negative effects of Western nations' agricultural subsidies are multi-faceted. First, they unfairly distort world prices, given that they generally bolster industries that would otherwise be unable to compete on the world stage. Secondly they hold their respective markets captive, depriving third-world farmers of participation in the lucrative markets, which would spur export led growth. Thirdly, in the case of export subsidies, such as the EU's sugar subsidy, low commodity prices affect

the domestic markets in non-EU countries, putting farmers at a disadvantage in their own backyard. These effects are moreover amplified by the agriculturally dominant position of the subsidizing countries. Therefore, the decisions within the US and the EU have large impacts on global markets. Besides negatively affecting the average western consumer and African farmer, it also seems morally suspect for Western countries to force African states to liberalize their agricultural sectors while maintaining their own.

Despite the costs to the majority of the world's population, subsidies will likely remain in place, as they are the sacred cows of a few very powerful, rich and influential groups whose affluence depends on subsidies. As long as they remain, agriculturally based African economies will struggle to achieve development based on the export-led growth models imposed on them by the West.

<sup>1</sup> Bolton, G. (2007) *Africa Doesn't Matter: How the West Has Failed the Poorest Continent and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Arcade Publishing

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, G. (1994) Why Structural Adjustment is Necessary and Why it Doesn't Work. *ROAPE* 60, 214-225

<sup>4</sup> Heinisch, E. L. (2006) West Africa versus the United States on cotton subsidies: how, why and what next? *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44(2). 251-274

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Koo, Won W. and P. Lynn Kennedy. (2006) Impact of Agricultural Subsidies on Global Welfare. *American Journal of Agriculture and Economics* 88, Number 5



# Having a

*Carl Truedsson and Sofia Widen on why the*

Is there anything more sacred than a Head of State in the form of a monarch? This revered national institution in Sweden, it can be argued, has been placed upon an 'irrational pedestal', largely shielded from criticism. Just by looking at the year that passed, it has become apparent just how sacred this institution is. Erik Helmersson, a journalist from the *Swedish Daily Paper*, summarizes the events of last year. A controversial book, *The Resistant Monarch*, has been published uncovering a previous mistress of King Carl Gustaf. The King then lobbied for five companies, all of which he conveniently has a financial interest in, during a visit to Brazil. Finally, it was publicly revealed that the King's stepfather, Walther Sommerlath, took part in the German "Arianisation" during the 1930s, when he purchased a firm from a Jewish man forced to flee by the Nazis. Not a very flattering summary<sup>1</sup>.

Naturally, there is widespread disagreement about the nature of the Swedish royals' holiness; some say that their privileged position

is something of the past. On this view, we could argue that, firstly, they are constitutionally constrained from exercising the political power once vested in the monarchy. More importantly, the Swedish royal family is constantly subject to the world's most open and scrutinizing media. This is an illusion. The royal family is seldom asked any relevant questions about their privileged positions, their work, or even something as simple as their daily activities. There is another point to make here: all sorts of authority should be criticized - including them.

**“Naturally, there is widespread disagreement about the nature of the Swedish royals' holiness; some say that their privileged position is something of the past.”**

The only way we can criticize this sacred institution is via media outlets, such as television and newspapers. The current absence of criticism is a concern to all of us. If journalists are not allowed to, or refrain from, questioning such a public and national institution and its members

then, it logically follows, this is something very few other people will engage in.

Perhaps the most striking example of the monarchy's 'levitated' and protected position is best illustrated in the state-funded and widely broadcasted TV program: *The Year with the Swedish Royal Family*. This is a program that supposedly mirrors the

life and work of the royal family, offering insights into their lives via exclusive interviews. However, out of the hour long program, only “two minutes are devoted to the publication of the book and one minute [was] used to discuss the [princess's] broken engagement”<sup>2</sup>, states Helmersson. This is something that Per Svensson, cultural journalist at *The Southern Swedish Daily Press*, also criticizes, arguing that “The Royal Family is an institution that represents the Head of State [and] it's strange of you to exclude these events and don't question this institution”<sup>3</sup>. However, given that the director of the program, Meta Bergkvist, is a close personal friend of the royal family, it might seem less strange that the programme devoted so little time to the scandals. Is this an exception that the Swedish people allow to exist in an otherwise open and progressive country? It surely seems as if the Swedish royal family is too sacred to be questioned by several of our Swedish journalists.

This is a crucial point, and it certainly begs the question: “What, if any, formal or professional restrictions or rules exist when it comes to the press engaging with the Swedish monarchy”<sup>4</sup>? In a country that consistently tops the 'freedom of the press' charts (in the 2010 Reporters Sans Frontières ranking, Sweden tied with other Northern European Countries for 1st place<sup>5</sup>), the answer is, as one

would hope, no. That is to say, there are no formal restrictions as to what a member of the press or media can ask or publish about the Swedish monarchy. Furthermore, as Lennart Weibull, Professor in Mass Media Research at the University of Gothenburg, rightly asserts, “freedom of the press”<sup>6</sup> merely asserts the right of the Swedish press to publish any stories that they want to about the monarchy, not that the monarchy is obligated to engage with the press or, for that matter, answer any of their questions. While this may be true, why does a public institution like the monarchy enjoy such a segregated and 'sacred' status from that of other Swedish public figures (such as politicians) whose refusal to engage with the press would conjure an immense public distrust and could possibly lead to demands for their resignation? Swedish political journalist Alex Voronov<sup>7</sup> highlights a very interesting difference between the 'public' institutions of the monarchy and Swedish politicians: while both 'parties' are very much in the public eye, the monarchy is supposed to remain apolitical and neutral in public debate, whilst a politician's entire career is built on an adherence to a certain ideological manifesto. This, Voronov postulates, coupled with King Carl XVI Gustaf's notorious ineptitude at public speaking, could be why the Swedish monarchy is so heavily shielded from the press.



# royal cow

*media must be unafraid to criticize monarchs*

Such a profound dichotomy between public figures that are, or should be, inherently homogenous is certainly not democratic, Voronov argues, and must therefore be more thoroughly scrutinized.

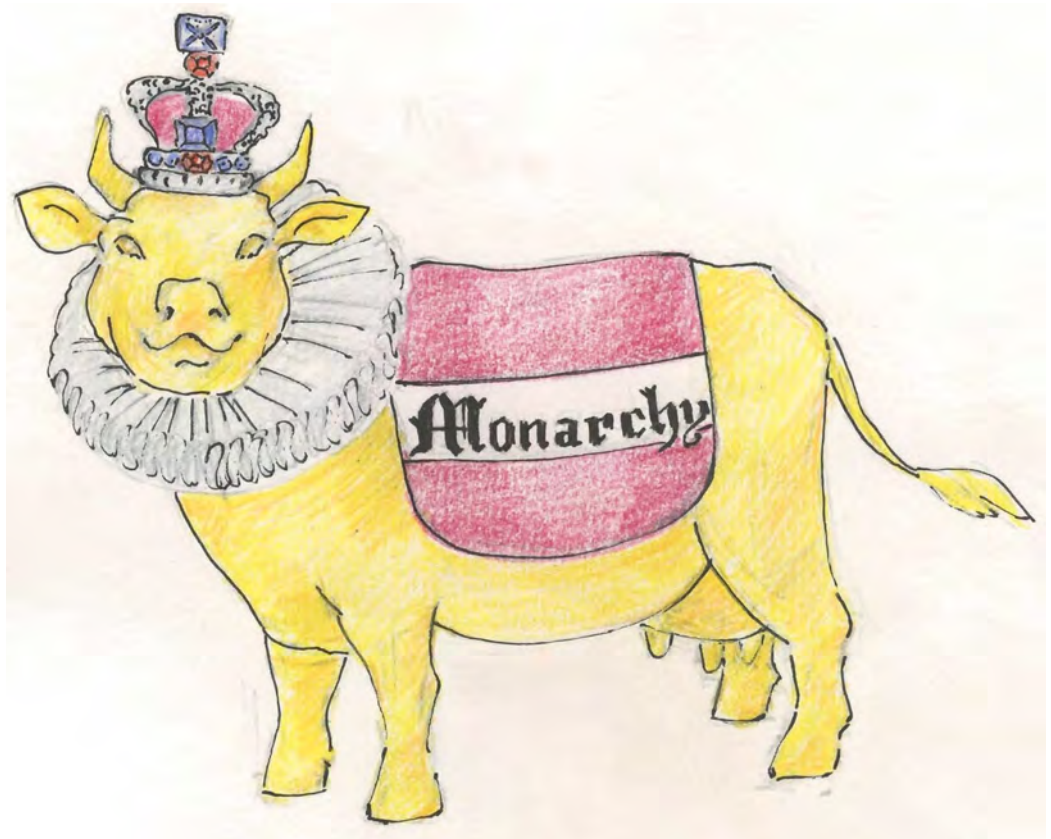
Moreover, Ola Wong, a journalist with the *Swedish Daily Paper*, raises a very interesting question<sup>8</sup> about what exact role the monarchy actually plays in its position as ‘official representative’ for Sweden on publicly funded trips abroad. The official line is that, during these trips, members of the royal family are supposed to serve as a ‘medium’ through which Swedish commercial and cultural interests are to be represented and promoted<sup>9</sup>. If this is indeed the case, Wong contends, why is it that during a recent trip to China the entire royal entourage engaged not once with the Chinese press? Not every royal family ‘keeps mum’ on its trips abroad

- both the Norwegian and Danish crown princes, also in China, engaged with the Chinese media, even giving interviews. Wong gives specific reference to yet another ‘official’ Royal trip abroad this past autumn, which saw the biggest Swedish healthcare

**“One does not need to be a republican to be justified in directing criticisms against the royal family. It is a public institution.”**

delegation ever to visit China, headed by Crown Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel.

During this visit, Victoria and Daniel were kept at great length from the Chinese press, who only received a few ‘photo ops’ with the newly wed Royals<sup>10</sup>. A lot of good, some would argue, that this will do in solidifying new contacts and promoting Swedish commercial interests



Mariana Iotenko

abroad.

One does not need to be a republican to be justified in directing criticisms against the royal family. It is a public institution and the healthy level of skepticism that abounds in society at large should certainly apply when considering this ‘sacred’ institution. Since the royal family cannot be removed in elections, the only medium through which criticism can be expressed is via the press. Journalists cannot hide behind the excuse that heads of state are politically neutral. This political neutrality can explain why they are sometimes reluctant to express their

opinions – but it surely cannot explain why journalists decide to silence theirs.

<sup>1</sup> Helmersen, E. (2011) *The Year With the Royal Family is Criticised*. Swedish Daily Paper, 1 January.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Swedish Daily Paper, (2010) *Swedish State Television's Program about the Royal Family*. 30 December.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Reporters Without Borders (2010) *The Press Freedom Index 2010*. Available at: <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html>

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Lennart Weibull, Professor in Mass Media Research at the University of Gothenburg. Conducted: 21 January 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Voronov, A. (2009) *Journalists pushed aside during King's visit*. Published in the *Eskilstuna Courriel*, 2 June.

<sup>8</sup> Wong, O. (2010) *Silent like the Wall: Perspektiv about the Royals*. Swedish Daily Paper, 5 November.

<sup>9</sup> (2011) *Sveriges Kungahus*. Available at: [royalcourt.se](http://royalcourt.se)

<sup>10</sup> Wong, O. (2010) *Replace the Royal Institution with a PR Firm* Swedish Daily Paper, 8 November.



# Why democracy

*Mitchell Hargreaves on why the West's*

As Winston Churchill put it: “it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” And yet today, democracy is often presented by western states as the pinnacle of anthropological development, the most advanced and civilised form of governance to which all states should aspire. To many developed nations it is considered a sacred cow, so far beyond the scope of criticism that its spread, even at vast cost to human life, is not only warranted but a moral obligation. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama, in his essay *The End of History*, even went so far as to declare that mankind’s ideological development may be over, with nothing left but the wait for all states to gradually accept the western liberal democratic model as the final form of national government.<sup>1</sup> Under George W. Bush, America and its allies invaded Iraq in order, among other excuses, to advance the process of democratic development to those oppressed by dogmatic and sectarian religious rule<sup>2</sup>, and this war has demonstrated that democracy is an export with a high tariff. To commit to forcing this system militarily onto another state requires absolute confidence in the conviction that the benefits of democracy outweigh the bloodshed, with no question that democracy could be limited in its ability to produce the best government for the people. That the

western powers, particularly America, continue to advocate the spread of democracy worldwide demonstrates their unquestioning, yet fundamentally misplaced, faith in the democratic system.

With respect to Francis Fukuyama, since his time of writing at the end of the Cold War, we have not witnessed any miraculous liberalisation in Russia, and, in fact, the corruption that was once fuelled by the ruthless pre-Glasnost government now seems to be enforced by Mafia muscle.<sup>3</sup> However, the trend of money talking in democratic states is not limited to those so new to the system. In America, one of democracy’s most vocal advocates, to campaign for public office at practically any level requires vast financial backing, naturally such support necessitates compromise. Even in the land of the free, policy is for sale. But this is not the same as the corruption found in authoritarian states because we don’t call it bribery, we call them ‘campaign contributions’. Even in party-led democracies such as the UK, offshore oligarchs can buy their stake

in government through party donations, and spread their influence through the Westminster benches. Plutocracy

**“That the western powers, particularly America, continue to advocate the spread of democracy worldwide demonstrates their unquestioning, yet fundamentally misplaced, faith in the democratic system.”**

is inherent in democracy in its current form; democracy calls for campaigning, campaigning calls for funding, and funding calls for influence.

There are, however, more fundamental problems inherent in party politics. The first priority of any political party is to remain in power, which thus fuels rivalry between opposing parties and prevents any potential co-operation for the greater good. Prime Minister’s Questions is a clear example of how political rivalries can lead to *ad hominem* debates and meaningless rhetoric at the cost of progress. Disagreement for disagreement’s sake is an inescapable element of party politics worldwide, and just as party loyalty discourages individuality and the benefits that it may bring, party lines are often drawn arbitrarily in opposition out of perceived duty rather than genuine conviction. All this amounts to a never ending political war that overlooks the true purpose of government.

Furthermore, democracy in the western world is not as free as it is made out to be. Whilst it is often stated that democracy provides citizens with the opportunity to decide who governs them, it in fact only provides a shortlist, with the public able only to choose the lesser of the evils presented to them. Representative democracy, as is seen in most democratic states, cannot overcome this fundamental problem, yet direct democracy is little better. Perhaps in smaller communities - where all can control policy directly rather than via an elected proxy, and where voter apathy is reduced by the immediate relevance of issues - many problems may be avoided. But in California people repeatedly vote against public spending cuts and tax rises in the mandatory fiscal policy referendums, leaving the state financially destitute.<sup>4</sup> Whilst voter apathy in direct democracies has led to such ludicrous rulings as Switzerland’s nationwide ban on minarets.<sup>5</sup> In practice, no form of democracy has been found that can efficiently enact policies in the best interests of the people on a national level. Either a new democratic paradigm is required, operating on an entirely different scale by an entirely different mechanism, or a better alternative must be found. Otherwise the public will find themselves permanently under the authority of an endless chain of benign but invariably mediocre governments.

# does not work

*favourite product is not worth exporting*



Mariana Iotenko

Yet democracy has a more deep rooted problem. Whenever a system is implemented that relies on the judgment of the majority, or even goes so far as to assume that what is most popular is best, there is always room for exploitation. James Bovard succinctly defined this flaw in the quote: “Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep

**“Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner”**

voting on what to have for dinner.”<sup>6</sup> However, the tyranny of the majority is a concern that has been expressed about democracy since Plato’s appeal for a philosopher-king. It is a fear that has been vindicated throughout history. The past oppression of minorities is often remembered with solemnity and regret, and yet the very system that has justifi-

fied such inequality and made it permissible is presented as the solution. Segregation in America is a notable example. Prejudice and weighted voting combined to fuel an injustice that spanned centuries, and yet democracy alone could not have empowered the minority to vote for freedom, not while the resentful will of the majority is sovereign. History has demonstrated time and again that the people are all too often willing to turn a blind eye to the suffering of others when it improves conditions for themselves, and this is how democracy claims

to empower the people - whilst simultaneously leaving them powerless. The west’s ceaseless battle to bring democracy to the Middle East is presented as a solution for minorities - whether ethnic, religious or other - to combat the oppression that they face at the hands of authoritarian rule. Democracy may be synonymous with liberty and the freedom of expression in the eyes of the west, but all it is likely to bring to the Middle East is the same sectarian bias justified by democratic mandate. This would undermine any humanitarian attempt to improve conditions for those bearing the brunt of the tyranny. Yet, so many governments still commit to democracy’s spread through the means of military intervention, which is a testament to their delusions of democracy’s grandeur. Churchill may well have been right when he suggested that democracy is the least worst system western states have tried, but hopefully it will not be the last. The bloodshed demands better than that.

<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama, F. (1989) The End of History. *The National Interest*. Available at: <http://www. wesjones.com/eoh.htm>  
<sup>2</sup> US Congress. (1998) *Iraq Liberation Act*. Available at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ query/z?c105:H.R.4655.ENR:>  
<sup>3</sup> Harding, L. (2010) WikiLeaks cables: Russian government ‘using mafia for its dirty work’. *Guardian.co.uk*, 1 December. Available at: <http:// www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cable-spain-russian-mafia>  
<sup>4</sup> Council of State Governments. (2010) *The Book of the States*.  
<sup>5</sup> BBC News. (2009) *Swiss Voters Back Ban on Minarets*. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/ hi/world/europe/8385069.stm>  
<sup>6</sup> Bovard, J. (1994) *Lost Rights: The Destruction of American Liberty*. St. Martin’s Press: New York.



# Wedding

*Christopher Daley illuminates the misconceptions surrounding arranged*

There are two popular conceptions of arranged marriage in our imagination. The first is friendly and probably occurs in India. There is a colourful urban wedding; a shy young bride in an elaborate sari is brought out, weighed down with gold bracelets and heavy earrings. A nervous young boy fidgets in anticipation, comically terrified by the prospect of an ugly wife. A procession of fat jolly uncles and chattering aunts fill their ears with advice and saucy insinuation before the wedding party erupts in spontaneous celebration.

The second is the image of a young girl lured to Pakistan on false pretences, stripped of her passport and telephone then forced to live in the poor rural conditions her parents made such attempts to escape only a generation ago. The result of these popular misconceptions is that we have two categories of marriage, nice (arranged) and nasty (forced).

These two conceptions of marriage are seemingly very different. One is 'arranged' and produces happy and stable unions with low rates of divorce and domestic abuse (most cases go unreported). The second is obviously 'forced' and more resembles the behaviour of a trafficking network than a charming cul-

tural idiosyncrasy. One must therefore ask, at what point does an arranged marriage become a forced one?

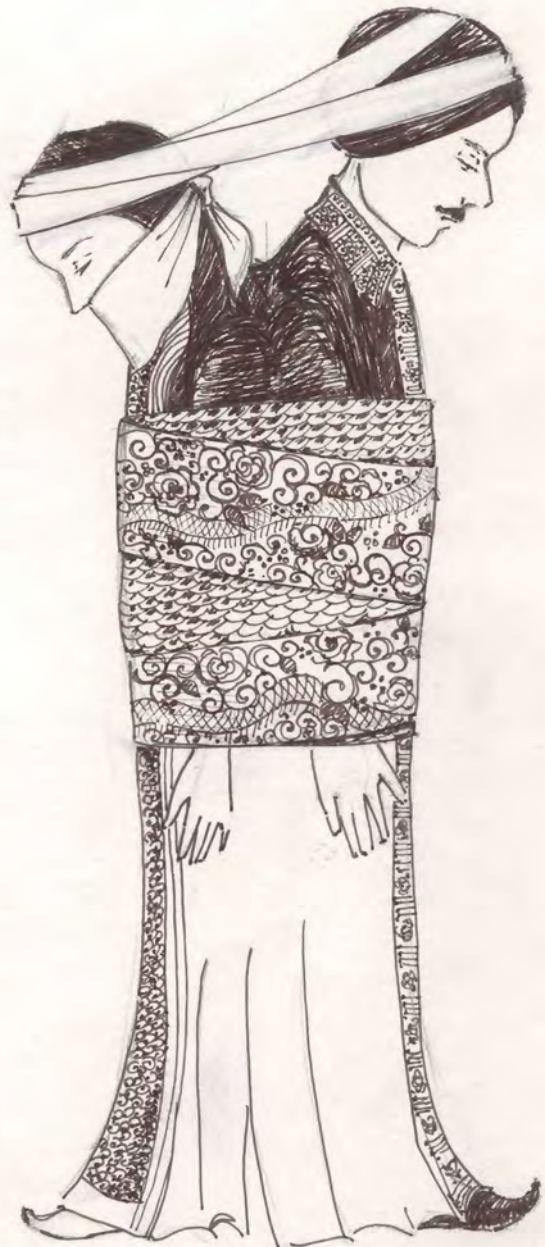
What is required is some clarity in the definitions of each form of marriage. The Foreign and Commonwealth office has categorised forced marriage as: "A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of both people, where pressure or abuse is used" and an arranged marriage as: "... in an arranged marriage, the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner, but the choice of whether to enter the marriage is left to both people<sup>1</sup>."

From this we can conclude that forced marriages are the result of 'pressure' whilst arranged marriages are the result of 'choice'.

**"What is required is some clarity in the definitions of each form of marriage."**

This is a trap. One may have the appearance of a marriage being arranged rather than forced by giving the prospective candidates a say in the matter. Surely if the young bride has the right to deny numerous suitors before settling on one she is, in fact, complicit in the union? Well, no. She is not. As is often the case, what is not said reveals the deeper truth.

The young bride in an arranged marriage may choose, but only from a list of candidates proposed by her parents.





# blues

*and forced marriages and discusses untenable traditions*

This list will be limited to older males of the same ethnicity or religion. The list will be further limited to men of a certain income or profession. The bride may not add to the list. If her father is Sikh then no Muslim, Christian or Jewish men can be considered.

However, the most important condition of the list is this - it is finite. The choice is hers, but she must make one. This article from 'home professor' demonstrates the beguiling

absence of logic in categorizing a marriage as arranged...

"It is unfortunate that arranged marriages are taken in a negative light by western societies. This is attributed to a lack of knowledge about the whole concept of arranged marriages. Not all these marriages are forced. Parents ensure that their sons and daughters are satisfied with their parents' choices. The children's consent is vital, and should a prospective partner be refused, parents will simply have to find another suitable choice<sup>2</sup>."

The choice here resembles the kind of freedom given a prisoner when they choose their method of execution. For gay and lesbian children the sentence is a life of economic and domestic servitude. It heralds the end

of ambition for women who want to finish their education, for young men who do not wish to follow a 'suitable' profession and for countless young people who simply don't yet know what they want. Furthermore, what is not elaborated on is by what

**"The choice here resembles the kind of freedom given a prisoner when they choose their method of execution."**

methods parents make this choice. Most often it is on the character and reputation of the suitors families. I need not point out the flaws in such a method. Virtue is not a hereditary

occurrence.

The two definitions of marriage share the same foundational practices. In both the arranged and forced examples a bride is expected to fulfill two primary duties, to produce children and keep a tidy house whilst the male acts as provider. The humiliation of having sex with a stranger whilst being expected to clean his sheets after cannot be labeled as anything other than what it is, sex slavery. The securities offered, whether it be a goat or a Mercedes Benz, demotes the groom and his family to the status of client in the transac-

tion. Just what it makes the girl and her family is self-evident.

May I propose a new definition of arranged marriage? It is simpler than the others posted by the FCO and forcedmarriage.net (both organizations which employ an arranged/forced divide so as not to offend their employees who have been matched themselves)<sup>3</sup>. It is simply this, that people in our society reach an age of civic responsibility for their own conduct. At that age, they are free to communicate with whom-ever they so choose without interference. Those who would wish to interfere in that process should have their domestic and economic arrangements decided for them at Her Majesties pleasure.

The truth is that arranged marriage is not a Muslim phenomenon. Nor it is an affliction of the unenlightened poor. It is prevalent through-

**"For gay and lesbian children the sentence is a life of economic and domestic servitude."**

out the professional classes of Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Persian, Balkan and some African communities in Britain. Its victims equally male and female and many of them study at

this University. So long as those who are not affected by the practice do not voice their concerns, then the systematic abuse of a whole generation of British men and women will continue.

Liberals and conservatives disagree on the motives and effects of military action in the Middle East – but all find common ground in their desire to see the universal emancipation of women. I suggest we look at our own affairs and apply our strict ideals to our brothers and sisters in this country also.

An arranged marriage is always a forced one. Those who resist quickly find themselves falling into a 'categorization gap' due to ostracism from the family unit and homelessness. To even imagine that by giving people a choice in the matter excuses the tradition as being anything other than barbaric is a contradiction too heavy to validate. Parents cannot own their children just as one human being cannot own another.

<sup>1</sup> Forced Marriage Unit. (2010) What is Forced Marriage? *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*. Available at: [www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/what-is-forced-marriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/what-is-forced-marriage)

<sup>2</sup> Professor's House. (N.D.) *Arranged Marriage Facts*. Available at: <http://www.professorshouse.com/Relationships/Marriage-Advice/Articles/Arranged-Marriage-Facts/>

<sup>3</sup> The Foreign Office commissioned Gita Saghal to make a film for British schools on the perils of arranged marriage. Saghal herself believes in the validity of the arranged/forced divide ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/news-id\\_1866000/1866717.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/news-id_1866000/1866717.stm)). Forcedmarriage.net is funded by the Ethnic Minorities Foundations who have a strong multiculturalists agenda and whose board of trustees are from commonly pro arranged marriage communities.

# Beating around Israel's

*Anouk Berthier on the international importance of openly acknowledging*

Absent from most mainstream media, and disturbingly even diplomatically even diplomatic discussions on the military and political situation in the Middle East, is the State of Israel's very own sacred cow, its nuclear weapons programme.

Recently German Chancellor Angela Merkel said during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that "Iran's nuclear program is a threat to Israel and the whole world".<sup>1</sup> While Israel and the United States are widely suspected of having jointly worked on a highly specific cyber worm, Stuxnet, to tamper with Iran's nuclear technology and Israeli secret services have been accused of assassinating a number of Iranian nuclear scientists,<sup>2</sup> few Western commentators bother to ask whether Israel's nuclear program is a threat to Iran and the whole world.

Only three states still in possession of nuclear weapons have declined to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): India, Israel and Pakistan (North Korea actually ratified it but withdrew in 2003). India and Pakistan have publicly announced possession of nuclear weapons, whereas Israel's are a public secret that the state itself has always kept in an ambiguous status. This nuclear hide-and-not-seek game even has a name in Hebrew, *animut*.

Israeli nuclear opacity has been encouraged by the United States since 1969,



when Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and US President Richard Nixon signed a secret accord in which the United States agreed to tolerate and shield Israel's nuclear programme, if Israel did not reveal its possession of nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup> President Barack Obama tacitly reiterated this agreement by claiming Israel has "unique security requirements ... [and] the United States will never ask Israel to take any steps

that would undermine [its] security interests".<sup>4</sup>

It seems impossible to establish the increasingly discussed nuclear-weapons-free zone (NFWZ) in the Middle East without officially addressing Israel's nuclear weapons programme. Israeli officials walk the thin discursive line of *animut* with style, with regular claims from the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission that Israel has a "long-standing commit-

ment to norms of security, responsibility, accountability, and restraint in the nuclear domain".<sup>5</sup> These have allowed Israel to reach the status of a respectable democracy, illegitimately legitimized into telling its regional neighbours what they should and should not do with their own nuclear programmes.

Israel wasted no time developing what it considered fundamental to its survival in such a hostile environment. In

Joshua Valanzuolo

# ardent nuclear bush

## *Israel's nuclear programme and why denial is unacceptable*

1948, Israeli researchers started exploring the Negev desert for uranium deposits. And, in 1952 Israel secretly founded its own Atomic Energy Commission under control of the Defence Ministry.<sup>6</sup>

France, keen to develop its own bomb, set up a joint research effort with Israel in 1949. The two

countries profited from each other's knowledge and technology well into the 1950s.

However, a botched French-British-Israeli Suez Canal operation in 1956 left Israel alone in the Sinai, and France feeling it needed forgiving. A French research reactor and plutonium separation technology subsequently made their way to Israel, and French experts helped build the first Israeli reactor underground at the Negev Nuclear Research Centre, Dimona. Israeli officials initially referred to Dimona as a manganese plant, a textile plant, or even an agricultural research centre. It was not until 1958 that US spy planes identified it as a probable reactor complex.<sup>7</sup>

By this time, France was trying to politely coerce Israel into coming out of the nuclear closet and publicly announce its nuclear intentions. In December 1960, a couple of days after Israel's nuclear installation had been mentioned in *The New York Times* for

the first time, Israeli President Ben-Gurion announced that Israel was building a reactor for 'peaceful purposes'.<sup>8</sup>

The following years bore their share of amusing stories regarding the not-so-secret nuclear reactor at Dimona. Dr. Zalman Shapiro, the president of the US Nuclear Materials and Equipment

Corporation, was accused in 1965 by the US government of having 'lost' 200 pounds of highly enriched uranium, suspected of having been sent to Israel sometime before 1965.<sup>9</sup> By the time of the 1967 War, a number of authors believe Israel had at least two usable bombs<sup>10,11</sup>.

Mordechai Vanunu, a former nuclear technician at the Dimona centre, paid the ultimate price for blaspheming Israel's sacred cow. He spent 18 years in an Israeli prison cell, 11 of which in solitary confinement, for having

provided the London *Sunday Times* in 1985 with detailed information complete with photographs of the Israeli nuclear arsenal. This at least succeeded in forcing Israel, according to Farr, to bring "the bomb up the basement

stairs if not out of the basement".<sup>11</sup>

Exactly how many nuclear warheads, long range missiles and self-propelled artillery pieces Israel now owns will most likely never be known. Estimates in 1997 drew the arsenal at more than 400 deliverable thermonuclear and nuclear weapons,<sup>12</sup> yet in 2008, former US president Jimmy Carter rather modestly estimated Israel's nuclear arsenal at 150 weapons.<sup>13</sup>

Israel aggressively defends its right to the Temple (the code word for nuclear weapons in Moshe Dayan's time). Other than the inherent danger of being a Jewish nation in a predominantly Muslim region, with countries like Iran and groups like Hezbollah justifying it arming itself, Israel claims moral superiority as a signatory of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Currently Israel is an

Annex 2 in the CTBT State along with Indonesia, China, Iran, Egypt and the United States. Ratification of the CTBT by these states is required

for the Entry in Force of the Treaty. In 2008, Israel was even on the verge of ratifying the CTBT, not out of moral grandeur but for strategic considerations. Firstly, ratification would lead the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to lift its trade embargo against

Israel. Secondly, the Treaty provides for on-site inspections that Israel hopes would shed more light on Iran's own nuclear programme.

Despite Iran's regularly voiced concerns about Israel's nuclear programme in an attempt to reduce the latter's status from sacred cow to golden calf, it seems very clear that while Iran's bomb is a black sheep, Israel's bombs are indeed unreasonably held to be beyond criticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Ynet News. (2011) *German Chancellor: Iran's nuclear program threat to world, Israel*. January 31. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/68gbhms>

<sup>2</sup> Broad, W, Markoff, J, Sanger, D. (2011) *Israeli Test on Worm Called Crucial in Iran Nuclear Delay*. *New York Times*, January 15. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5usv9zn>

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, A, Miller, M. (2010) *Bringing Israel's Bomb Out of the Basement*. *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89(5)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Farr W. D. (1999) *The Third Temple's Holy of Holies: Israel's Nuclear Weapons*. *The Counterproliferation Papers, Future Warfare Series No. 2*. Air University Press Maxwell Air Force Base

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen A. (1995) *Most Favored Nation*. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Vol. 51(1)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Hersh, S. M. (1991) *The Samson Option*. *Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Random House.

<sup>11</sup> Burrows, W. E., Windrem, R. (1994) *Critical Mass. The Dangerous Race for Superweapons in a Fragmenting World*. New York: Simon and Schuster

<sup>12</sup> Farr W. D. (1999) *The Third Temple's Holy of Holies: Israel's Nuclear Weapons*. *The Counterproliferation Papers, Future Warfare Series No. 2*. Air University Press Maxwell Air Force Base

<sup>13</sup> Brower, K. S. (1997) *A Propensity for Conflict: Potential Scenarios and Outcomes of War in the Middle East*. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Special Report no. 14

<sup>14</sup> Ynet News. (2008) *Carter: Israel has 150 nuclear weapons*. March 26. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6b79yzo>

# The new

*Sofia Dolfe on economic dependency in the third*

As the wave of decolonization swept through Africa and Asia in the second half of the twentieth century, it appeared that imperialism had ended once and for all. With political self-determination granted, the trajectory towards independent economic prosperity also seemed imminent through aid from the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In the 1980s and 1990s, these institutions implemented Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in order for newly independent states to reorganize their economies and liberalize markets for free trade. SAPs were ultimately used to combat developing states' – often substantial – debt, following independence. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) further solidified stability, establishing a forum in which all newly independent nations could enjoy the same trade benefits and regulations as developed Western states. To many, these organisations are sacred, ensuring a stable international monetary system, offering loans, hampering trade discrimination, and creating trade rules equal to all.

This ideal portrayal needs reconsideration. International trade and monetary organisations do not always offer a gateway to global economic betterment. Instead, they often facilitate a dead end road towards economic dependency. For one, SAPs have had detrimental long-term



Mariana Iotenko

effects. Their reorganization of developing states' economies – through privatization, tax reforms, flexible interest rates, and specialization – has only served strategic, Western interests. "Sub-Saharan Africa, traditionally the WB's main client, is still an ex-

remely poor region due to the 'shock therapy' administered to make capitalism work."<sup>1</sup> Focusing government spending on stringent economic reconstruction has increased social unrest, since no funds are available for health care, education and social welfare.

These effects are compounded by the failure of the WTO to regulate unfair trade relations. In 2006, the European Union spent 41 percent of its budget on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): the subsidization of European agriculture and, increasingly,



# imperial order

*world and Western hegemony in global financial institutions*

the US subsidizes its steel and cotton industry. Such measures defeat the purpose of free trade, where equal rights to export remains a salient principle. For developing countries

specializing in the export of natural resources, the constant competition with Western subsidized raw materials hinders their ability to export, thus

hindering their economic advancement. Analysts even speculate that agriculture in developing countries will be 'wiped out'; millions of farmers in developing nations have already been forced to move off their land.<sup>2</sup> Developed states, relying on the export of manufactured goods, however, maintain that developing states must continue to open up their markets to import.

This unfair, disproportionate system is reinforced by the inability of developing countries to influence decision-making or take advantage of the judicial settlement system of the WTO, which is aimed to combat unfair terms of trade. Since the GATT years (the predecessor of the WTO) developed countries have persistently steered the decision-making agenda. According to Narlikar, a senior academic at

the University of Cambridge, developed countries only discussed "issues of interest to themselves, disregarding or excluding issues where the comparative advantage of

developing countries lay."<sup>3</sup> The WTO Singapore, Geneva, Seattle, Doha and Cancun rounds have done little, if anything, to change and improve this acute

issue of agricultural subsidies within Western states. Pascal Lamy, the WTO Director General, in fact maintains that the WTO can do little to avert this problem until 2013 of-  
fering little prospect for developing states.<sup>4</sup>

There is also a disadvantageous financial aspect to the decision-making process. The WTO revolves around frequent council meetings. Respective representatives from the 153 member-states convene in different cities, often at the same time,

to discuss trade relations.

Developing countries do not have the same expertise as developed states do to send representatives to each meeting, rendering it impossible for them to actively influence decision-making. Moreover, 22 developing countries do not have delegations in Geneva, and, on average, developing states only have half the number of present delegates as developed states do.

The judicial settlement poses similar problems. Trade regulation is technical and complex and negotiation requires good lawyers, which developing countries often cannot afford. Consequently, developing states cannot enjoy the legal rights that they are entitled to under WTO rules, placing them at an extreme disadvantage. In the IMF, the weight of each member's vote is determined by

their quota size. Their share of the quota is determined by the amount of money that they contribute to the organisation. Currently, the US enjoys a 17 per-

cent quota share, so it can veto the 85 percent majority needed for consensus. Conversely, 166 developing members col-

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lectively enjoy a 30 percent quota, leaving little room for them to actively influence policy decisions. The system is unfair and biased, favouring the richer and highly industrialized Western states.

The international monetary system is fundamentally flawed. Developing states are unable to confront and revert dominating policies of developed countries, perpetuating a system of economic dependency. Decolonisation may have swept through the Global South during previous decades, but imperialism still persists. The players remain the same. On the one hand, developed states shape policy regulation and outcomes; on the other, developing states are trapped in an exploitative system. But the name of the game has changed; this time it operates under the guise of free trade.

<sup>1</sup>Djavdov, M. (N.D.) World Bank and IMF: Financial cops of Western Hegemony. *Crescent Online*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5wopl9o>

<sup>2</sup>Sharma, D. (2006) WTO: Doha Destructive Round: Time to Pull Down Shutters. *Share the Worlds Resources*, 25 July. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5vgt53j>

<sup>3</sup>Narlikar, A. (2003) *International Trade and Developing Countries*. London: Routledge

<sup>4</sup>Sharma, D. (2006) WTO: Doha Destructive Round: Time to Pull Down Shutters. *Share the Worlds Resources*, 25 July. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5vgt53j>

# Sacred cow in heavy storms

*Ida Stuve on why the UN desperately needs to rethink its role*

The United Nations is the most important international organisation. Its main purpose is the maintenance of international peace and security and the resolution of disputes in economic, social and humanitarian arenas. Since 1945, the world has been reshaped dramatically; the great powers have changed addresses. Today, the hip neighbourhoods of the up and coming elites are found in a rapidly expanding Asia. In the midst of this is the UN, reaffirming the role of the 'old' world order desperately held up by a rickety assembly of powers. The world has arguably reached a turning point, where the UN needs to reform and modernise. Without reform, it is easy to see a weak UN facing a similar fate to its forefather, the League of Nations.

The international system faces many challenges: financial instability; global warming; energy insecurity; unstable states; nuclear weapons; rising food prices and other challenges. They are of a highly intertwined nature, demanding diplomatic mediation, a role that a highly visible UN should play but has failed to recently. Whistleblowers from both within and outside the UN have warned of a weakened organization, led by a spineless Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. The current Norwegian delegation commented that, "in a time where the UN is crucial to reach multilateral agreement on escalating global crises, the UN and Ban Ki-moon stands out in terms of a lacking presence"<sup>1</sup>. Several recent examples of this are the neglect of crisis areas like Burma, Darfur and Zimbabwe, where visits and investigations were undertaken, yet nothing has been resolved. Furthermore, Ban Ki-moon has been criticised for his weak defence of human rights and campaign for disarmament. Halfway through his five-year term, his record is arguably

uninspiring.

The recent financial crisis was not handled well by either the General Assembly or the Secretary General. In part, this led to the establishment of the G-20, which tasked itself with further strengthening international cooperation.<sup>2</sup> The UN has increasingly failed to satisfactorily voice the concerns of the smaller and less powerful nations on many matters. Without this dialogue, powerful and influential nations have turned to each other to solve global issues, thereby ignoring the opinions of poor and troubled states. In an increasingly interconnected world, leaders realize that international cooperation is crucial to reach consensus on important global issues. The UN is the most established organ within which to facilitate this co-operation, but its recent lack of success in doing so means it could be challenged by other bilateral groupings. Veto-powers on the Security Council have begun to fight hard to retain their position, and establish groups parallel to the UN as a possible shortcut and guarantor of influence.

Politics influences the UN more than its founding principles affect its policies. This should be reversed, or else the ideal balance between a realist and idealist ideology, so delicately showcased in the UN, will not take root. This could lead to a further establishment of elitist multilateral groups, filling the vacuum left by the UN. Ban Ki-moon's moral voice and authority has been diminished, creating a great obstacle to the organisation's capacities. Whether Ban Ki-moon's low profile is due to less media coverage or his personality is debatable. When reflecting on the last decade of the UN, a more vocal Kofi Annan is noticeable. Has an inoffensive leader been selected purposefully<sup>3</sup>?

Inga-Britt Ahlenius, the former Under-Secretary General for the



Joshua Valanzuolo

United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, recently published a book based on her experiences and final internal investigation report at the UN.<sup>4</sup> In it, she criticises Ban Ki-moon, accusing him of weak leadership. Ahlenius argues that it is clearer than ever that the Secretariat's main purpose is no longer to lead, as other interests are deemed more important in 'the greater game': "It is clear that the five permanent members of the Security Council are no longer interested in a strong UN, and even less in a strong Secretary General".<sup>5</sup>

Ahlenius accuses Ban Ki-moon of acting on behalf of the American government, who explicitly requested he remove all of Kofi Annan's staff. Ahlenius comments on this, saying, "a weak leader automatically compensates with the instalment of staff around him who are dependent on him, working on one year contracts and are easily controlled".<sup>6</sup> This has created fear and instability at the top of an organization established to maintain peace and international security.

As mentioned previously, the UN is weakened by internal resistance to institutional change. Because of this, it cannot and will not deliver on its founding aim to maintain international peace and security. However, in its defence, how can it achieve this? Without more involvement from rising powers, the reform process risks further stagnation. The UN is as essential as it is imperfect. Criticism is important, as constructive debate is required for the UN to review its faults, and hopefully improve as a consequence. Just as the UN applies international pressure on member states, maybe it is time the international community demands a stronger and redefined UN. In the end, a stronger and more coherent UN should, and hopefully will, represent the interests and values of all member states.

<sup>1</sup> Rønneberg, K. (2009). *Her er det Hemmelige Notatet*. Aftenposten, August 19th. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6h42nwo>

<sup>2</sup> G-20 Official Website. Available at: <http://www.g20.org/index.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Karlsson, I. (2011). *UN Falling Apart Under 'Ban Ki-moon'*, IPS, January 31st. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5v92ued>

<sup>4</sup> Ahlenius, B. *End of Assignment Report*. June 2010

<sup>5</sup> Skavlan, F. (2011). *Norway, Interview with Inga-Britt Ahlenius*. NRK, February 11th. <http://tinyurl.com/6cndkzg>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



# Why we need the BNP

*Natasha Turak on combatting ignorance with common sense*

A party with ideals reminiscent to Nazi Germany, the far-right wing British National Party (BNP), aims to “keep Britain British” by rabidly opposing the presence of ethnic groups in the UK. Its membership was formerly white-only, until faced with the threat of legal action.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore its agenda is widely acknowledged as racist and fascist; blaming Britain’s woes, namely unemployment, on minorities. The BNP declares itself “wholly opposed to any form of racial integration between British and non-European peoples,” and “committed to stemming and reversing the tide of non-white immigration and to restoring... the overwhelmingly white makeup of the British population.”<sup>2</sup> This vitriolic message seems to have struck a chord with a small pocket of Britons, who elected two BNP members to the European Parliament in 2009. In regards to this ultranationalist triumph David Cameron stated he felt “sickened.”<sup>3</sup> So why do we need them?

What one must remember in a democracy, is that one cannot pick and choose who is entitled to freedom of speech. This freedom means nothing if it only applies to what the majority wants to hear. The right to free speech is manifest only when it applies not simply to what the majority wants to hear, but to what may offend it. If not, society risks tyranny of the majority.

Anti-fascism groups like Unite Against Fascism (UAF) or the International Socialist Resistance, campaign for censoring the BNP from public speaking because its message promotes a bigoted, xenophobic ideology, which could lead to racial violence. With full respect for their worthy intentions, there is one thing they get wrong.

This critique of anti-fascist activist groups is delicate, and can be misconstrued. Criticism can be met with accusations of condoning intolerant behaviour. Claiming full support for equality-promoting

groups who oppose the BNP, the writer of this article simply intends to draw attention to the flaws in their aim to obstruct its free speech. Defending the free speech of people like Nick Griffin is not in any way the same as defending his views.

John Stuart Mill wrote that, “Even supposing an opinion we hold really were true, it would still be wrong to try to silence opposing opinions.”<sup>4</sup> Denying a legitimate political party the right to free speech is plainly hypocritical. If activist groups attempt to violate this right, how can they legitimately accuse the BNP of violating the rights of others?

Activists protested outside BBC Headquarters in 2009 when the BBC invited BNP leader Nick Griffin to speak on Question Time. When asked about a quote accredited to him, “in which he equated six million deaths in the Holocaust with the flat earth theory, he replied that European law stopped him explaining.” He was also revealed to have called Islam a “wicked, vicious faith.”<sup>5</sup> Given all of this, it is not hard to see why the BNP attracts more disgust than support. Yet, if the BNP is not able to express its views in the public arena, it will go underground and its malevolence will fester. By keeping it under the spotlight, the nation sees the fallacies underlying its extreme ideology.

It is not refusal to publicly engage with the BNP that thwarts their power. It is by challenging them with well-constructed debate, which exposes their fabricated platform. For example on Question Time, according to former Justice Secretary Jack Straw, “when

anybody put a specific quotation to Mr. Griffin, he tried to ‘wriggle out of it’.”<sup>6</sup> Moments like this have the ultimate effect of letting the BNP publicly drive the nail into their own coffin.

Weyman Bennett of the UAF maintains, that public airing of the BNP’s views “will lead to the growth of a fascist party and promote violence against ethnic minorities.”<sup>7</sup> Activists argue that frustrated people, knowing that the

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BNP is legal, will flock to it. They also cite a spike in racial attacks toward minorities directly following BNP speeches and demonstrations.<sup>8</sup>

These are valid points. However, the likeli-

hood is high that anyone beginning to foster racist sentiments will find an outlet regardless. If not the BNP, then it could be the more extreme and violent English Defence League, or even underground neo-Nazi groups, which are far more deadly and difficult for the government and the public to track. Furthermore, by addressing the socioeconomic grievances held by those vulnerable to racist ideologies, the government may by extension protect minority groups from persecution. A robust democracy needs robust communities and vigilant law enforcement officers, who are particularly wary during and after BNP speeches and rallies. The government and communities in general have a duty to promote tolerance and justice, to combat ignorance via schools and campaigns, and to protect citizens through law enforcement.

The BNP’s rise to the international stage has been a wake-up call for the British people, forcing

them to think about the causes of racism and how its proponents have been elected. We need the BNP as a reminder to today’s leading parties that they cannot forget about those pockets of the British population who feel dissatisfied and alienated, and thus risk falling victim to vindictive messages. We need the BNP to remind the public of what the ugly face of racism looks like when ignorance is left to fester.

Repressing publicity of offensive views will have much the same result as the Victorians obtained by repressing talk of vice: prostitution and child-abuse only worsened because of the silence. Only by facing issues can our society address the challenge. Democracy must be upheld, and we must accept that rights are extended to all British citizens, for better or worse. If freedom of speech does not hold in extreme cases, then it holds in none. A perfectly harmonious society is far from attainable. Yet, this does not mean that every citizen should not propagate awareness and teach tolerance to younger generations. And, as the government has the duty to address its more vulnerable and disgruntled communities, so too must it commit to protecting the safety and dignity of its people; race notwithstanding.

<sup>1</sup> BBC. (2010) *BNP votes to ditch whites-only membership rule*. 14 February. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yhj4fcl>

<sup>2</sup> BNP. (2010) *Democracy, Freedom, Culture and Identity: British National Party General Elections Manifesto 2010*. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6a5dv74>

<sup>3</sup> BBC. (2009) *BNP Secures Two European Seats*. June 8. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/6fkzvwz>

<sup>4</sup> Mill, J.S. (N.D) *On Liberty*. Adelaide: ebooks@adelaide, 2009

<sup>5</sup> BBC (2009) *Angry Scenes Face Griffin at BBC*. October 22 2009. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/6yj42hr>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

